

WHO IS THE ‘OTHER’ PARACLETE?

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THE QURANIC PARACLETE: AḤMAD

In *Sura* 61:6, we read this well-known announcement: *And when Jesus the son of Mary said: “Children of Israel, verily I am the messenger of Allah to you in order to confirm what was before me from the Torah and to announce the message that shall bring the messenger who is to come after me and whose name is Aḥmad”*. As Wansbrough noticed, this Aḥmad can be compared to a similar prophecy that we find in S 33: 40, but in this case referring to the name Muḥammad.¹ In the following lines, dedicated to the scholar who marked and reoriented the Quranic studies of the last decades so profoundly, we will try to further explore the meaning of this striking variation of names.

It has long been remarked that the verse of *Sura* 61 is a free citation from the Gospel of John (14:16), where we read: *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (παράκλητος), that he may abide with you for ever, or, rather, from chapter 15, verse 26: But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me*. Indeed, the preceding verse 25 might contain the reference to

¹ Wansbrough, J. *Quranic Studies. Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, 64. London Oriental Series, 31. Oxford, 1977; Urvoy, M.-T. “Annonce de Mahomet.” In Amir-Moezzi, M. A., ed. *Dictionnaire du Coran*, 55. Paris, 2007.

the Torah² that is also appearing in the Quran: *But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law: They hated me without a cause.*

In the Quranic verse, the Prophet Muḥammad seems to identify himself with this Spirit of God, called the Paraclete. It has also been remarked that the name *Aḥmad* could be the result of a misinterpretation of the Gospel text, by way of itacism: thus ‘παράκλητος’, transcribed into a Semitic language as *prqlht*, could be read as ‘περίλυτος’, resulting in *Aḥmad* as its literal translation.³ In this context, the citation of a Syriac version of the Gospel by Ibn Hišām containing the name *mānahemānā*, seems to confirm this.⁴ Thus, the Gospel would have predicted the coming of Muḥammad.

² Sometimes, as a prophetic Biblical announcement, *Deut.* 18: 15 is also referred to in this context: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken”, cf. Urvoy, “Annonce de Mahomet,” 55.

³ Guthrie, A., E. F. F. Bishop, “The Paraclete, Almunhamanna and Aḥmad.” *The Muslim World* 41.4 (1951): 252–54; Nöldeke, Th. *Geschichte des Qurāns*, vol. 1, 9–10. Leipzig, ²1909; Sfar, M. *Le Coran, la Bible et l’Orient ancien*, 413. Paris, 1998; Urvoy, “Annonce de Mahomet,” 56, and my art.: “Le Prophète musulman en tant que Nāṣir Allāh et ses antécédents: le « Nazōraios » évangélique et le Livre des Jubilés.” *OLP* 23 (1992): 254 n. 7; “Die Vereinigung des Propheten mit seinem Gott.” In Groß, M., and K.-H. Ohlig, eds. *Schlaglichter. Die beiden ersten islamischen Jahrhunderte*, 377–378. Inārah, 3. Berlin, 2008.

⁴ Muṣṭafā as-Saqā, Ibr. Al-Ibyārī, ‘Abd al-Ḥafīz Šalabī, *Ibn Hišām, Sīrat an-Nabī*, 1, 233. Kairo; Guillaume, A. *The Life of Muhammad. A Translation of Ibn Ishaq’s Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, 104. Oxford, 1955, ⁸1987; Dalman, G. V. *Aramäisch-neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrasch*, 267. Göttingen, 1938: “trösten”; Idem. *Die Worte Jesu*, 1, 71–72. Leipzig, 1898; Baumstark, A. “Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung aus dem Christlich-Palästinensischen.” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik*, 8 (1932): 205; Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l’Orient ancien*, 414 n. 1; Urvoy, “Annonce de Mahomet,” 56, and my art.: “Le Prophète musulman,” 254 n. 7; “L’Évangile du Prophète.” In De Smet, D., G. de Callataÿ, and J. M. F. Van Reeth, eds. *Al-Kitāb. La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l’Islam. Actes du Symposium International tenu à Leuven et Louvain-la-Neuve du 29 mai au 1 juin 2002*, 173.

At the other hand, we know that religious reformers preceding the Prophet Muḥammad, like Montanus and Mani,⁵ already identified themselves with the same Paraclete and it therefore appears that Muḥammad only followed a well-established prophetic tradition. Consequently, the announcement of the Paraclete had already been interpreted in such a sense, independently from the name *Muḥammad* or *Aḥmad*.

THE BASIC EXEGETICAL PROBLEM:

THE IDENTITY OF THE JOHANNINE PARACLETE

The question should therefore be reformulated. First we have to investigate the original function of the Biblical Paraclete. As this is highly controversial and in order to orient ourselves in this complicated matter, we propose to follow a trace that has the advantage to be clear and neat: the identity of the 'other' Paraclete. Indeed, in Jn. 14:16, Jesus announces that there will come 'another Paraclete' after his Ascension: ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἄλλον παρακλήτονα δώσει ὑμῖν. This suggests that there would exist two Paracletes: one being the H. Ghost who is to come after the disappearance of Christ and another one, who is preceding the venue of this latest Paraclete. The question we have to solve in the first place is therefore: who might be this 'other', first Paraclete, is he distinct from the second one? The equivocalness has been further developed into a differentiation between a celestial *Intercessor* with God, or a "friend at court" on the one hand, and a "friend from court" on the other: an angel whom God is sending to comfort men on earth in His absence.⁶ To be sure, in many a commen-

Acta Orientalia Belgica, Subsidia, III. Leuven/Bruxelles/Louvain-la-Neuve, 2004; "La zandaqa et le Prophète de l'Islam." *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 20 (2007): 69.

⁵ *Kephalaia* 15:19 sqq.; Evodius, *De Fide* 24; Widengren, G. *Mani und der Manichäismus*, 33. Stuttgart, 1961; Tardieu, M. *Le Manichéisme*, 13. Que sais-je?, 1940. Paris, 1981, ²1997.

⁶ Bacon, B. W. "The 'Other' Comforter." *Expositor* 2 (1917): 274–82; Sasse, H. "Der Paraklet im Johannesevangelium." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 24 (1925): 271–72; Windisch, H. "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche." In *Festgabe für A. Jülicher*, 110, 129–30. Tübingen,

tary, the problem about the two Paracletes is argued away;⁷ nonetheless, there are only two possible solutions. Either one has to consider Jesus as the first ‘aid’ or *Paraclete*,⁸ who was interceding for his disciples as long as He was among them on earth: in that case Jesus would be the first and the Holy Ghost the second Paraclete. Or both are distinct from Christ; in that case the Paraclete has to be distinguished from the Spirit, in the sense that there are two divine ‘Spirits’: one the Paraclete and the other the Holy Ghost. In other words: it is sometimes believed that there would have occurred a ‘Johannine Pentecost’, a *donum superadditum*, different from the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost itself.⁹ Indeed, in only one passage from the Gospel of John, *Paraclete* and *Spirit* are explicitly

1927; Mowinckel, “Die Vorstellungen,” 128. For a similar dual aspect of the divine spirit in Rabbinic literature: Mowinckel, 100.

⁷ Thus for ex. Lagrange, M.-J. *Évangile selon Saint-Jean*, 381–82. *Études Bibliques*. Paris, 1936; Stählin, G. *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 202. Göttingen, 1936 (1968); Wikenhauser, A. *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, 269. Regensburg, 1961.

