

A Passage from the Koran in the “Liturgy of the Kingdom”?

Question: In the Mass celebrated under the theme of “Divine Unity”, you have used, as the first reading, a passage from the Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims. I would like to tell you that I do not understand that choice.

I must specify, first of all, that I am presently reading the Koran. This book is constraining and punitive. If we follow its logic, all those who are not Muslims are infidels who deserve to die...

I have also returned from several missions in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. In all, I spent more than six months there. I worked with the Christians in those countries and I heard horror stories concerning Islam. For example, in a small city in Syria where the Christians thought they were living in harmony with the Muslims, these latter betrayed them and cruelly killed them.... These horrors are not only due to the perversity of man, but they also occur because the Koran permits them.... The Koran, besides the messages of hate, is filled with inconsistencies which are attributed to Allah. It is unbelievable!...

If we limit ourselves to the words taken up during Mass, yes, they seem to be just and good, but this is simply a plagiarism of other books (the gospels and the Old Testament).... I cannot accept that one would believe that the Koran is acceptable because a passage from it has been read during Holy Mass. As far as I am concerned, this is almost like blasphemy.... The Koran was written by a proud man [*there follows a series of terms which it is not appropriate to quote here*]. Consequently, I cannot see the Koran being given value without seriously questioning myself.

I am sorry to write to you in such terms, but I need your answers. For me, they are like a last hope in this world in which everything is collapsing, in which everything is trodden underfoot. Thanks in advance.

M.G.

It has already been quite a while since I received the letter from which the comments above are taken. However, only today was I able to finally keep the promise I made to its author at that time, not to evade his indignant question but reply to it frankly and clearly.

AN IMPORTANT REMINDER

First of all, it is necessary to recall that the introduction of a passage from the Koran and of writings from Muslim authors into the liturgy was already the subject of a question from a member of the Work in 2016, and it received its reply in an article entitled: “Holding Out One’s Hand to the Muslims?” (Answers to Questions, no. 3, in *Le Royaume*, no. 243, Nov.-Dec. 2016, pp. 14-18) I can only encourage persons who are interested in the subject to refer to it for more information.

This “presence of Islam” (and other religions) in the form of texts inserted within the liturgy of the word had already been dealt with on at least two other occasions. The first time was in a text entitled, “The Liturgy of the Kingdom”, (*Le Royaume*, no. 234, June 2015, pp. 16-19) in which it was explained that “*the purpose is not ‘to validate’ in any way other religions in their entirety or what this or that author may have written, but simply to recognize the great value of specific texts, very well identified, and destined to gradually constitute a whole ‘corpus’ of reference...*”

The second time, it was in an article entitled, “Secular Prejudices and Absurd Rivalries”, (*Le Royaume*, no. 235, July-August 2015, pp. 14-16) in which it was specified: “*The Lady’s Work is happy to be receptive to new texts, at times non-Christian, which it nevertheless considers to be perfectly worthy of being a part of the Spiritual Heritage of Humanity. Assuredly, only well determined texts are being validated (and not other writings by those same authors, not the religions to which they belong, not other similar documents), but this is nonetheless a major development which itself fits into a much vaster undertaking that aims at making of all peoples ‘one single flock’, in accordance with the Lady of All Peoples’ insistent exhortation.*”

This specific detail was taken up again a little later (cf. *Le Royaume*, no. 238, Jan.-Feb. 2016, p. 19), so that it would be quite clear to everyone that the purpose is always to bring together “*all that humanity, under an inspiration from Heaven, has produced in spiritual texts that are the most beautiful, the most remarkable and the richest, and which can be used in a liturgical context.*”

PUTTING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

The twofold reminder above has as a main objective to clearly situate everything before getting to the answer itself. And to begin with, we are obliged to realize that there exists

an enormous difference in viewpoint between the spirit of this letter and the presence of a passage from the Koran in the liturgy. On the one hand, there is the call to the future, and on the other, the weight of the past (even if, unfortunately, it continues to persist in our day). In fact, many horrible things were committed in the name of Islam and they still continue to be committed, but to simply declare this without any other qualifiers or other considerations does not paint a fair and complete picture of the global reality of our world and of our humanity.

For, next to their enormous positive contribution, many horrible things were also committed in the name of Christianity and of the other religions, even those whose peaceful characteristic is usually emphasized. And of course, we cannot disregard either our own Old Testament which provides us with its lot of abominations of all kinds, feeding this to us sometimes even in the readings in the liturgy of the Catholic Church today.

