

THE THEOLOGICAL CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON THE QUR'AN

A reflection

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The title that was proposed to me is: "The Theological Christian Influence on the Qur'an: A Reflection." Yet can one speak about Christian influences on the Qur'an? If so, to what extent? Can one specify exactly the magnitude and origin of these influences?

The problem

To begin with we must note that the very concept of influence is generally rejected by all of traditional Islam. The Qur'an cannot be subject to influences, since it comes directly from God and is in no way a human work. If it were a work attributable to Muhammad himself, it could be subject to influences. However, being a divine message brought down upon Muhammad, there is no other influence but that of God. By this fact alone the very question that we raise is already excluded by traditional Islamic thought.

Yet if we consider the Qur'an as a literary document, then one has the right to pose the question in order to know if, and in what measure, there could have been influences from earlier literary documents. In addition, given the number of Biblical allusions that one finds in the Qur'an, and in light of what is known of the Christian milieu of Mecca and the Jewish milieu of Medina, it is normal to inquire into the Biblical (Jewish and Christian) influences that could have impacted the Qur'an.

I note first of all that there are a certain number of suras that speak of Christ, the Virgin Mary mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, Zechariah, the apostles, and so on. Evidence would show, even without a long study, that there are indeed parallels of these pericopes in the Qur'anic text on one hand and the Gospel texts – canonical or apocryphal – on the other hand.

It is evidently in these verses where one would eventually find the most Christian influences. However here I will leave aside these "historical" descriptions where

the parallels are evident and well known (those of the infancy of Mary, the annunciation of John the Baptist, the annunciation to Mary, the infancy miracles of Jesus, and so on.), in order to examine other passages where the Christian parallels are not evident.

**God chose Adam, Noah, Abraham and the family
of Imran (Q 3:33–4)**

I begin with verses 33–4 of sura 3 (The Family of ‘Imran)

*inna llaha stafa ‘Adama wa-Nuhan wa-‘ala Ibrahima wa-‘ala ‘Imrana ‘ala
l-‘alamina, dhurriyyatan ba‘duha min ba‘din. wa-llahu sami‘un ‘alim.*

God did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of ‘Imran above all people, Offspring, one of the other: And God heareth and knoweth all things (tr. Yusuf Ali).¹

How many are the elect?

The first important remark to be made is that this verse speaks of election (*istafa*). This term has a large Biblical resonance, particularly in Hebrew tradition, where Israel is the Elect of God, the “elect people” of God.

However, the four proper names mentioned here are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the family of ‘Imran. If one considers the chronological succession, the order indicated is correct. And yet, if the three first names are certainly identifiable in the Bible, the fourth is problematic. Indeed, in the Qur’anic context, the expression *Al ‘Imran* refers to the family of Jesus through Mary. Thus we have a series of four names, which encompasses Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jesus. These four figures have been elected.

And yet this series is surprising, since the figure who is cited most often in the Qur’an is not Adam, Noah, Abraham or Jesus. Instead it is Moses, who by far exceeds all of the other prophets (being mentioned 138 times). And yet, as though by chance, Moses is not named here. How is this possible? And if he is not cited, it means then that this verse has no Jewish influence, and could not stem from Jews: it can only stem from a Christian milieu.

Similarly, in light of the importance of Moses (who probably represents a model for Muhammad more than all of the other cited figures, being at once the leader of a people and the messenger of God) in the Qur’an, it seems to me impossible that the Qur’an would have omitted here Moses in this series of the Elect of God.

The name ‘Imran

In apocryphal Christian texts, the parents of Mary are called Anne and Yuwakim. In the Qur’an Anne is unknown – which should come as no surprise² – and Yuwakim is called ‘Imran. Where does this name come from?

According to 1 Chronicles 5:29 (Hebrew), the children of ‘Amran are Aaron, Moses and Miriam (Mary); in Exodus 15:20, Miriam is called the “sister of Aaron.” Could the Qur’an have confused Mary the mother of Jesus with Mary the sister of Aaron? This seems to be confirmed by Qur’an 19:28, where Mary is called “O sister of Aaron,” and Qur’an 66:12, where Mary is called the daughter of ‘Imran.³

And yet we know that the fathers of the Church (e.g. Aphraates [fl. fourth century] and Gregory of Nyssa [d. 395], both of whom were well known to Syriac Christians) often compared the two Marys (of the Old and New Testaments) and that this connection found a place in popular Christian preaching. According to Joseph Henninger, this would explain the confusion.⁴

Meanwhile, Muslim commentators note this difficulty. They explain that ‘Imran father of Mary is different than ‘Imran father of Miriam. Meanwhile “sister of Aaron” indicates “descendent of relative of Aaron.”⁵

Thus we have two ‘Imrans: that of the Hebrew Bible, who is the father of Moses, Aaron and Miriam, and that of the Qur’an, who is the father of Aaron and Mary. It seems to me that, in the expression “Family of ‘Imran,” one should see *the meeting of these two traditions*, the Hebrew and the Arab, the Biblical and the Qur’anic. In other words, there would not be only four names of the elect (Adam, Noah, Abraham, and the family of Mary and Jesus), but in fact five, including Moses and his family before that of Jesus.

An evident Christian influence

If one accepts this working hypothesis, then we will find a schema that is typically Christian, namely “the Covenants of God with humanity”: the Covenant (*berith*) of Adam, expressed by what is known as the proto-evangelium (Genesis 3:15); the Covenant of Noah, symbolized by the rainbow; the covenant of Abraham, in which all of the nations of the earth will be blessed, given material form in the circumcision of men; the Covenant of Moses, marked by the tablets of the Law given on Mt Sinai; and finally the Covenant that the Christians call the “New Covenant” in Jesus.

If this is the case, then it is necessary to understand the election (*istifa*) of these men in the sense that they were chosen by God who contracted with them a Covenant. Thus we find anew the theme of God’s five Covenants with humanity, a classical theme with the Fathers of the Church, from Origen (d. ca. 254) to John Chrysostom (d. 407) and many other Fathers.

We find again this theme with certain Arab Christian authors, for example with the little known Palestinian author from the beginning of the ninth century, Butrus al-Bayt Ra’si, that is, Peter the bishop of Capitolia in Jordan, author of a *Kitab al-Burhan* (falsely attributed to Eutychius of Alexandria).⁶ Commenting on the parable of the workers of the last hour (Matthew 20:1–15), in which there are five successive invitations to workers from the first to the last hour, our apologist

interprets this along with patristic tradition, as a reference to the five Covenants of God with humanity.