⁸ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 114; Betz, O. *Der Paraklet, Fürsprecher im häretischen Spätjudentum, im Johannes-Evangelium und in neu gefunden gnostischen Schriften*, 163. *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums*, 2. Leiden, 1963; Brown, R. E. “The Paraclete in the Fourth Gospel.” *New Testament Studies* 13 (1966–67): 128; Idem. *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI*, 1140. The Anchor Bible. New York, 1970; Turner, M. M. B. “The Concept of Receiving The Spirit in John’s Gospel.” *Vox Evangelica* 10 (1977): 26; Casarella, A. *The Johannine Paraclete in the Church Fathers. A Study in the History of Exegesis*, 184. *Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese*. Tübingen, 1983; de la Potterie, I. *La Vérité dans Saint Jean*, vol. 1, 342. *Analecta Biblica*, 73. Rome, 1999; Bucur, B. G. “Revisiting Christian Oeyen: ‘The Other Clement’ on Father, Son, and the Angelomorphic Spirit.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 388, 404.

⁹ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 111; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 147; Turner, “The Concept of Receiving The Spirit,” 25; Ben-nema, C. “The Giving of the Spirit in John’s Gospel—A New Proposal?” *EQ* 74 (2002): 195.

identified, but many scholars consider this as a secondary scribal clarification.¹⁰

The question gets even more complicated, as nowhere else in the Greek Bible (LXX), the expression Παράκλητος occurs¹¹; only Philo occasionally used the word, in the sense of *intercessor*, *advocate*.¹² According to Philo, the High Priest should have at his side the divine order of the created world (possibly to be identified with the cosmic Intellect—νοῦς), whom he calls the "Son", to be his advocate while he is praying and standing in front of God the "Father": τῷ τοῦ κόσμου πατρὶ παρακλήτῳ χρῆσθαι τελειοτάτῳ τὴν ἀρετὴν υἱῷ.¹³ In the New Testament, the word παράκλητος only appears in the *Corpus Johanneum*; in the First Letter (2:1) it is clearly referring to Jesus, as the *intercessor* with his Father in heaven.¹⁴

One could wonder therefore if the name might be the product of a misunderstanding, as it is stated nowhere else that Jesus would be a 'Paraclete'. Is it possible that Jesus' role as Saviour originally applied to the Spirit also? 'Saviour' in Aramaic is called *pārūqā*, a word that looks very similar to the term *paraclete*. It has already been suggested that *paraclete* could be Aramaic and not

¹⁰ Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 650.

¹¹ Behm, J. παράκλητος, In Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 5, 800. Stuttgart, 1954.

¹² Behm, παράκλητος, 800–1: "Führsprecher, im eigtl. rechtlichen Sinn Personen, die vor dem Machthaber für Beschuldigte das Wort führen"; Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint-Jean*, 381; Wolfson, H. W. *Philo. Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, vol. 2, 412–13. Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1947, 41968; Sasse, "Der Paraklet im Johannesevangelium," 271; Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 136; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 158.

¹³ Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 2: 134; Mowinckel, "Die Vorstellungen," 108–9. Nevertheless according to Mowinckel, 120, Philo's understanding of this Paraclete could hardly have influenced the Johannine concept.

¹⁴ 1 Jn. 2:1, *Vulg.*: *advocatus*, Sasse, "Der Paraklet," 261; Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 124–25, 134; Braun, F. M. *Évangile selon Saint Jean*, 429. Paris, 1946; Brown, "The Paraclete," 116–117; Idem. *The Gospel according to John*, 1135.

Greek: a (slightly miswritten) participle of *prq*, referring to *someone who is saving*.¹⁵ In that case, Jesus would simply have referred to his own spirit, transmitted to his apostles at his death, as a relic from his presence on earth. I will return to this matter further on.

THE INTRODUCTION OF ANGELIC HYPOSTASES

According to a number of scholars, such as Windisch and Bultmann, there would have been originally a Paraclete, distinct from the Holy Ghost, only to be confused with Him in later tradition.¹⁶ His functions were very similar to those of Jesus: “Der Paraklet ist eine Parallelgestalt zu Jesus selbst.”¹⁷ He could therefore be called ‘another Paraclete’ or perhaps ‘another Saviour’ (*ἄλλος σωτήρ*). This conception of the work of the Spirit implies the idea of the succession of the revelations as well as the function of the prophets charged with these divine messages—“eine selbständige Person, einen Propheten, in dem sich der Geist manifestiert (...) in jedem Fall (...) eine Analogie zu dem in Jesus inkarnierten Logos oder (...) eine Art zweiten Messias.”¹⁸ Such a doctrine about the succession of divine messengers is very familiar to the islamologist, as it clearly recalls the doctrine concerning prophets and imams and more precisely the function of the *naṣīḥ*, so typical for Muslim (shī‘ite) theology.¹⁹ “Zugrunde [i.e. of Jn. 16: 5–15] liegt die Idee

¹⁵ Lamsa, G. M. *Die Evangelien in aramäischer Sicht*, 418–19. Gossau/St. Gallen. 1963.

¹⁶ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 134–35; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1135.

¹⁷ Bultmann, R. *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 437. Meyers Kommentar, II. Göttingen, ¹⁰1941; Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 121; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1140.

¹⁸ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 118.

¹⁹ Rubin, U. “Prophets and progenitors in the early Shī‘a tradition.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 1 (1979): 45–46; Kister, M. J. “Ādam. A study of some legends in Tafsīr and ḥadīth-Literature.” *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993): 115–17; Lüling, G. *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muhammad. Eine Kritik am christlichen Abendland*, 109. Erlangen, 1981, and my art. “Les formes du paganisme préislamique selon les interprétations musulmanes,” to be published in the *Proceedings of the 23rd UEAI Congress* (OLA).

von einer Kette von Offenbarungszeugen, die einander ablösen müssen".²⁰ The last Gospel could have derived such an idea from an already existing gnostic tradition,²¹ but henceforth concentrated into one historical event:²² namely the incarnation of Christ. The function of the Paraclete would in that case indicate the transmission of this principle: it has even been suggested that the succession of Jesus by the Paraclete could indicate the mission that the author of the fourth Gospel was claiming for himself.²³ If this would be the case, the original function of the Paraclete resembles the one that Marcion, Montanus—and eventually Mani and Muḥammad—have claimed for themselves,²⁴ even if it is improbable that such an identification was the purpose of the Evangelist himself (who was most certainly thinking about a divine Spirit²⁵). The model for such a figure should be looked for in gnostic litera-

²⁰ Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 119. According to Spitta, F. *Das Johannes-Evangelium*, 318–19. 1910, John would have followed for his definition of the role of the Paraclete, an already existing interpretation about the returning of the Prophet Elias. We discuss this role of Elias in the establishment of Islamic prophetology in another contribution ("Qui es-tu ? Es-tu Élie ? Es-tu le Prophète ?" (Jean 1:19–21). "Transposition intertextuelle d'une prophétologie, de la Bible au Coran." In *Oralité et Ecriture dans la Bible et le Coran*. Aix-en-Provence, 2012.

²¹ It has been suggested that John would have followed an already existing proto-Gnostic document, a thesis that has been—convincingly—refuted, Brown, "The Paraclete," 119. However, even if a direct borrowing from a precise written source is improbable, the criticism does not exclude that the function of a hypostatic Paraclete was somewhat in the air at the time of the redaction of the Gospel, cf. *ibid.*, 124; Mowinckel, "Die Vorstellungen," 130; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 158, 174.

²² Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*..., 437.

²³ Sasse, "Der Paraklet...", 272–75, 277.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 275; Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 110.

²⁵ Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 131–32.

ture. Some specialists have referred to the ‘assistant’ or *Yawar* of the Mandaean tradition.²⁶

According to many exegetes, this latest proposition is too far-fetched. In any case, such a gnostic, hypostatic figure can only be understood in the context of what has been called the ‘Angel Christology’, a doctrine that is often said to have influenced Islamic prophetology greatly.²⁷ For instance, in the *Pastor Hermas*, the ποιμὴν τιμωρητῆς (*Sim.* 7:1) or the *Son of God* is presented as the first of the Seven most elevated Angels—ἄγγελοι πρωτόκτιστοι or πρωτόγονοι.²⁸ They are most evidently behind the *malā’ika al-muqarribūn* of the Quran (4: 172; 56: 11, 88; 83: 21, 28),²⁹ as well as behind the cosmic seven *amlāk ḥunafā’* who figured in the Syriac inscription that happened to be found in the foundations of the *Ka’ba*.³⁰ In two cases, S 3: 45 and 4: 172, Jesus is included among

²⁶ Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes*, 439–40; Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 136; Brown, “The Paraclete,” 119; Idem, *The Gospel according to John*, 1137. See however the critical remarks of Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 231.