On the other hand, as much out of a concern for objectivity as of a sense of justice, no information must be rejected. Of course, there are Muslims who commit horrible misdeeds, but there are also Muslims who are subjected to them, and this on a broad scale even, such as, for example, in China (in the context of an anti-religious regime), in India and Burma (on the part of the Hindus for the ones and of the Buddhists, for the others).

Consequently, one must not attribute solely to Muslims all the misfortunes in the world, any more than to the faithful of any other religion. Each one of them is responsible for its share of crimes and excesses, including Christianity which, if we have some knowledge of history, is not outdone in this regard. Thus, even if the comments of the question's author are perhaps true in themselves, they do not give a exact picture of the very complex situation prevailing in this regard on the surface of the earth.

THE STAMP OF THE ERA

What must also be considered is the fact that the texts from the Koran, like the Jewish and Christian religious writings bear the stamp of the era or time in which they were written. According to certain historians, the Koran would even be showing a certain progress in relation to numerous aspects of life in the Arab world at the time of its writing in the seventh century.

It is not for me to judge in this regard, but what I do perceive is that, like most of the religions founded a long time ago, Islam would have much to gain, in the present context, from a sort of "update" which could be successfully undertaken and completed by religious authorities, institutions or persons. For, most often, the people, for their part, spontaneously make the necessary adaptations or "corrections". Thus, even if, in the Koran, there are verses which order that the infidels, that is, the non-Muslims, be killed, the vast majority of Allah's devotees are very well aware that they must not do so and obviously do not do it.

However, we would perhaps need to go beyond that, that is, resolutely move away from certain aspects of the religion which, since they reflect the mentality of the era when the Koran was written, sometimes lock Islam and its faithful within parameters which are hard to reconcile with today's world (for example, that the only justice is a religious one, or that the

witness of two women is necessary in order to be equivalent to that of one man).

For their part, Christians have also had to distance themselves from certain comments from the founders, especially Saint Paul. Some of these are well known, particularly with regard to women and sexuality, but others are less so. Thus, when he writes, for example: "*Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters,*" (Col 3:22) ought we see in those words an assertion that slavery was not only legitimate at that time but that it would still be legitimate today?

Of course, it was commonly practised when Saint Paul wrote his injunction but, in principle, it is no longer presently practised. Consequently, the Christians have moved away from "certain ideas" Saint Paul had, without, for all that, rejecting all the rest of his work (even if "*The word of the Lord*" is still proclaimed in unison after the reading of an epistle from Saint Paul at Mass).

Therefore, would it be possible to look at the Koran in a similar manner and nonetheless see in Islam the word of God himself being passed on by the archangel Gabriel? For God adapts himself to man and his capacity to understand and accept the truth, in keeping with the eras and the mentalities. We will have to come back to this point in the near future because it is very important.

THE PERSON OF MOHAMMED

Finally, with regard to Mohammed, the founder of Islam, who, according to the author of the question, would be like the very incarnation of evil, we would really have to be careful. I am not saying that he was a saint; furthermore, no one in Islam makes that claim either. They see in him the last, and therefore, the greatest of the Prophets, and in Jesus, the "stamp of sanctity". In any case, we really have very little information about him which is sure.

So, whatever Mohammed might have been and whatever exactions he may or may not have committed in the reality of the facts, the dialogue with Muslims will certainly not get very far if we start by wanting to undermine their religion at its base by denying the very foundation of their faith. Do they not proclaim every day and at least five times a day that there is no other god than God and that Mohammed is his Prophet?

Finally, for my part, I do not know if the archangel Gabriel really dictated all or part of the Koran to Mohammed, but what I do know is that the Muslims believe it and that, even if we do not share their faith, we must respect it. Better still: as long as it does not prevent us from being what we are and believing what we believe, we must focus on what is good, positive and even great in it.

SEEING WHAT IS GOOD, NOT WHAT IS BAD

"Focus on what Islam has that is great" is precisely what we are doing in the liturgy of the Kingdom, and not with regard to Islam alone but with regard to all religions. For it is no longer a matter of arguing over the validity of this or that point in this or that religion – this is already a thing of the past –, but of moving forward, bringing out what is good and true in the others and give thanks to God for this. For God, who sees much more widely and much further than we do, did not consider it beneath Him to inspire persons everywhere on Earth. He loves all men, and to take up again Marie-Paule's

words, He wants them all *“in His beautiful Heaven”*. But with the faithful in the other religions and other confessions, He does it differently than He does with us.

Not, besides, that it makes any difference whether one is a Christian or a Muslim or even, on another level, that one is a Catholic or a Protestant, or again, a member of the Church of Peter or the Church of John, for there are fundamental differences between them and, if all religions are estimable, they are not all at the same level in their integration of man within the Divine.