It is clear that the preaching (or call) of Christ and His disciples is the last and complete preaching. It is for all nations alike, and is not specially for one nation rather than another, in accordance with the parable, spoken by Christ in the Gospel, of the five calls whereby God called His servants to work for the kingdom of heaven in the world to come.

((pseudo-)Eutychius of Alexandria, *The Book of the Demonstration (Kitab al-Burhan)*, trans. Watt, CSCO 193, § 366, 156)

Thereafter he cites the text of the parable (Matthew 20:1–15) and gives the following explanation:

The first calling whereby God called on men to act in obedience to Him was the call of Adam early at the beginning of the world. Then the second call was the call of Noah after the deluge. The third call was the call of Abraham. These three calls were *by the law of nature*.

The fourth call was the call of Moses *by the scriptural law of the Torah*.

The fifth call was the call of Christ and His apostles *by the law of the Gospel*. This call was not specially for the children of Israel, but was for all men alike, for the many idle nations to whom the book of the Torah had not been revealed and whom none of the prophets had hired. This is the call of *the law of grace*, for Christ gave [as grace] to the people of His call the full hire for their faith in Him; He did not reckon it to them by hours of the day. He began paying them before the first, and He did not listen to the murmuring of the envious, because of His power to do what He wills with His own.

Each of these calls represents a *Covenant* from God and a public testament between Him and the people of that Covenant.

((pseudo-)Eutychius of Alexandria, *The Book of the Demonstration (Kitab al-Burhan)*, trans. Watt, CSCO 193, § 367–8, 156–7)

Naturally, Butrus does not mention Muhammad. Yet his very absence, and the fact that there are no more than five Covenants and that the Covenant of Christ is the only universal one, implies that the Covenant of Muhammad is excluded by the Bible.⁷

On the other hand, one is surprised to see that in the Qur'an Muhammad is not named among these elect. One expects him to be part of this series, since his name is al-Mustafa in Islamic tradition, the elect *par excellence*, and it is this very term (*istafa*) that is used in our verse. Yet Muhammad does not participate in this tradition of the Elect, and, according to the hypothesis which we are presenting, does not bring a Covenant.

From whom could such an enumeration come from if not the Christians? More precisely, if one accepts our interpretation of the expression “Al ‘Imran,” that it encompasses at once Moses and Jesus, then it could only come from a Judaeo-Christian milieu, that is from Christians who have preserved Hebrew traditions. For Jews Al ‘Imran is none other than Moses (along with Aaron and Miriam). The fact that the Qur’anic tradition, on the contrary, attributes this name to the family of Mary and Jesus, shows that there is a Christian tradition here. For this reason I conclude that there is a Judaeo-Christian tradition here.

Jesus creator (Q 3:49)

It would be impossible here, due to space, to examine the miracles of Jesus mentioned in the Qur’an, notably in Q 3:49. Since they are sufficiently well known and since their relation with the Gospel texts is evident, I will be content to limit myself to the first miracle in order to single out two particular points.

Aya sign

wa-rasulan ila bani Isra’ila anni qad ji’tukum bi-’ayatin min rabbikum

And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message):

“I have come to you, with a Sign (aya) from your Lord.”

The word *aya* is a keyword in Islamo-Christian revelation. One finds it seventy-seven times in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of John, in the Greek form *sêmeion*, and 287 times in the Qur’an (however somewhat rarely in the first Meccan surans). It signifies a prodigious sign that attests to the authenticity of the one who accomplishes it (it should not be translated with *‘alama*, which signifies only “signal”).

In Arabic the word designates the verses of the Qur’an or the Bible. This comes from the idea that every phrase of the Qur’an is a miraculous sign for those who truly believe, an idea that is connected with the dogma of the inimitability (*i’jaz*) of the Qur’an.

This word, *aya* (“sign”) is frequently discussed by the Arab lexicographers. It has no Arabic derivation and is evidently a borrowing from a Semitic language. It could be translated from Hebrew *ôl* (likewise translated in the Septuagint as *sêmeion*), but the specialists more often derive it from Syriac *ata*. The word *aya* is frequently attested in pre-Islamic poetry, for example in the *Diwan* of Imru’ al-Qays.⁸ If this is the case, then the probability that it entered Arabic through Syriac speaking Christians is more likely, as Jeffery explains

While it is not impossible that the Arabs may have got the word from the Jews, it is more probable that it came to them from the Syriac-speaking Christians.

(*FV*, 72)

The verb khalaqa

*anni akhluqu lakum mina l-tini kahay'ati l-tayri, fa-anfukhu
fihī fa-yakunu tayran, bi-idhni llah*

I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird,
and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's leave.

This miracle is also mentioned in Q 5:110. It is found in the apocryphal Infancy Gospels.⁹

The verb *khalaqa* is found 180 times in the Qur'an and it is always translated, in various languages, with "to create." With the exception of Q 20:17 (*takhluquna ifkan* you invent a lie), it always designates the creative action of God. In 177 cases, the subject of the verb is God, while in the other two cases (3:49 and 5:110) it is Christ. Evidently this could only come from Christians; Muslim tradition, which could not uphold this meaning (the only one attested in the Qur'an), interprets it with the meaning of "to fashion, mold." Meanwhile, the action of "breathing into" is, in the Bible as in the Qur'an, typical of the creative action of God.

Thus the two verbs used in this verse both reflect the divine creative action, and not the human action of a potter, for example, thereby confirming the Christian origin of this verse.

Christ the new Adam (Q 3:59)

The Qur'anic text

*Inna mathala 'Isa 'inda llahi kamathali Adama, khalaqahu min
turabin, thumma qala lahu "kun" fa-yakunu*

The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be." And he was.

This verse establishes a parallel or a likeness (*mathal*) between Jesus and Adam. The question presented is whether the Qur'an specifies the content of this likeness.

The most common response of the Muslim commentators, even today, is to say that this likeness is made explicit in the second part of this verse: God "created him from dust then said to him: 'Be.' And he was." Yet this explanation does not agree with the Qur'an itself. Indeed, when the Qur'an says, God "created him from dust," the personal pronoun could not refer to Christ, since he was not created from dust but from the breath of God in Mary.