²⁷ Werner, M. *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas problemgeschichtlich dargestellt*, 371 sqq. Bern/Tübingen, 1953; Corbin, H. *Le paradoxe du monothéisme*, 114–19. Paris, 1981; Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 55–56, 60–61, 236; Stuckenbruck, L. T. *Angel Veneration and Christology*. WUNT, 2/70. Tübingen, 1995; Hurtado, L. W. “Monotheism, Principal Angels, and the Background of Christology,” on-line pre-publication to appear in Lim, T. H., and J. J. Collins, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*; Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l’Orient ancien*, 186–87.

²⁸ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 128; Barbel, J. *Christos Angelos*, 193, 202–3, 207. *Theophaneia*, 3. Bonn, 1941; Bucur, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen,” 384, 394–95, 398, and my art. “Âges ou anges? L’arbre cosmique et les esprits qui gouvernent les champs de l’univers.” *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 23 (2010): 215–16.

²⁹ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 31; Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 70, 82, 234.

³⁰ Gil, M. “The Creed of Abū ‘Āmir.” *Israel Oriental Studies* 12 (1992): 13, 21, 39.

them, as Wansbrough noticed.³¹ Moreover, the *rabbānīyūn* of S 3: 80 should probably be explained in a similar way.³² These Seven are the result of a Persian transposition (the *amāša spānta*, rendered into Greek as ἀγγέλαι) of the Old Babylonian 'Seven', who are presiding over days, weeks, planets and astrological decans.³³ In gnosticism they are a sevenfold extrapolation of the function of the Demiurge, like angels acting in the manner of the seven ἄρχοντες κοσμοποιοί.³⁴ The Manichaean cosmology may have been a go-between from older Persian and Hellenistic speculations about seven ἀγγέλαι to the Arabian, Islamic ones about prophets, imams and their celestial counterparts.³⁵ Elsewhere I already argued that it was such a gigantic cosmic Angel who appeared as a kind of divine hypostasis to the Prophet Muḥammad in *Sūra* 53.³⁶

The exact nature of these angelic representations of the prophetic or messianic function has been much debated, as it might contradict orthodox Christology. According to Daniélou, they are not so much ordinary angels or archangels; rather their real significance has to be derived from the historical theological context of early Christian writings, at a time when the ontological position of the divine hypostasis—Jesus Christ—had still to be defined, along with the development of the classical Trinitarian formulas. From this viewpoint, the expression 'angel' could indicate a supernatural, spiritual substance in general,³⁷ any spiritual or divine being in a manifest form, as appearing in our world; the archangel Michaël as the representative of God ("who is as God") is a striking example

³¹ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 30, cf. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 68–71.

³² Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 63–66: "Herrschaftsengel".

³³ Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 221–23, and my art. "Âges ou anges," 217–218.

³⁴ Jonas, H. *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, vol. 1, 168 n. 1, 208. Göttingen, 1964.

³⁵ Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," 39.

³⁶ "Die Vereinigung des Propheten," 372–74; "Âges ou anges," 220–221.

³⁷ Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 157, cf. Mowinckel, "Die Vorstellungen," 115–116.

for such a doctrine.³⁸ However, one could inverse the argument by saying that Daniélou imposes Trinitarian Christology on texts that ignored such ideas, not yet existing in those pre-Nicaean times. Proposals to understand this kind of primitive Christology as ‘Spirit’ or ‘angelomorphic’ Christology or Pneumatology³⁹ do not entirely solve the problem.

In any case, the doctrine about a divine spirit that descends in order to come and reside in each prophet and that is further transmitted from teacher to disciple, thus guaranteeing the succession of revelation, is a concept that has its antecedents in the Qumranic tradition⁴⁰ and, more in general, in the later Jewish tradition immediately preceding Christianity, as the result of Persian and perhaps also Hellenic influences, as is most apparent from Philo⁴¹ and other Jewish Greek sources.

THE COMFORTER IN Gnostic TEXTS AND THE DIATESSARON

If Jesus would be already a ‘Paraclete’—the first one—preceding the other who is the Spirit, both would be a kind of such angelomorphic entities. In that case, the Paraclete is a form of a hypostasis, an angel of God, in the sense of a gnostic spiritual principle.⁴²

As already mentioned, the Paraclete is called the *mānāḥemānā* by Ibn Hišām in his *Sīrat an-Nabī*. In the common Pəšītā-version of the Syriac New Testament, the Johannine term is only transcribed as *paraqlītā* (*prqlt* without *y* in the Old Syrian⁴³). Only one

³⁸ Daniélou, J. *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*, 168–69. Bibliothèque de Théologie. Histoire des doctrines avant Nicée, 1. Tournai, 1958; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 150, 154–55; Hurtado, “Monotheism,” 5–6.

³⁹ Bucur, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen,” 383.

⁴⁰ Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumrān*, 112; Brown, “The Paraclete,” 120–21.

⁴¹ Wolfson, *Philo* 2: 30–31.

⁴² Brown, “The Paraclete,” 122.

⁴³ Smith Lewis, A. *The Old Syriac Gospels or Evangelion Da-Mepharreshē*, 252–56. London, 1910 (New Jersey, 2005); Burkitt, F. C. *Evangelion Da-Mepharreshē: the Curetonian Version of the Four Gospels with the Readings of the Sinai Palimpsest and the Early Syriac Patristic Evidence*, 293. Cambridge, 1894.

very rare witness of the Gospel-text renders the name as *mānah-hemān* (*ḥwrn mnhm*): the old Melkite, Syro-Palestinian translation (Syr^{pal}, discovered and edited by Agnes Smith Lewis).⁴⁴ Although this version generally follows the usual Greek form of the text, many details display striking similarities with the Gospel-text of the *Diatessaron*.⁴⁵ Could it therefore be that *mānah-hemānā* is also such a *Diatessaron* reading? This would confirm once more my hypothesis, that the only Gospel-text the Prophet Muḥammad knew about and to which he is always referring as *al-Inḡīl* in the singular, is precisely the *Diatessaron*.⁴⁶ Our suggestion is at least not contradicted by the rendering of the term in the Liège *Diatessaron* as “*enen andren troestre*”⁴⁷. The Syro-Palestinian version and possibly also the *Diatessaron* may render an original Hebrew and/or Palestinian Aramaic form of the name, with the specific meaning of “someone, who

⁴⁴ Smith Lewis, A., and M. Dunlop Gibson. *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionaria of the Gospels*, 51. London, 1899 (1971); Baumstark, “Altarabische Evangelienübersetzung,” 202–5; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 104, n. 1.

⁴⁵ Black, M. “The Palestinian Syriac Gospels and the Diatessaron.” *Oriens Christianus* 36 (1941): 101 (unfortunately, the continuation of this article was never published, so that the study about the 4th Gospel is missing); Idem. “The Syriac Versional Tradition.” In Aland, K., ed. *Die alten Übersetzungen des neuen Testaments*, 142. Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung, 5. Berlin, 1972: “...ultimately based on a pre-Peshitta or an ‘Old Syriac’ version. The influence of the Diatessaron on the Lectionary is unmistakable”; Aland, B. “Bibelübersetzungen I.” *TRE* 6 (1980): 194–95; Pierre, M.-J. *Aphraate le Sage Persan, Les Exposés*, vol. 1, 142. SC, 349. Paris, 1988; Shedinger, R. F. *Tatian and the Jewish Scriptures: a Textual and Philological Analysis of the Old Testament Citations in Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 22. CSCO, 591, subs 109. Louvain, 2001.