All religions can lead to God, for, as Marie-Paule wrote: *“All religions have their nobleness, their points of truth”* (*Le Royaume*, no. 153, Jan.-Feb. 2002, p. 2), but in the one or the other, the process is longer, more complex or more difficult and, according to our faith as members of the Lady’s Work, no religion is equal to the one the Son began to reveal to us in former times and which the Daughter is completing and continuing to reveal to us today.

But, precisely, this religion of the Son and the Daughter includes – *“in this time which is our time”*, she said – an openness to other religions. That is why our actions, our words and our thoughts must show a clear break with a past filled with ignorance and misunderstanding, of rejection, of hates and conflicts which have been a part of the everyday life of humanity until now. We are entering into the Kingdom of God on Earth and we must not bring into it our old mistakes and narrow-mindedness.

MARIE-PAULE AND JOHN PAUL II

So it was that John Paul II, this great visionary of the Kingdom to come, often spoke of the need for a purification of the memory, as much that of the peoples as that of men. Thus, *“In the dynamics of the movement towards unity, we must purify our personal memory and that of our community of the recall of all the clashes, the injustices and the hatreds of the past.”*¹

This purification of the memory is necessary in the relationships between all the religions, but it must be applied in a special way to the recurring hostility between Islam and Christianity. And that is why Pope John Paul II was even more specific: *“Christians and Muslims, in general we have badly understood each other, and sometimes, in the past, we have opposed and even exhausted each other in polemics and in wars. I believe that, today, God invites us to change our old practices.”*²

This statement corresponds in a significant manner to Marie-Paule’s request when she recommended that we disregard the *“absurd rivalries”* and *“secular prejudices”* which, too often, have torn apart families and peoples, and she clearly foretold that, in the future, humanity would “transcend” them. *“The new millennium is leading the world towards new ways for a new world and new heavens. The purified generations, liberated from their secular prejudices, their absurd rivalries, will be open to the fires of the True Spirit and will fuse in His light. They will stand in admiration before the action of God that has prevailed in our Time.”*³

It is the same direction, the same exhortation: Marie-Paule Co-Redemptrix told us that, from generation to generation, humanity must purify itself and liberate itself from the secular prejudices and the absurd rivalries, and Pope John Paul II, the Vicar of Christ, speaking in His name, told us: *“Today, God invites us to change our old practices,”* and he would go on to proclaim: *“In a world which desires unity and peace, and which however experiences a thousand tensions and conflicts, should not believers favour friendship [and unity] between the men and the peoples who form one single community on earth?”*⁴

This *“single community”* formed by the men and the peoples of the Earth is the Community of the Lady and it is the Kingdom.

THE LADY OF ALL PEOPLES

Of course, we must not close our eyes before the realities of the world and I am not saying that all Muslims are angels of gentleness, tolerance and kindness, but all Christians are not like that either, nor are all the believers of other religions.

What is necessary is that we no longer perceive the differences and oppositions as something inevitable which we are unable to overcome, but as a sort of collective moral atavism (*“old practices”*) which we must now transcend. That might seem to be impossible, but when Marie-Paule spoke of the *“purified generations”*, she did not express herself in the conditional, but in the future, saying that they *“will be open to the fires of the True Spirit”*.

Considered from this marvelous viewpoint of a future immensely full of light, many of men’s ideas in matters of religion are in fact *“secular prejudices”* and many of the struggles and conflicts are in reality *“absurd rivalries”*.

And why, then, should such an aspiration turned towards the coming of another world be good for all believers except the Muslims? What right would allow us to establish distinctions when the Lady herself does not do so? She presented herself before the world as the Lady of All Peoples. She did not say, *“all peoples, except the peoples of the Muslim faith”*; she said: *“of all peoples”*.

Already, a few decades earlier, the Virgin Mary herself had opened the way, showing us the direction in which the efforts, prayers and thoughts of Christians should go. How? By appearing in the only place in all of Christendom which bears the name of the prophet Mohammed’s beloved daughter: Fatima.⁵

M. B., April 17, 2020

1. In Paris, during an ecumenical meeting on May 31, 1980.
2. Address to young Muslims in Casablanca, Morocco, on August 19, 1985 (no. 10).
3. In *Le Royaume*, no. 153, Jan.-Feb. 2002, p. 4. Cf. also the article by the author, *“Secular Prejudices and Absurd Rivalries”* in *Le Royaume*, no. 235, July-August 2015, pp. 14-16.
4. In the same address to young Muslims in Casablanca (no. 3).
5. Cf. *Le Royaume*, no. 243, Nov.-Dec. 2016, p. 18.