*wa-llati ahsanat farjaha, fa-nafakhna fiha min ruhina, wa-ja'alnaha
wa-bnaha ayatan li-l-'alamina* "And (remember) her who guarded
her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her
son a sign for all peoples."

(Q 21:91)

Nevertheless, many Muslim readers curiously apply the pronoun to Christ. Yet this phrase can only refer to Adam alone. The first sura (chronologically speaking) of the Qur'an (96:1) affirms that Adam was created from dust when it speaks of *'alaq*, which should be understood in the sense of "sticky mud," and not of "sperm" as many today think.¹⁰

On the other hand, the second part of the phrase ("then said to him: 'Be.' And he was.") also can only be applied to Adam. For God created everything by his word (*amr*), as the Qur'an affirms: "Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'be,' and it is!" (36:82; cf. 3:47).

In reality, this verse contains two ideas: one, the affirmation of a likeness between Christ and Adam (*mathala 'Isa 'inda llah*; yet of what this likeness consists the Qur'an does not say); and two, a report concerning Adam, that God created him from dust and his word.

One can assume nevertheless that the likeness between the two, according to the Qur'an, is that like Jesus Adam was created without a father. This point is rather frequently mentioned in Muslim tradition until the present day. Muslim apologists of the Middle Ages, as those of the modern era (e.g. Shaykh Rashid Rida in his commentary on the Qur'an) emphasize even that Adam was superior to Jesus because he was born without a mother. Christian theologians (notably Elijah of Nisibis [d. 1056]) respond that in this Adam is not different than the first donkey or bull, since he is the first of his *jins*. But Jesus was born without a father when there were an infinity of possible fathers. According to them the eminence of Christ above Adam is thereby demonstrated.

The Parallel according to Paul

The parallel between Jesus and Adam is important to Paul. Thus in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (King James Version). Or again in Romans 5:12–21

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to

condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.¹¹

This parallel is also frequently found in patristic literature: Christ is the new Adam, who liberates us from the sin of Adam and the death that followed from it, and so on.

In reading the Qur'an, the reader has the sense of encountering a Christian (Pauline *par excellence*) *topos*, integrated into Qur'anic thought and Islamized dogmatically.

The Eucharist (5:112–15)¹²

The Table (Q 5:112–14)

(112) *Idh qala al-hawariyyuna : Ya 'Isa bna Maryama, hal yastati'u rabbuka an yunazzila 'alayna ma'idatan mina l-sama'? . Qala ittaqu llaha in kuntum mu'minina.*

(113) *Qalu nuridu an na'kula minha wa-tatma'inna qulubuna wa-na 'lama an qad sadaqtana wa-nakuna 'alayha mina al-shahidina.*

(114) *Qala 'Isa bnu Maryama: allahumma rabbana, anzil 'alayna ma'idatan mina l-sama'i takunu lana 'idan li-awwalina wa-'akhirina wa-'ayatan minka. Wa-rzuqna wa-anta khayru l-raziqina.*

(112) Behold! the disciples, said: "O Jesus the son of Mary! can thy Lord send down to us a table set (with viands) from heaven?"¹³ Said Jesus: "Fear Allah, if ye have faith."¹⁴

(113) They said: "We only wish to eat thereof and satisfy our hearts, and to know that thou hast indeed told us the truth; and that we ourselves may be witnesses to the miracle."

(114) Said Jesus the son of Mary: "O Allah our Lord! Send us from heaven a table set (with viands), that there may be for us – for the first and the last of us – a solemn festival and a sign from thee; and provide for our sustenance, for thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)."

Al-Ma'ida (Q 5:112, 114)

We note first an interesting detail. This chapter of 120 verses has only four verses (112–15) on the Table, the *ma'ida* is only mentioned in verses 112 and 114, and nowhere else in the Qur'an. However, it is this most rare word and these verses that provide the title to this chapter, proof that they were felt to be important.

Western researchers agree that these verses refer to two groups of Gospel narratives: the Multiplication of Loaves and the Last Supper. Some of them also have said that the Table that descends from the sky at the demand of the apostles and upon the prayer of Jesus could be an allusion to the vision of Peter of a sheet descending from the sky (Acts 10:9–13); this does not seem apparent to me.

The first philological remark is the fact that the term *ma'ida* is evidently a non-Arabic word borrowed from another language, as the derivation of the Arabic root *myd* is “pulled by the hair.” The relatively rare opinion that it derives from Persian is weak. The majority of researchers are agreed that the term is borrowed from Ethiopic; even more, it is the technical term used by the Christians of Ethiopia to signify the Last Supper. According to a report that I was not able to confirm, this term is already in the Ethiopic translation of the Bible made in the fourth century, on the basis of Hebrew and Syriac.¹⁵

Otherwise, there is unanimity between Muslims and non-Muslims on the fact that this sura is one of the last, if not the last, of the Qur'an. That is to say that it is certainly posterior to the return from Ethiopia of the last Meccan emigrants. This would support the fact that this would be a borrowing from Ethiopian Christianity.

Feast ('id) and sign (aya) (v. 114)

The term *'id* is found nowhere else in the Qur'an. According to unanimous scholarly opinion it is a borrowing from the Syriac *'ida*, which signifies “Feast” or “liturgical festival.”¹⁶ As for the word *aya*, “sign,” we have seen that it is also probably a borrowing from Syriac Christians.

This *ma'ida* is thus defined by two terms: *'id* and *aya*, a “Feast” or “liturgical festival” and a “sign.” Is this not the most appropriate definition of the Eucharist of Christians, which is a festive celebration and a sacramental sign? Even more, it seems evident that in this passage we are dealing with a rather faithful description of Christian faith, otherwise not shared by Muslims. How could this be?

li-awwalina wa-'akhirina (v. 114)

The expression *li-awwalina wa-'akhirina* is also found nowhere else in the Qur'an. Even the words *awwaluna* and *akhiruna* are found nowhere else in the Qur'an. Meanwhile, *awwal* and *akhir* are never used in the Qur'an to designate a person. The expression apparently means “all, nobody excluded.”