⁴⁶ See my art. “L’Évangile du Prophète,” 158. Similarly, Aphrahat is always citing ‘the Gospel’ in the singular, by which he is also indicating the *Diatessaron*, cf. Pierre, *Aphraate*, 140–41.

⁴⁷ De Bruin, C. C. *Diatessaron Leodiense*, 236. Corpus Sacrae Scripturae Neerlandicae Medii Aevi, Series Miror, 1.1. Leiden, 1970.

makes to breathe again, who resuscitates and revivifies”.⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, a *manahem* already occurs in the literature of Qumran.⁴⁹

A corresponding salving figure exists in the gnostic tradition. References have been made to the Mandaean literature, where on many occasions a *Messenger* is appearing, an *Assistant*, also often called a *Redeemer* (*p’rwq’* or *mp’rq’n’*), pointing to a salvation that is only to come at the end of times.⁵⁰ Gnostic literature bears witness to still another, for our case more appropriate saviour: the so-called *parwânqîn*⁵¹ who is appearing as early as the Syriac *Song of the Pearl*. This *parwânqîn* is a Syriac word that only apparently seems to be linked to the stem *prq*, ‘to save’; the Greek translations of the *Song of the Pearl* render it as ὁδηγός or ἡγεμών, meaning ‘guide’. The passage reads as follows: “I was leaving the Orient and I went down, while two *parwânqîn* accompanied me, the road being terrible and difficult”⁵².

In fact the term *parwânqâ* has nothing to do with the Semitic *prq*, for the simple reason that it is a loan-word from the Persian, meaning ‘guide’. At the Iranian, especially Parthian court, this guide appears as someone who is ‘preceding’ the king as his herald or messenger and who has to transmit the orders of the king. This function, fitting originally in the context of a feudal society, was transposed metaphorically into that of Manichaean soteriology, to indicate someone who, as a kind of angel or divine hypostasis, is assisting like a vassal does, his divine monarch, the Most High God. This angel or Archont, called *parwânqâ*, has to guide the souls of the faithful, by learning them why they need to prefer the eternal

⁴⁸ See my art. “Le Prophète musulman,” 254; “La zandaqa,” 69.

⁴⁹ Brown, “The Paraclete,” 115 n. 3.

⁵⁰ Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 136; W. Foerster, “σφζω.” In Kittel and Friedrich, *Theologisches Wörterbuch*, 1002; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 230.

⁵¹ In fact, this is a correction by Bevan and Nöldeke, based on the Greek translations, followed by all the editors since (Lipsius and Hoffmann); the manuscript reads *prwqyn*, cf. Poirier, P. H. *L’Hymne de la Perle des Actes de Thomas. Introduction, texte, commentaire*, 337. Louvain-la-Neuve, 1981. *Homo Religiosus*, 8.

⁵² Poirier, *L’Hymne de la Perle*, 233, 330, 344.

and unhampered righteousness.⁵³ As such, he is frequently appearing in Mandaean texts too, where his name often is confused with that of the *parūqa* or 'Saviour'.⁵⁴

It is quite imaginable that a so-called *parwānqā* indicating a hypostatic, angelomorphic principle, already existed at the time of the redaction of the fourth Gospel.⁵⁵ It might therefore have been his original name, subsequently misunderstood and read as *Paraclete*—possibly by way of a secondary, supplementary confusion with the existing adjective *pūrqānāyā*—thus producing a word that is understandable in Greek. In that case Jesus' prophecy simply meant that there would be two salving 'persons' or *parānqē*: the first 'Saviour' being Jesus himself and the second one his Spirit, whom He would send or leave behind after his resurrection, to remain eternally on earth among his disciples, until the consummation of times.

I am still more inclined however, to suppose that this adaptation of the *parwānqā* to become a Paraclete was not so much the result of a misunderstanding, but has been deliberate. It could very well have been the work of the author of the Gospel himself, intended to render a good sense to an otherwise ununderstandable foreign word (*parwānqā*) in Greek, in order to clarify what the exact mission would be of the Ghost who is about to come. As such a proposition has considerable theological implications, surpassing the framework of this investigation, I intend to return to the subject in a forthcoming publication.

The dualistic and gnostic interpretation linked to the announcement of the Paraclete in the tradition of the *Diatessaron* is clearly appearing in St. Ephrem's commentary. Ephrem is indeed constantly refuting such a dualistic concept of the deity, professed by the Bardaysānites and Manicheans, by arguing that the Ghost is just as divine as Jesus Christ, at the same level, not greater nor

⁵³ Widengren, G. *Die Religionen Irans*, 296–97. *Die Religionen der Menschheit*, 14. Stuttgart, 1963; Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle*, 235–36.

⁵⁴ Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle*, 235.

⁵⁵ Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 117–20; Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 699 also argues in favour for such a dualistic origin.

lesser,⁵⁶ rather, He is of the same nature: therefore He (i.e. Jesus Christ), has sent the Spirit or Paraclete “from his own nature” (*mēn kəyānā dīlēh*), that is to say from his essence or substance.⁵⁷ Therefore it is impossible for Ephrem that someone, be it Mani or any other prophet or humane religious authority, might be the incarnation of the Paraclete, as a representative of the divine, good principle of Light.⁵⁸ Yet, this was precisely what Mani was claiming for himself: to be the Paraclete whom Jesus had foretold.

ANALYSIS OF THE QURANIC TEXT AND THE TESTIMONY OF IBN HIŠĀM

Although Ibn Hišām, while discussing in his *Sīrat an-Nabī* Jesus’ announcement of the Paraclete, does not make any direct reference to the text of the Quran, he must have remarked that the prophecy was fulfilled by *Sura* 61:6. The best analysis of Ibn Hišām’s presentation is still the one by Alfred Guillaume.⁵⁹ However, at the time of its publication, some sources that could elucidate meaning and background of the text were not available yet. This is why we deem it necessary to have a closer look at this important testimony once more.⁶⁰

قال ابن إسحاق : وقد كان فيما بلغني عما كان وضع عيسى بن مريم فيما جاءه من الله في الإنجيل لأهل الإنجيل من صفة رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ، مما أثبت في محسن الحوارى لهم حين نسخ لهم الإنجيل عن عهد عيسى بن مريم عليه السلام

⁵⁶ Lange, Chr., ed. *Ephraem der Syrer. Kommentar zum Diatessaron*, vol. 2, 533. Fontes Christiani, 54/2. Turnhout, 2008.

⁵⁷ This is how I understand his Commentary 22,1, Lange, *Kommentar zum Diatessaron*, vol. 2, 616, a passage that is, I think, not at all “unklar ... zu verstehen”.

⁵⁸ Lange, *Kommentar zum Diatessaron*, vol. 1, 24.

⁵⁹ Guillaume, A. “The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina.” *Al-Andalus* 15.2 (1950): 288–96.

⁶⁰ We reproduce the text of Muṣṭafā as-Saqā (e.a., edd.), *Sīrat an-Nabī* 1, 232–33.

في رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إليهم أنه قال من أبغضني فقد أبغض الرب
ولولا أني صنعت بحضرتهم صنائع لم يصنعها أحد قبلي ، ما كانت لهم خطيئة
ولكن من الآن بطروا وظنوا أنهم يعزوني وأيضا للرب ولكن لا بد من
أن تتم الكلمة التي في الناموس أنهم أبغضوني مجانا أى باطلاً فلو قد جاء
المنحمننا هذا الذي يرسله الله إليكم من عند الرب ، و روح القدس ،
هذا الذي من عند الرب خرج فهو شهيد على وأنتم أيضا لأنكم قديما كنتم معي
في هذا قلت لكم : لكيما لا تشكوا .

والمنحمننا بالسريانية محمد وهو بالرومية البرقليطس

The text could be rendered as follows (some modifications and interpretations of the text are accounted for further):

Ibn Ishāq said: And there was in what I heard about Jesus the Son of Mary from what God revealed in the Gospel to the adherents of the Gospel, as Johannes the Apostle set it down for them about the Messenger of God, when writing for them the Gospel about the Testament of Jesus the son of Mary, concerning the Messenger of God:

«He that hateth me hateth the Lord. And if I had not wrought in their presence works that no one has wrought before me, they had not had sin. But now that they have observed and do believe, they are comforted in me and thus also in the Lord. However, no doubt the word that concerns the Nāmūs must be fulfilled: *They hated me without a cause*, meaning *without reason*. And when the *munaḥamanā* shall come, whom God will send to you from the Lord, the Spirit of Rightness, who is going forth from the Lord and who will testify of me, and ye also, because ye have been with me from the beginning. About these I have spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.»

And the *munaḥamanā* is in Syriac *Muḥammad* and in Greek he is the *Baraqlītis*.

As Baumstark and Guillaume already remarked, the form of the name of the Evangelist *Yuhannis* is from the outset a clear indication for its origin, as this is how he is appearing in the Syro-Palestinian tradition; elsewhere in Syria we would expect the spell-

ing *Yuhān(n)a(n)*.⁶¹ The presence of this form does not necessarily contradict an origin from the Diatessaron: it seems that the Gospel of St. John is the only one to be referred to by Aphrahat in his *Demonstrations*, who is regularly citing from the *Diatessaron*.⁶²

In the phrase: “He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (Jn. 15: 23—τὸν πατέρα), *al-ab* is changed into *ar-rabb*. Of course this appears to be an adaptation to Islam,⁶³ but it is not necessarily to be imputed to the author of the citation, Ibn Hišām, himself; it might be a (even unintentional) modification by an ulterior copyist too, as the Arabic form of the two words is very similar. We should therefore remain prudent in this case and not too easily formulate any hazardous conclusions.

Somewhat further ἑωράκασιν = *baṭirū* seems corrupt. Baumstark, followed by Guillaume, emendated into *naẓarū*.⁶⁴ However, there is a much more evident correction into *baṣirū*: this is even the reading of the Arabic *Diatessaron*!⁶⁵ The use of this verb gives to the Gospel-text a more ‘gnostic’ purport. It is indeed part of a Judeo-Christian prophetological terminology that I have analysed many years ago: *nṣr* and *bṣr* are also appearing in *Sura* 19: 42/43 and in a passage where Ibn Hišām endeavours to define the prophetic mission. Closely linked to the Mandaean ‘observants’, it is designating a ‘*nāṣir*’: someone who is applying himself to protect the integrity of the divine mysteries.⁶⁶ Visibly, the second, added, verb *waẓannū* (‘they believed’) is only reinforcing this meaning, probably as a kind of a gloss.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Baumstark, “Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung,” 204; Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels,” 292.

⁶² Pierre, *Aphraate*, 140–141; Bruns, P. *Aphrahat. Unterweisungen 1, aus dem syrischen übersetzt und eingeleitet*, 48. Fontes Christiani, 5/1. Freiburg.

⁶³ Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels,” 294.

⁶⁴ Baumstark, “Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung,” 205; Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels,” 294.

⁶⁵ Marmardji, A.-S. *Diatessaron de Tatien*, 442. Beyrouth, 1935.

⁶⁶ See my art. “Le Prophète musulman,” 258, 265.

⁶⁷ Similarly Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels,” 294: “looks like another shot at the meaning”.

For the word *ya'izzūnani*, there is some hesitation in the tradition, a number of manuscripts reading it as: *ya'uizzūnani*.⁶⁸ Ostensibly the copyists felt uneasy here. We are therefore inclined to give a totally different meaning to the text. Guillaume still tried to translate the text of the manuscript tradition literally: "but from now they are puffed up with pride and think that they will overcome me and also the Lord", only to subsequently remark that the reading has no sense and must therefore be mistaken or corrupt.⁶⁹ However, if we would read the verb without *tašdīd*, it could be derived, not from *'aizzā*, but from the verb *'zw/ 'zy*,⁷⁰ with the meaning: "to link up someone to someone else" and even (in the second form, with *tašdīd*): "to comfort", and we would translate accordingly, giving the phrase a positive sense: "but now that they have seen and do believe (fully understand), they belong to me (they are comforted in me) and thus also to the Lord". If our interpretation is correct, the text is giving a clear justification for the Islamic interpretation of the apostolic, prophetic mission, by transmitting the divine, angelic spirit from Jesus to his followers the apostles, who are about to receive the Paraclete.

Even more interesting is the translation of "their Law" (ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν γεγραμμένος) into "the word that concerns the *Nāmūs*". As Guillaume already rightly observed, the phrase "that has been written" is omitted in the Arab version, an alteration that suggests that we are here in the presence of "a mysterious prophecy about the *Nāmūs* which early Muslim commentators identified with Gabriel or Holy Spirit."⁷¹ Strangely enough it seems to have escaped to the attention of Guillaume that such an interpretation is indeed attested by part of the manuscript tradition,

⁶⁸ Wüstenfeld, F. *Das Leben Muhammed's nach Muhammed Ibn Ishāk bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hischām, aus den Handschriften zu Berlin, Leipzig, Gotha und Leyden herausgegeben*, vol. 2, 48. Göttingen, 1859–60.

⁶⁹ Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels," 291, 294.

⁷⁰ The Old Syriac text is reading *sanau*, Smith Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospels*, 256; Marmardji, *Diatessaron*, 443. Could it have been misread as if it were derived from *'zr*, 'to link, bind'?

⁷¹ Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels," 294.

as the codex *Berlin Wetzstein* 15 actually reads: *an-Nāmūs Ġibrīl*.⁷² In this case the archangel is to be compared to the νόμος or εἰμαρμένη who is the cosmological principle or 'Weltgott' of Marcionism.⁷³ Furthermore, it has to be remarked that *nāmūs* is the usual term by which the Manichaeans indicate their doctrine.⁷⁴ Also, a few lines further in the text of Ibn Hišām, when the appearing of the angel Gabriel is reported to Waraqa, the uncle of Ḥadīḡa, he exclaims: "there hath come unto him the greatest Nāmūs,"⁷⁵ who was correctly identified by Ṭabarī as Gabriel.⁷⁶ This is in complete agreement with a well-known Jewish and Jewish-Christian tradition,⁷⁷ that identifies Gabriel with the Law or the Torah. As God's messenger, he has to transmit his Revelation to mankind. As such, he must be equalled to the Manichaean angel at-Tawm, the 'companion' of the Divine Spirit or Paraclete, who, in the form of Gabriel, is speaking to the prophets.⁷⁸ In all those cases, Gabriel is a form or appearance of the Lord himself,⁷⁹ that is to say a kind of Archont. As a matter of fact, according to the Montanists in the presentation of the Syriac author Marūta of Mayperkat (4th/early 5th C.), it was such a divine Archont who united himself to the 'goddess' Mary in order to conceive the Son of God, a representation of the conception of Jesus also to be found in later Islamic

⁷² Wüstenfeld, *Das Leben Mubammed's*, 2:48.

⁷³ Jonas, *Gnosis*, 168 n. 1, 208 n. 1.

⁷⁴ Gil, The Creed of Abū 'Āmir, 38, referring to Henrichs, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 77 (1973): 47–48.

⁷⁵ Tr. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 107.

⁷⁶ Gilliot, "Le Coran, fruit d'un travail collectif?" 190.

⁷⁷ Windisch, "Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche," 136; de la Potterie, I. "Le Paraclet." In Idem, ed. *La Vie selon l'Esprit. Condition du chrétien*, 95–96. Paris, 1965; Idem, *La Vérité*, 331; Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 175; Brown, "The Paraclete," 121.