We find again here something that relates to the Eucharist and which, as far as I know, has not yet been noticed by researchers. We know that there are two traditions on the narrative of the institution of the Eucharist: one according to Matthew and Mark and the other according to Luke and Paul. According to Matthew–Mark we have: “This is the *blood of my Covenant*,¹⁷ which is shed for many,” while for Luke–Paul we have: “This cup is the new Covenant,¹⁸ in my blood, which is shed for you.”¹⁹ We see that while Luke–Paul have “for you,”

Matthew and Mark have “for many” (Matthew 26:28: \ddagger $\dot{\iota}$ \sim ; Mark 14:24: $\dot{\iota}$ \ddagger \sim *pro multis*, in the Latin version of Jerome). The ancient Roman liturgy integrates the two: “*Qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur in remissionem peccatorum.*”

Yet the expression “*pro multis*” is typical of the New Testament: we find it there ten other times.²⁰ In these twelve passages, it does not signify “for many,” as though a certain number are excluded, but rather “for all.” This turn of phrase is well known to the exegetes, and we find a very clear allusion to it in the letter of John Paul II to the priests for Holy Thursday 2005.

“Hoc est enim corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur.” The body and the blood of Christ are given for the salvation of man, of the whole man and of all men. This salvation is integral and at the same time universal, because no one, unless he freely chooses, is excluded from the saving power of Christ’s blood: “qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur.” It is a sacrifice offered for “many,” as the Biblical text says (Mark 14:24; Matthew 26:28; cf. Isaiah 53:11–12); this typical Semitic expression refers to the multitude who are saved by Christ, the one Redeemer, yet at the same time it implies the totality of human beings to whom salvation is offered: the Lord’s blood is “shed for you and for all,” as some translations legitimately make explicit. Christ’s flesh is truly given “for the life of the world” (John 6:51; cf. 1 John 2:2).²¹

Conclusion

These few verses have been glossed by Muslim commentators with the help of various narratives, which one can find for example in the work of Roger Arnaldez²² or Michel Hayek.²³ In my opinion, it cannot be truly understood except as a clear allusion to the Eucharist,²⁴ which could only have Syriac or Ethiopic Christians as its source, and which remains veiled to Muslims. One is struck meanwhile by the number of words here that appear nowhere else in the Qur’an.

“Provide for our sustenance” (v. 114) and the Lord’s Prayer

Wa-rzuqna wa-anta khayru l-raziqina

“Provide for our sustenance, for thou art the best Sustainer (of our needs)”

Rizq, in Classical Arabic, is the food necessary for one day.²⁵ Thus one thinks necessarily of the Lord’s Prayer: “*Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie*” “*ton arton emôn ton epi-ousion dos emin semeron*” (Matthew 6:11) or “*didou emin to kathemeran*” (Luke 11:3) and in English “Give us today our daily bread.”

Yet we know that the text of the Lord's Prayer was understood by various churches of the East as an allusion to the Eucharist, precisely due to the word *epi-ousion*, which can signify "daily" (as Jerome translated it in the Vulgate and as it is in the majority of western languages after him), or even "*super-substantialis*" as the *Vetus Latina* translates it, as well as the Arab Byzantine version (*khubzana l-jawhari our essential bread*), or even "of tomorrow" as the Coptic Tradition understands it (cf. *khubzana lladhi li-l-ghad a'tina l-yawm our bread for tomorrow give us today*), along with that of the Ebionites. The last two interpretations evidently make an allusion to the Eucharistic bread.

Thus this brief Qur'anic phrase, marvelous in its conciseness, probably invokes the Lord's Prayer, which is always connected to the Eucharist in the tradition of the Eastern churches. The thematic unity of this verse thus becomes even more evident.

The threat of God (v. 115)

Qala llahu inni munazziluha 'alaykum, fa-man yakfur ba'du minkum, fa-inni u'adhhibuhu 'adhaban la u'adhhibuhu ahadan mina l-'alamina.

Allah said: "I will send it down unto you: But if any of you after that resisteth faith, I will punish him with a penalty such as I have not inflicted on any one among all the peoples."

This terrifying phrase invokes 1 Corinthians 11:27–9, which speaks of the Eucharist in these terms:

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Conclusion

In summary, we have seen that the verses 112–15 give the name to the entire sura *al-Ma'ida*. This term, which is found nowhere else in the Qur'an other than this passage, is borrowed from Ethiopian and is the technical term that designates the Eucharistic table to Ethiopian Christians.

This section of the Qur'an, mysterious for those who are not familiar with the New Testament and Christian theology, becomes on the contrary clear and profound in this light. This *ma'ida* is at a once festive celebration and sacramental sign. It is offered to all, to the first as to the last. It is the necessary bread for daily subsistence (*rizq*). The one who rejects this sign or does not recognize it will be punished terribly, an admonition made by Paul.

The Qur'anic non-crucifixion (Qur'an 4:156–9)²⁶

This Qur'anic text is the most important to be discussed, for it denies in a clear manner the crucifixion of Christ. The sura can be dated to the year 626. According to Muslim chronology it occupies the ninety-second place (according to most Orientalists the 102nd place).

Three motifs of the punishment of Jews (vv. 156–7a)

(156) *Wa-bi-kufrihim wa-qawlihim 'ala Maryam buhtanan 'aziman,*
 (157a) *wa-qawlihim inna qatalna al-Masih 'Isa ibn Maryam rasul Allah...*

- (156) That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge;
 (157a) That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God"

According to this text, there are three motifs that led to the condemnation of the Jews: their rejection of faith, their charge against Mary (of having had relations with a man) and their pretension of having killed Christ.

- 1 The first accusation refers to the fact that the Jews did not recognize Jesus as the messiah, even if messiah is not a concept of great importance to the Qur'an. It seems to be simply a proper name.
- 2 The second accusation is that of adultery. It relates to an earlier text (Q 19:27–8) wherein Mary comes to her family, carrying Jesus in her arms. They say to her "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought! O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!" This is a theme developed widely in the apocryphal Gospels.
- 3 The third accusation is for having said: "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God." The polemic here is against the Jews, not the Christians.

They killed him not, nor crucified him (v. 157b)

The Qur'anic text continues: "but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them (*wa-lakin shubbiha lahum*)." The translations are many and diverse here. The text, far from evident, is shrouded in mystery. Some commentators speak of another person who was substituted in the place of Jesus.

According to the Qur'an, the Christians who affirm the death of Christ do so without proof and without certitude, being content to follow a hypothesis (*zann*): "Those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety (*yaqinan*) they killed him not."

The adverb *yaqinan* at the end of the phrase is surprising. One could translate it, as Muhammad Kamel Hussein does in his novel *Qarya zalima (City of Wrong)*: "It is not certain that they killed him." Others go further and suggest the translation: "It is certain that they did not kill him."