⁷⁸ Widengren, *Mani*, 32–33; Tardieu, *Manichéisme*, 13, 18; Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien*, 414; Gilliot, "Le Coran, fruit d'un travail collectif," 190 + n. 26. Cf. also Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 232.

⁷⁹ Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 237.

tradition.⁸⁰ Such 'Philomarianite' and Montanite doctrines seem to have greatly influenced the beginnings of Islam,⁸¹ possibly by way of a Manichaean intermediate, where we encounter a trinity, consisting of a Father, a Mother of Life / the Living Spirit and the Original Man, corresponding to the ancient Syrian divine triad.⁸² This has also much to do with the fact that in Syriac the word for 'spirit', *rūḥā*, is a feminine noun. This is always the case in the works of the older authors—Aphrahat⁸³ and Saint Ephrem; only later this gender was sometimes altered into masculine when indicating the Holy Ghost and this precisely for religious reasons (just as happened with the Arabic word *rūḥ*). This theologically inspired grammatical correction is most certainly a reaction against gnostic tendencies, where such a female Spirit, often as part of a dualistic Syzygy, plays a central role in the creation myth, as for instance in the works of Bardaysan.⁸⁴

In the following sentence of Ibn Hišām, the subject of the verb is changed. Guillaume remarks: "By altering 'whom I will send to you from the Father' to 'whom God will send to you from the Lord' an impossible sentence results."⁸⁵ In the Pəšīttā-version of

⁸⁰ Rahmani, I. E. *Studia Syriaca*, 79, 102. Scharfe, 1909, cited by Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 260; Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 12.

⁸¹ See my art. "Les Collyridiennes. Le culte de la femme dans la tradition arabe ancienne." *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 15 (2001): 147–54, and Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 173–74.

⁸² Jonas, *Gnosis*, 121 n. 1, 302, 305–6, 310; Widengren, *Mani*, 53–54; Drijvers, H. J. W. *Bardaisan of Edessa*, 221. *Studia Semitica Neerlandica*, 6. Assen, 1966. (Important for the development of such gnostic ideas about Christ and Trinity may have been the image of the *pearl*, cf. Usener, H. "Die Perle, aus der Geschichte eines Bildes." In Harnack, A., e.a., edd. *Theologische Abhandlungen Carl von Weisäcker gewidmet*, 209–12. Freiburg, 1892; Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle*, 243.

⁸³ Pierre, *Aphraate*, 762 n. 35.

⁸⁴ Bousset, W. *Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, 71, 96, 330. *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des alten und neuen Testaments*, 10. Göttingen, 1907; Drijvers, *Bardaisan*, 145–46. See already the *Hymn of the Pearl*, Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle*, 320.

⁸⁵ Guillaume, "The Version of the Gospels," 294.

the New Testament, we have *haw de'nā māsaddar 'nā ləkūn men ləwāt ābi*. The Old Syriac however reads: *damšaddarnā ləkūn men ləwāt ābi*, which could easily have been misread and misinterpreted as: “send to you from my Father”, the more so as it could have been contaminated with Jn. 14: 26, where it is said: “the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name”.⁸⁶ What Ibn Hišām's version is aiming at is once more as clear as it can be: the Spirit mysteriously comes from the Lord and after having inspired Jesus, it is now transmitted to the apostles, in order to inhabit them and to inspire their words.

That the role of the Spirit is different from the common, ‘received’ interpretation of the function of the Paraclete according to orthodox Christianity, is proven beyond any doubt by the rendering of the title “the Spirit of Truth” (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας), not as *Rūḥ al-quds*, as in the printed edition that we have reproduced, but as *Rūḥ al-qist*, which is the form of the text according to the majority of the manuscripts and the reading that has been retained by Wüstenfeld in his classical edition.⁸⁷ The meaning of the name would therefore be according to Ibn Hišām: “the Spirit of rightness, of justice”.⁸⁸ This is once more in accordance to the Syro-Palestinian version; the text of Jn. 15: 26 is missing in the lectionary, but in Jn. 14: 17 we read: *Rūḥā dəqūštā*.⁸⁹ The Paraclete is therefore interpreted in order to become a Spirit of Truth, appearing in the Qumranic texts as the *Prince of the good Forces of Light*, who has to combat with the righteous against the Forces of Evil.⁹⁰ A similar dualistic couple of spirits of Truth and Falsehood is, under Persian influence, already present in *Test. Juda* 20, as Mowinckel has indicated many years ago.⁹¹ In the Qumranic presentation, this principle of Light and Truth should equally penetrate the worship-

⁸⁶ Sasse, “Der Paraklet,” 265. Another, equally possible explanation is given by Baumstark, “Eine altarabische Evangelienübersetzung,” 207. The result is the same.

⁸⁷ Wüstenfeld, *Das Leben Mubammed's*, 1: 150, 2: 48.

⁸⁸ Guillaume, “The Version of the Gospels,” 293.

⁸⁹ Smith Lewis, *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionaria*, 51.

⁹⁰ Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 148, 151, 221–22; Hurtado, “Monotheism,” 7.

⁹¹ Mowinckel, “Die Vorstellungen,” 98, 116–17.

pers and inhabit their hearts.⁹² Therefore it becomes more and more clear that the Islamic concept of the Spirit, identified with the Prophetic principle, ultimately stems from late pre-Christian Judaism, where the angelic Spirit of Truth was already getting combined with the spirit that God is implanting in each of his prophets successively.⁹³ Similarly, according to Betz, the double nature of the Paraclete would be a clear indication for the fact that “der johan-neische Paraklet sei nach dem Bilde des spätjüdischen Fürbitters Michael geschaffen und dann mit dem «Geist der Wahrheit» gleich-gesetzt worden.”⁹⁴

Let us now turn once again to the Quranic text, cited at the outset of our inquiry. It appears, as is so often the case in the Quran,⁹⁵ to be a kind of a commentary, in the manner of a Jewish *midrash*, of the Gospel-text from Jn. 15: 25–26. Thus the phrase: “*in order to confirm what was before me from the Torah*” (*muṣaddiq^{an} limā bayna yadayya minā t-Tawrātⁱⁿ*), can only be a paraphrase of the words of Jesus according to the Gospel: “*the word might be fulfilled that is written in their Law*”—according to the Arabic *Diatessaron*: *litutamma l-kalimatu l-maktūbatu fī Nāmūsihim* (Gr.: ἵνα πληρωθῇ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτῶν γεγραμμένος).

The Quran continues: “*and to announce the message that shall bring the messenger who is to come after me and whose name is Aḥmad*”—a proposition that seems to paraphrase: “*the Comforter (...) the Spirit of truth (...) he shall testify of me*.” This role of the *muṣaddiq* that Jesus is playing in the Quranic prophecy, is most similar to the status of the Prophet Muḥammad⁹⁶ as the ‘Seal of the Prophets’, the σφραγίς

⁹² 1QS 3; 1QM 13 and 17; Cross, *Ancient Library*, 112, 114; Brown, “The Paraclete,” 121–22; Idem., *The Gospel according to John*, 699, 1138–39.

⁹³ Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 146; Brown, “The Paraclete,” 123.

⁹⁴ Betz, *Der Paraklet*, 159.

⁹⁵ See my art. “Le Coran et ses scribes.” *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 19 (2006): 76–77, 80, and “La zandaqa,” 70–71.

⁹⁶ Cf. Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 84: “...daß dieses Selbstverständnis des Propheten Muhammad lit dem Selbstverständnis Jesu Christi wesensgleich ist”.

or τέλος νόμου that was equally appearing already in Manichaeism,⁹⁷ referring to his role at the end of time.⁹⁸

SYRIAC DEVELOPMENTS: THE SPIRITUAL ASCENDANCE OF THE SOUL OF THE *ELECTI*

From the preceding analysis, we would like to conclude that it would be too easy to state that the Quranic and Islamic presentation of the Paraclete is simply a heretical one, derived from some dualistic, Marcionite, Manichaean or Montanite tradition. Rather there was a tendency, represented not only by these heterodox movements, but equally well attested among a great number of Syriac authors, of whom many are generally listed as orthodox. They all displayed a kind of angelology and prophetology close to a form of ‘Angel Christology’, linked to a transmigrant principle of prophecy—the Paraclete—that eventually came to inhabit the Prophet Muḥammad.