God raised him up to Himself (v. 158)

“Nay, God raised him up unto Himself (*rafa’ahu Allah ilayhi*); and God is Exalted in Power, Wise.” The phrase “God raised him up to Himself” is found only with Jesus in the Qur’an (cf. 3:55). One finds, it is true, in regard to the prophet Idris, that God “raised him to a lofty station” (Q 19:57; *wa-rafa’ nahu makanan ‘aliyyan*),²⁷ but not “to Himself.” Meanwhile, the pious Muslim tradition regarding Muhammad’s nocturnal journey (with reference to Q 17:1, usually dated to the years 615–19), does not have him arrive to God Himself.

There is probably a reminiscence here of the Ascension of Christ to the Father, such an important aspect of Christian theology. Yet here Christ is made to escape death.

The ascension to Christ is so prominent that it is taken up in a Qur’anic text (3:55) that is dated to the year 630: “Behold! God said: ‘O Jesus! I will take thee (*mutawaffika*) and raise thee to Myself (*wa-rafi’uka ilayya*).’”

All will believe in Jesus, who will be a witness against the infidels on the Day of Resurrection (v. 159)

Verse 159a: “And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death.” The expression “before his death” is not clear. Does the pronoun “his” refer to each person or to Jesus? It seems that the only meaning appropriate to the Qur’an (since indeed many have died without believing in Jesus) is “the death of Jesus.” Thus all of the Jews will believe in Jesus before he dies at the time when he has returned to earth.

The verse continues: “and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them.” We find this expression in the mouth of Jesus, in the last sura (chronologically speaking): “I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them” (5:117). Thus Jesus was a witness against them during his life, and he will be so again on the Day of Resurrection. Here there is probably an echo of the Christian theology which affirms that Christ will come at the end of time “to judge the living and the dead” (Nicene Creed).

Thus the traditional Islamic position on Jesus, briefly summarized, is

- 1 Jesus was not crucified.
- 2 Someone who looked like him was crucified in his place.
- 3 He is therefore not dead, but was raised up to God.
- 4 At the end of the world he will return to earth, fight the Antichrist and proclaim Islam as the true religion.
- 5 He will proclaim the coming of the Hour of Judgment, (marry) and die.
- 6 He will be raised on the day of the final resurrection.

Origin of the theory of substitution

All of the western commentaries conclude that the theory of the substitution of Christ on the Cross derives from Docetism, the heretical Christian current according

to which Christ took on only human appearance but was not truly a man, and therefore could not be crucified.

Docetism is already found in the beginning of the second century with Ignatius of Antioch (d. ca. 110). The apocryphal Acts of John likewise suggest the same doctrine. It is also suggested in a document of the Gnostic library of Nag' Hammadi, the *Authentikos logos*, which is datable to the second half of the second century.

Yet the text most evocative of the Qur'anic passage is that of the Gnostic Judaeo-Christian Basilides, reported by Irenaeus of Lyon at the end of the second century. Basilides writes

Those angels who occupy the lowest heaven, that, namely, which is visible to us, formed all the things which are in the world, and made allotments among themselves of the earth and of those nations which are upon it. The chief of them is he who is thought to be the God of the Jews; and inasmuch as he desired to render the other nations subject to his own people, that is, the Jews, all the other princes resisted and opposed him. Wherefore all other nations were at enmity with his nation.

But the Father without birth and without name, perceiving that they (*the Minds*) would be destroyed, sent his own first-begotten Nous (he it is who is called Christ) to bestow deliverance on them that believe in him, from the power of those who made the world.

He appeared, then, on earth as a man, to the nations of these powers, and wrought miracles.

Wherefore he did not himself suffer death, but Simon, a certain man of Cyrene, being compelled, bore the cross in his stead; so that this latter being transfigured by him, that he might be thought to be Jesus, was crucified, through ignorance and error, while Jesus himself received the form of Simon, and, standing by, laughed at them. For since he was an incorporeal power, and the "Nous" (mind) of the unborn Father, he transfigured himself as he pleased, and thus ascended to him who had sent him (*the Father*), deriding them, inasmuch as he could not be laid hold of, and was invisible to all.

Those, then, who know these things have been freed from the principalities who formed the world; so that it is not incumbent on us to confess him who was crucified (*Simon*), but him who came in the form of a man, and was thought to be crucified, and was called Jesus, and was sent by the Father, that by this dispensation he might destroy the works of the makers of the world.

If any one, therefore, he declares, confesses the crucified, that man is still a slave, and under the power of those who formed our bodies; but he

who denies him has been freed from these beings, and is acquainted with the dispensation of the unborn Father.

(Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 1, ch. 24, no. 4)

This does not mean that the Gnostic theory was current among the Christians of Arabia, but simply that the idea of a substitute for Jesus on the Cross was present.

Allah khayru l-makirin (3:54)

And (the unbelievers) plotted and planned, and God too planned, and the best of planners is God.

This text is to be understood in connection with the verses that follow and speak of the non-crucifixion of Christ. The impious plotted against God, but God was craftier than them and delivered Christ from the hands of those who sought to crucify him.

This theme of God's trick, which we find elsewhere in the Qur'an (8:30), seems strange, if not shocking. In fact, it is traditional with the fathers of the Church and frequent among the Christian Arab theologians (e.g. Butrus al-Bayt Ra'si in the ninth century and Sawirus Ibn al-Muqaffa' in the tenth century). The theme is likewise connected to the crucifixion of Christ but the meaning is different.

For Christian theologians the theme is based on the idea that Satan deceived Adam in paradise by a trick, and that this led to his exclusion from paradise and the tendency of rebellion as the second nature of humans (original sin). God therefore decided to save Adam and his descendents. But God is just ('*adl Allah*) and does not want to use coercive methods with Adam. He therefore used the same method of Satan, namely the trick (*al-makr*). He took on a human form, in Jesus Christ, to deceive Satan (who occasionally perceived that Jesus was not a human but the Messiah, as seen in the Gospel exorcism accounts). Above all he deceived him on the Cross when he took the form of a slave, something that is entirely improper for God. In this way he overcame Satan with his own tactic, the trick.

It seems to me that this beautiful patristic theme is found again here in the Qur'an, in the same context, but in its cosmic theological dimension (which we find again, for example, in Revelation).

Do not be excessive regarding Christ: he did not judge it improper to be a slave (4:171–2)

Now we turn to the final verses of the sura of women

(171) *Ya ahla l-kitabi la taghlu fi dinikum wa-la taqulu 'ala llahi illa l-haqqi: innama l-Masih 'Isa bnu Maryama rasulu llahi wa-kalimatuhu alqaha ila Maryama wa-ruhun minhu. Fa-'aminu bi-llahi wa-rusulih wa-la taqulu*

thalathatun intahu khayran lakum! innama llahu ilahun wahidun subhanahu an yakuna lahu wa-ladun! lahu ma fi al-samawati wa-ma fi l-ardi wa-kafa bi-llahi wakilan.

(172) *Lan yastankifa l-Masihun an yakuna ‘abdan li-llahi wa-la l-mala’ikatu l-muqarrabuna. wa-man yastankif ‘an ‘ibadatihi wa-yastakbir fa-sayahshuruhum ilayhi jami’an*

(171) O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of God aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in God and His messengers. Say not “Trinity” : desist: it will be better for you: for God is one God: Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is God as a Disposer of affairs.

(172) Christ disdaineth nor to serve and worship God, nor do the angels, those nearest (to God): those who disdain His worship and are arrogant, – He will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer).

Commit no excesses! (v. 171)

That which God says to the Christians is not to be excessive when speaking of Christ, to speak only the truth: that Christ is the Messenger of God (like Muhammad), the Word of God and the Spirit of God! This is an astonishing affirmation: at the same time that the Qur’anic text commands the Christians not to be excessive . . . *it is excessive*, if one accepts the meaning of its words.

The formula “Word of God” (*Kalimat Allah*) is evidently taken from the prologue of John (John 1:1). It is surprising to find it in the Qur’an, for it does not correspond to that which is normally said of the messengers of God, who are all created *by* the word of God. It is only applied to Christ and does not correspond with the Qur’anic conception of the oneness of God. Evidently it does not mean that which John (and Christians after him) understand by the “Word of God,” but the Qur’an also does not furnish an explanation that matches with the rest of its theological approach.

As for the formula “a Spirit (proceeding) from God,” which is transformed in Islamic (particularly Sufi) literature, into “Spirit of God,”²⁸ it is no less surprising. It never appears in the New Testament. It is found, however, in Gnostic literature. This point is not without interest. We have already found, on the subject of the Crucifixion of Christ, a Gnostic Christian influence on the Qur’an.

Christ does not judge it improper to lower himself (v. 172)

This verse is very suggestive: “Christ – like those angels who are close (to God) – does not judge it improper to be a slave of God.” (Translation mine; The inaccurate translation of Yusuf ‘Ali – “Christ disdaineth nor to serve and worship God . . .” – seems to reflect his apprehension with this verse.)

Yet adjusting one word is enough to bring out a phrase central to Christian faith and the message of Saint Paul in Phillipians 2:5–11 (especially verses 6–8).

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In the Qur’anic text, only one word makes the difference. If one had, in the phrase “*Lan yastankifa l-Masihun an yakuna ‘abdan lillahi*,” the verb *yasira*, for example, in the place of *yakuna*, we would have a most beautiful Arabic adaptation of the text of Paul: “Christ did not judge it improper of himself to become a slave.” Here, as elsewhere in the Qur’an when it comes to Christ and Christian doctrine, the Qur’anic text scrupulously respects the Christian affirmation, but juxtaposes it with Qur’anic dogma.

Jesus and the hour (Q 43: 61)

The Hour in the Qur’an

In the Qur’an, the term *sa‘a* (“hour”) appears fortyeight times. When one finds it in the definite form (*al-sa‘a*), it indicates “the Hour of the final judgment.” We find this expression frequently (forty times) in the Qur’an, often as a threat made to unbelievers. This is indeed the same meaning that we find in the Gospels, even in the mouth of Christ, and it seems likely that there was a direct Christian influence, since the expression does not seem to belong in Jewish tradition.

Only God has “knowledge of the Hour”

Elsewhere in the Qur’an, it is normally God who has “knowledge of the Hour” (*‘ilm al-sa‘a*), as one finds in the following three verses:

Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with God (alone). It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does any one know what it is that he will earn on the morrow: Nor does any one know in what land he is to die. Verily with God is full knowledge and He is acquainted (with all things) (31:34).

To Him is referred the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment: He knows all): No date-fruit comes out of its sheath, nor does a female conceive (within her womb) nor bring forth the Day that (God) will propound to them the (question), “Where are the partners (ye attributed to Me)?” They will say, “We do assure thee not one of us can bear witness!” (41:47).

And blessed is He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all between them: with Him is the Knowledge of the Hour (of Judgment): and to Him shall ye be brought back (43:85).

Yet this is also an affirmation of the New Testament and is even found in the very mouth of Christ.²⁹

Does Christ have “knowledge of the Hour”?

However, in one verse (Q 43:61), Christ is referred to have “having knowledge of the Hour,” or even more: “*being* the knowledge of the Hour” (“*innahu la-‘ilmun li-l-sa‘a*”). This formula is not very clear and most commentators avoid it. They prefer another reading, which does not exist in the canonical Cairo text: “*innahu la-‘alamun li-l-sa‘a*” “He is the sign of the Hour.” The commentators explain that the return of Christ to earth (universally affirmed by Muslim tradition) will be the sign announcing the Day of Judgment. Thus ‘Abdallah Yusuf ‘Ali, in a note on this verse in his translation, writes

This is understood to refer to the second coming of Jesus in the Last Days just before the Resurrection, when he will destroy the false doctrines that pass under his name, and prepare the way for the universal acceptance of Islam, the Gospel of Unity and Peace, the Straight Way of the Qurân.

(The Qurân, 1337, n. 4662³⁰)

Conclusion

According to these two readings of the Qur’an Jesus is the “sign” (*‘alam*) and “knowledge” (*‘ilm*) of the Hour. However, he is not *the* knowledge of the Hour, which is reserved for God, as the Qur’an repeats, echoing the Gospels. Jesus is likewise not the judge of the Last Day, a position reserved for God. Here too we find an affirmation of the Gospel clearly expressed in a parable of Christ (Matthew 25), in which the Father judges all of the humanity, yet in relation to their response to Christ.