We now intend to follow the trace of this kind of theology within the Syriac tradition, in order to show how it could almost inconspicuously influence Islamic doctrine.

One of the earliest representatives hereof, inaugurating the Syriac ascetic tradition, is James, more commonly known as Aphrahat ‘the Persian Sage’ who probably wrote at the beginning of the 4th Century.⁹⁹ Aphrahat describes a spiritual palace that somehow remind us about the bridal chamber of Light as appearing in the teachings of Bardaiṣan,¹⁰⁰ but this time without its he-

⁹⁷ Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies*, 64–65; Gil, “The Creed of Abū ‘Āmir,” 38; Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l’Orient ancien*, 412; Tardieu, *Manichéisme*, 20. Cf. the notion of the τέλειοι in the Gospel of John: Windisch, “Die fünf johanneischen Parakletsprüche,” 120.

⁹⁸ See my art. “La zandaqa,” 70.

⁹⁹ Pierre, *Aphraate*, 33–35; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 41; Van Vossel, V. “L’amour de Dieu chez Aphraate et dans le *Livre des Degrés*.” In *Dieu Miséricorde, Dieu Amour. Actes du colloque VIII, Patrimoine Syriaque*, vol. 1, 123–24. Antélias: CERO, 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Drijvers, *Bardaiṣan*, 151.

retical characteristics. It is this temple that the Spirit of Christ would come to inhabit.¹⁰¹

According to Aphrahat, the divine Spirit is to be equalled to the 'Spirit of Christ,'¹⁰² who is the paroxysm of the spirit of prophecy that was inspiring all the Biblical messengers of God.¹⁰³ Christ is therefore to be identified to this Old Testament prophetic principle ("mit dem in der alttestamentlichen Geschichte latent wirksamen Segenserbe"): a parcel of the divine Spirit that is living within Him, just as it does in each prophet¹⁰⁴ and acting as a mediator of this Spirit to mankind. What is more, such a spiritual component from divine origin, called *rūhā*, is animating every human being. It is precisely this spiritual part of man that has to be delivered, revived through baptism and, even more importantly, through ascetism and penitence, and consequently through the bestowal of pardon to the souls of the faithful by the divine Mediator, Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁵ Remarkably Aphrahat calls Christ a 'stone' or 'rock' (*so'a* and *kepa*)¹⁰⁶, a title that in the Gospel is only applied by Jesus to St. Peter. This would suggest that the divine prophetic principle that lived in Jesus went over subsequently into Peter—Islamic tradition would add: who is acting afterwards as his *waṣī*. Basing ourselves on this specific pneumatology of Aphrahat, we would argue that the old Iranian Syriac concept about the Spirit,¹⁰⁷ still close to the teachings of Tatian,¹⁰⁸ has set the basic presuppositions for what later will become Muslim prophetology, linked to the concept of the *waṣī*, the divine principle that is transmitted from one prophet to another and that is to be identified with the Paraclete who eventually came to inhabit the Prophet Muḥammad, at the end

¹⁰¹ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.* 1: 2–3, Pierre, *Aphraate*, 208–10; Van Vossel, "L'amour de Dieu," 125.

¹⁰² Aphrahat, *Demonstr.* 1:3; 6:1, 13–14, 18; Pierre, *Aphraate*, 166.

¹⁰³ Pierre, *Aphraate*, 165; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 58.

¹⁰⁴ Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 58, 68.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 67–69.

¹⁰⁶ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.* 1: 2–7, Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 81–84.

¹⁰⁷ Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 59: "Die 'Inkarnationsvorstellungen' Aphrahats sind ganz vom frühsyrisch-iranischen Bekleideschema geprägt".

¹⁰⁸ Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 59, 67.

of time.¹⁰⁹ It seems that Aphrahat's presentation of this concept of prophetology is also indebted to the gnostic tradition of the aforementioned Song of the Pearl.¹¹⁰

Aphrahat's most clear exposition about the role of the Spirit is to be found in his sixth treatise, about (and addressed to) the "steady members of the community" (*bəṇay qəyāmā*). The name is impossible to render in English¹¹¹; it seems to indicate a group of men who behave entirely according to the prescriptions of purity, as living solitary or in community. In any case they were celibatarians, without necessarily having been ordained as a priest.¹¹² This community of pure living men is therefore very similar to that of the Essenes or to the *electi* of certain gnostic sects. Literally, they are those who are standing 'upright',¹¹³ who are so to speak resurrected in advance: saved because of their ascetic way of life, purified and perfect before the Lord. The concept is certainly to be linked to some extreme kinds of ascetism, such as that of the stylites, where the idea of the *στάσις* or *qəyāmā* also played a central role.¹¹⁴

Of this purity, Christ is offering the most perfect example.¹¹⁵ Citing from an apocryphal Letter to the Corinthians, Aphrahat states that, even if God has given part of the Spirit of Christ to every Prophet, He gave it to Christ himself without any measure.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 109; Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," 38.

¹¹⁰ Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 58, cf. Poirier, *L'Hymne de la Perle*, 320, 427.

¹¹¹ K. Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat, Demonstrations*, 121. Mōrān 'Eth'ō, 23—SEERI. Kottayam, 2005, translates: "The Sons of the Covenant".

¹¹² Vööbus, A. *History of Ascetism in the Syriac Orient. A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, vol 1. *The Origin of Ascetism. Early Monasticism in Persia*, 184–86. CSCO, 184, Subs. 14. Louvain, 1958; Pierre, *Aphraate*, 99–101.

¹¹³ Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat*, 12.

¹¹⁴ See my art. "Syméon stylite l'ancien. Le Saint qui s'est fait colonne." *Acta Orientalia Belgica* 10 (1995): 118 (+ n. 94), 126–27.

¹¹⁵ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 9.

¹¹⁶ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 12, referring to 3 Cor. 3:10 and Jn. 3:34, Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat*, 149–50 + n. 105; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 202.

This same Spirit of Christ, that has inspired every prophet of the Bible, is still bestowed on all the members of his pious community, all having a share in His grace, while they are prophesying in the church of every time.¹¹⁷ Aphrahat is clearly developing here a form of prophetology which is similar, not only to that of the Montanist movement, but to that of Islam too; apparently it must have been a widespread doctrine in the Syriac church.

Thus the Spirit comes to dwell in the faithful, following baptism, so that they become a living temple for Him.¹¹⁸ Yet, this Spirit is a wandering spirit, wandering about from prophet to prophet and from century to century during all ages—an idea that seems to go back to Philo of Alexandria.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the Spirit is standing before the face of God the Father, just as do the angels according to what is said in the Gospel: “in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven”.¹²⁰ Aphrahat interprets this in such a way, that the Spirit who is inspiring the prophets, is reflecting the divine presence (His face) to the world, thus revealing his message to his people.

Aphrahat's soteriology is clearly displaying some similar gnostic, dualistic aspects. The final goal of Deliverance is the liberation and recovery of the Spirit from its earthly bindings. Human beings should free themselves of the attachment of their souls to the body. In order to achieve this reestablishment of the original perfect man preceding the fall of Adam, the pious has to become totally spiritual again, by the infusion of the holy Spirit who has been animating Christ from his baptism onwards.¹²¹ Thus the ultimate salvation is the result of a struggle of the forces of evil in our material world with the Spirit of God, who is coming to live in every spiritual, holy man. After death, the divine principle, the *rūḥā*

¹¹⁷ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 12; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 396; Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat*, 150.

¹¹⁸ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 14 (referring to Lev. 21:12 and Ezech. 36:12); Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 399; Valavanolickal, *Aphrahat*, 152.