He is the expected Messiah (*al-mahdi al-muntazar*) who will come to the earth, from the presence of God, as an announcer of the final judgment. In his role as Mahdi, he will accomplish his final mission: to purify the earth of all idols, superstition and erroneous beliefs. He will fight evil, the Antichrist, and defeat him. Finally he will proclaim the true religion: Islam. This is the role and the mission of Christ, by which he appears to be a perfect Muslim prophet.

Conclusion

Many other points could be evoked that would greatly illuminate the possible influence of Christianity on the Qur'an: the name of God al-Rahman; the expression *Sibghat Allah* (2:138) over which the commentators stumble, the parallels between Jesus and the angels, and so on.

Qur'anic proper names that reflect and a written Arabic Christian text

Yet what seems even more significant to me are certain proper names that reflect a *written* Christian text.

- a According to Qur'an 61:6 Christ announces a prophet who will come after him and gives him the name Ahmad. In the face of Christian objections that they know no such prophet, Muslim tradition sought to explain this verse according to the theme of the Paraclete, the Consoler, which is found three times in the Gospel of John. This interpretation is found already in the early Muslim-Christian debates, such as that between Timothy (d. 823) and the caliph al-Mahdi in 164/781 (r. 158/775–169/785). In the *Sira* of Ibn Hisham (d. 218/833) we find the passages of John on the Paraclete cited, according to the Syro-Palestinian version, which he transliterates as منحننا. The graphic likeness of this to محمدا (in the accusative) probably served to reinforce this interpretation.
- b The Qur'anic name John the Baptist (يحيى) is evidently a reading of يحيانا (a form attested among Christian Arabs at least until the tenth century).
- c The Qur'anic name of the prophet Isaiah (إسحع) is evidently a reading of شعيي (Sha'ya), still pronounced this way by Christian Arabs today.

The Qur'an's faithfulness to its Christian sources

As I said in the Introduction, one can detect Christian influences in the Qur'an in its narrative aspects: the narratives of the infancy of Mary, the annunciation of John the Baptist, the annunciation to Mary, the infancy miracles of Jesus, and so on. The majority of these texts stem from the apocryphal infancy Gospels, some of them from the canonical Gospels.

With all of these parallel texts, one is struck by the faithfulness of the Qur'an to its source. One usually has the sense that the author of the Qur'an (I begin with the hypothesis that this religious document has a human author) seeks to reproduce that which he has gathered as faithfully as possible, sometimes without understanding it, or at least while understanding it in his own manner. This is evident in regard to the Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Qudus*), of Christ the Word of God, of his conception without human intervention, or the fact that Christ *created* living things (by shaping them and breathing into them), and so on.

However, the *principle of coherence* meant that the Qur'anic text had to add certain things to mitigate the effect of its reports (for example the addition of *bi-idhn Allah* – “by God’s leave” after the mention of Christ’s miracles), just as much as it had to give other certain words another meaning (thus *ruh* – “spirit” – is often taken with the meaning of angel), or even (quite commonly) to leave a phrase ambiguous.

What type of influence?

Jewish influence on the Qur'an is quite evident on the level of Biblical reports, cult, juridical regulations and traditions of daily life (without mentioning prayer and fasting before the “reform” of 623–4).

Christian influence is more evident on level of New Testament reports and certain theological themes. Yet Christian influence seems to me evident no less on a cultural level. This is evident from the *written* Christian influence on certain proper names in the Qur'an, as presented earlier. This affirmation is confirmed by the Arab tradition which unanimously reports a Syriac or Nabatean (thus Christian) influence on Arabic writing. Meanwhile, one could bring up numerous Qur'anic Arabic words of Syriac origin that relate to writing or culture.³¹

Judaeo-Christian/Gnostic influence is another matter. How could it have been a factor in the historical context of the Qur'an? In particular, how could the Gnostic perspective on the death of Christ on the Cross have arrived in Arabia in the seventh century? We know unfortunately very little on the Christianity of Arabia during this period. It is possible that the famous formula attributed to Theodoret of Cyrrhus (d. 458 or 466): “Arabia haeresium ferax” (“Arabia bearer [or mother] of heresies”) could be a key to the problem, even if it is unclear of which “Arabia” he is speaking.³² The same Theodoret teaches us, in the fourth book of his *Ecclesiastical History*, that Arabia was often a place of exile, for example of Pelagius in 367,³³ and of various orthodox Christians a bit later. He is precise enough to add that they were sent to the furthest (*eschatiás*)³⁴ regions of Arabia, presumably *Arabia deserta*.

Some scholars believe that the Elchasites were refugees in Arabia, and this is another track that could illuminate certain Qur'anic passages. I do not think that there were proper Judaeo-Christian communities left in Arabia, but Judaeo-Christian oral traditions could certainly have survived there until the time of the Qur'an's origins.

I offer the following working hypothesis: when Jerusalem was conquered by the Persians in 614 in the era of the Khosrow II Parviz (r. 590–628), and re-conquered by the Byzantines in 629–30 in the era of Heraclius (r. 610–41), the Jews were expelled from there. Is it possible that Judaeo-Christians expelled with them found refuge in Arabia, far from the empire, and then transmitted or reinforced the idea that someone was substituted for Christ on the Cross? As far as the chronology of the Qur'an, this event corresponds perfectly to sura four, which is datable to this period. Of course, this is only a hypothesis.

In brief, there is no need to demonstrate that there was a Christian influence on the Qur'an, in as much as this is apparent from the evidence of a number of narratives. What is more interesting is research on Qur'anic material that does not explicitly address Christian themes, yet still reveals this influence. Meanwhile, it should be remembered that discussion of "influence" is not opposed to the dogmatic position that the Qur'an was revealed, if one might accept the idea that the word "revealed" need not exclude human activity. At the same time, further philological, literary and theological research might introduce new elements that will further illuminate this matter.

Notes

- 1 According to the original Yusuf 'Ali translation (*The Holy Quran*, [Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1938]) and not the later editions (Beltsville, Maryland: Amana, 1989-present) that reflect Saudi sponsored modifications.
- 2 In fact, other than Mary, no other woman is named in the Qur'an!
- 3 Cf. C.F. Gerock, *Versuch einer Darstellung der Christologie des Korans*, Hamburg: Perthes, 1839, 23.
- 4 See J. Henninger, "Spuren christlicher Glaubenswahrheiten in Koran," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 1, 1945, 306–7.
- 5 Cf. M. Hayek, *Le Christ de l'Islam*, Paris: Seuil, 1959, 83; and especially R. Arnaldez, *Jésus fils de Marie, prophète de l'Islam*, Paris: Desclée, 1980, 33–8.
- 6 See (pseudo-)Eutychius of Alexandria, *The Book of the Demonstration (Kitab al-Burhan)*, P. Cachia (ed.) CSCO 192 and 209, trans. W.M. Watt CSCO 193 and 210, Leuven: Peeters, 1960 and 1961.
- 7 In the same way Marqus b. al-Qunbar, a Coptic exegete of the late twelfth century rejects that there was a Covenant with Muhammad with an allegory based on the three wives of Abraham. On this author see S.K. Samir, "Vie et œuvre de Marc Ibn al-Qunbar," *Christianisme d'Égypte: Mélanges René-Georges Coquin, Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte* 9 (Louvain: Peeters 1995), 123–58.
- 8 Poem 65, first verse, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets: Ennabiga, 'Antara, Tharafa, Zuhair, 'Alqama and Imru'ulqais*, W. Ahlwardt (ed.), London: Trübner, 1870, 160 (reprinted Osnabrück: Biblio, 1972).
- 9 *Gospel of Thomas* 2:2–4; *Arabic Infancy Gospel* 36:1–2 and 46:102; *Armenian Infancy Gospel* 18:2; *Pseudo-Matthew* 27. Blachère, in a note on this verse (p. 82 in the 1 volume edition: Paris: Mazonneuve, 1966), writes: "Ce miracle est mentionné dans l'Évangile de l'Enfance où il se présente sous deux formes sensiblement différentes. Dans la première, Jésus joue avec des camarades et, ayant façonné des figurines d'argile représentant des animaux, notamment des oiseaux, ceux-ci sur son ordre s'envolent; se posent et picorent. Dans l'autre, Jésus, le jour du sabbat, façonne des figurines d'argile représentant des oiseaux; un pharisien arrive et veut les détruire; Jésus frappe des mains et les figurines s'envolent. Cette seconde version est celle qui se trouve chez Pseudo-Matthieu et dans l'Évangile de Thomas."
- 10 Cf. Ch. Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Berlin: Schiler, 2004, 315–17.
- 11 See also 1 Corinthians 15:45–9.
- 12 For this section see also Durrah Al-Haddad, *al-Injil fi-l-Qur'an*, Jounieh: Librairie pauliste: 1982, 290–6.
- 13 Cf. John 6:51: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven."
- 14 That is, "Do not tempt God!"

- 15 See *FV*, 255–6.
- 16 See *FV*, 213.
- 17 An expression borrowed from Exodus 24:8.
- 18 An expression borrowed from Jeremiah 31:31.
- 19 Luke 22:20 1 Corinthians 11:25 (the latter verse does not include “which is shed for you”).
- 20 See Matthew 20:28 Mark 10:45; Romans 5:15, 19; 12:4; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:2, 14, 20; Hebrews 9:28.
- 21 See § 4 at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_20050313_priests-holy-thursday_en.html
- 22 Arnaldez, *Jésus fils de Marie, prophète de l’Islam*, 173–85.
- 23 Cf. *Le Christ de l’Islam*, 220–2, where the opinions of various commentators on the Table are recorded.
- 24 Cf. H. Michaud, *Jésus selon le Coran*, Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1960, 57.
- 25 See A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1860, 1, 855b: “Subsistance journalière, pain quotidien.”
- 26 On this section, see S. Kh. Samir, “La crocifissione di Cristo nel Corano”, in: Piero Coda e Mariano Crociata (Edd.), *Il crocifisso e le religioni. Compassione di Dio e sofferenza dell’uomo nelle religioni monoteiste* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2002) 49–82.
- 27 Idris seems to correspond with the Biblical Enoch; cf. Genesis 5:24 and Hebrews 11:5.
- 28 In Sufi texts the exclamation “Ya Ruh Allah!” addressed to Jesus, is frequently found.
- 29 See Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32.
- 30 ‘Abdallâh Yûsuf ‘Alî, *The Qurân*, Beirut, Dar al-‘Arabiyya, n.d. This is taken almost literally by L. Bonelli, *Il Corano*, Milan: Hoepli, 1997², 89, n. 3, in relation to Q 4:159; and also by Federico Peirone, *Il Corano, introduzione traduzione e commento*, Milan: Mondadori, 1980, 2, 682, n. 57.
- 31 See S. Kh. Samir, “La culture arabe chrétienne ancienne en interaction avec la pensée arabe musulmane,” *Islamochristiana* 8, 1982, 1–35 (in Arabic), esp. 14.
- 32 I could not find the precise reference to this phrase in Theodoret’s writings (which are not available in the original Greek) or elsewhere. I also could not consult R.W. Smith, “*Arabia Haeresium Ferax?*” *A History of Christianity in the Transjordan to C.E. 395*, Dissertation, Miami University (Ohio), 1994. In a letter of December 19, 2005, Prof. Theresia Hainthaler explained to me: “I have not yet found the expression with Theodoret (and also not with Epiphanius, Sozomenus, Hippolytus, and so on.). I do not expect to find it with Theodoret. I have also not encountered the expression in Harnack’s *Missionsgeschichte*. Augustine (*De Haeresibus* 83), referring to Eusebius of Caesarea (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 6:37), speaks of representatives of a heresy whom he names *Arabici* (because they are to be found in Arabia and the heresiarch is unknown).” In a letter of February 24, 2006, after a long series of references, she concludes, “Hence it appears that this expression does not stem from a patristic or early medieval Author.”
- 33 *Theodoret Kirchengeschichte*, Léon Parmentier (ed.), Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954, chapter 13.3 233.13. Cf. *The Ecclesiastical History, Dialogues, and Letters of Theodoret*, trans. B. Jackson, *A Select Library Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), chapter. 12, 115b-16a: “Him, too, Valens relegated to Arabia, the divine Meletius to Armenia, and Eusebius, that unflagging labourer in apostolic work, to Thrace.”
- 34 *Ibid.*, Parmentier (ed.), chapter 18.5 (p. 240. 18–20) Jackson, chapter 15, p. 118b: “Thereupon Valens ordered that they were to be separated into pairs and sent in different directions, some to Thrace, some to the furthest regions of Arabia, and others to the towns of the Thebaid.”