¹¹⁹ Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 15; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 403, referring to Philo Alex., *De gigant.* 47–48, cf. Wolfson, *Philo* 2: 33–34.

¹²⁰ Mt. 18: 10, Aphrahat, *Demonstr.*, 6: 15.

¹²¹ Pierre, *Aphraate*, 175–76, 184–85; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 59, 68.

napšânâytâ, that is animating every human being has to free itself from its corporeal bindings and to rejoin its origin in heaven.¹²²

Aphrahat's concept about the role of the Spirit of Christ has been further expanded by a series of texts following his footsteps. One of those is the *Liber Graduum*, an ascetic work, dating probably from the 4th C.¹²³ In the mind of its learned editor Kmosko, it would have had a Messalian background,¹²⁴ a thesis that has been refuted since. Even if many typical Messalian positions are largely absent from the *Liber Graduum* (that is therefore generally considered 'orthodox'¹²⁵), it nevertheless contains a number of concepts that do not need to be necessarily Messalian, but at least recall some of its basic characteristics. It has therefore been ascribed to a more 'refined' form of Messalianism and to a kind of dualism that is equally close to Manichaeism.¹²⁶ To be sure, gnostic, dualist and Judaeo-Christian tendencies must have been widely spread in Syria at the time of its redaction.¹²⁷

The *Liber Graduum* shows the path one has to follow in order to imitate Christ. Here, the Paraclete comes into the picture: only Christ is totally fulfilled with the Paraclete. He was holy, just as the angels and the celestial beings are.¹²⁸ In consequence, man has to acquire this state of fulfilment too.¹²⁹

Now the *Liber Graduum* distinguishes two phases in the acquisition of the Paraclete, as has been perspicaciously demonstrated by Guillaumont. They correspond, so it seems, to the distinction between *Spirit* and *Paraclete*, as a *donum superadditum*, according to the Syriac interpretation. The first phase is derived from the Pauline

¹²² Pierre, *Aphraate*, 191–97; Bruns, *Aphrahat*, 68–69.

¹²³ Van Vessel, "L'amour de Dieu," 131.

¹²⁴ Kmosko, M. *Liber Graduum*, CXLIV. *Patrologia Syriaca* 1.3. Paris, 1926.

¹²⁵ Vööbus, *History of Ascetism*, 180–82.

¹²⁶ Rahner, H. "Messalianismus." In *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 7, 319. Freiburg, 1962.

¹²⁷ Van Vessel, "L'amour de Dieu," 132.

¹²⁸ Kmosko, *Liber Graduum* 15:2, p. 337; Van Vessel, "L'amour de Dieu," 134.

¹²⁹ Kmosko, *Liber Graduum* 3:12, p. 69.

concept of the *earnest of the Spirit* (ἀρραβὼν τοῦ πνεύματος—Pəš.: *rahbūnā dərūḥel*).¹³⁰ When receiving this earnest of the Spirit, man is attaining a first step in his purification. There are indeed, so the *Liber Graduum* explicitly states, two kinds of believers: to the first, divine grace is only partially imparted, as a minor portion of benediction (*mənātā ʔə'ūrā*), whereas the second kind has been given the fulness of grace (*mawḥātā rahā*). Only this second phase is called the 'Spirit Paraclete' (*rūḥā paraqlītā*) in the proper sense:¹³¹ only then the Lord Jesus Christ comes to inhabit his devoted servant.¹³² Obviously the *Liber Graduum* distinguishes between the ordinary members of the community, who merely possess the *earnest of the Spirit*, and the perfect ones, who like the *electi* of Manichaeism are respecting all divine commandments and are disposing of the plenitude of the revelation and grace.¹³³

Behind all this—just as there are also many Platonic elements, for example, in the related cosmology of Bardaysan, and much more than one would think at first sight, as I have demonstrated elsewhere¹³⁴—are some Platonic and neo-Platonic speculations, of which Clement of Alexandria offers the most clear and complete exposition.¹³⁵ According to Clement the (seven) Angels or Archangels are forming a group of subaltern Hypostases, a hierarchy through whom Revelation is gradually descended, reflected and transmitted to mankind. The Paraclete is in the mind of Clement another entity by whom and through whom the Logos is acting;¹³⁶

¹³⁰ 2 Cor. 1:22 and 5:5; Guillaumont, A. "Les « Arrhes de l'Esprit » dans le Livre des Degrés." In Graffin, F., ed. *Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khouri-Sarkis*, 108–9. Louvain, 1969. For the word *earnest*, the *Liber Graduum* uses *'urbānā* (Guillaumont, *ibid.*, 108: "Le terme paraît donc se trouver [...] uniquement dans le *Livre des Degrés*."

¹³¹ Kmosko, *Liber Graduum* 3:12, p. 72.

¹³² Van Vessel, "L'amour de Dieu," 137.

¹³³ Guillaumont, "Les « Arrhes de l'Esprit »," 110–12.

¹³⁴ "La cosmologie de Bardaysan." *Actes du 9e Symposium Syriacum, Parole de l'Orient* 31 (2006): 133–44.

¹³⁵ Bucur, "Revisiting Christian Oeyen," 391, 395, is referring to Numenius and to Plotinus.

¹³⁶ Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 202, cf. Wolfson, *Philo* 2:32.

He is therefore described as a kind of δύναμις, who is transforming the souls of the faithful in order to become perfect before God.¹³⁷ This Paraclete is like the sum of all these Angels or Hypostases, each time appearing in the form of one of them; He is “the dynamic aspect of the Logos” that “manifests itself in the work of the angelic spirits”¹³⁸, who are the working agents of God.¹³⁹ Revelation is operated by these angelic spirits, who are communicating its content to each other, until it reaches the angel that is most close to the prophet he is to inspire.

One should remark that Revelation is presented here in a typical Middle or Neo-Platonic form, already present in the prophethology of Philo of Alexandria¹⁴⁰ and further developed here by Clement in the sense of an impulse that is moving each level of the celestial world, animated by his particular angel, thus communicating the divine δύναμις or ἐνέργεια from one level to the other, until the prophet receives his part of the divine energy from the angel that has been immediately assigned to him.¹⁴¹ The Paraclete is in the mind of Clement the agent who is bringing about the theophany, who can become apparent in different forms, as a “plural entity”,¹⁴² but of whom Jesus Christ, the Logos of God, has been the most clear and full manifestation.

Again and again we have the same canvas of ideas: a divine, angelic spirit, called Paraclete of Logos, who is descending to inhabit and inspire ever and ever again the prophet of his generation. He is the prophet’s spirit, who is using the humane aspect of every singular prophet as his instrument, in order to transmit the word of God. In that sense, the prophet is to be understood as a theophanic figure, as an embodiment of a divine spirit or angel.

¹³⁷ Clem., *Strom.* 7: 2, 9; Bucur, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen,” 388–89.

¹³⁸ Bucur, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen,” 390, 404–5.

¹³⁹ Barbel, *Christos Angelos*, 203.

¹⁴⁰ Wolfson, *Philo* 2:32.

¹⁴¹ Bucur, “Revisiting Christian Oeyen,” 400–2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 412.

«YOU HAVE BEEN ELECTED!»

According to tradition, the Prophet Muḥammad died, lying on 'Ā'īša's bosom. His last words to her, when she became more and more worried about his worsening condition, but nevertheless still hoping for a recovery, were denying her last hope: "No, rather the higher company of Paradise!"—*bal, ar-rafiq al-'a'lā minā l-ḡanna*.¹⁴³ As has been shown by Hans Wehr, this is most evidently an allusion to the *al-malā' al-'a'lā* of S 37: 8 and 38: 69. We would therefore agree with Lüling's conclusion: "Des Propheten urchristlich empfunder Wunsch bestand also darin, in den hohen Rat der Erzengel und Propheten und also auch in die Gesellschaft des Christus Angelus abberufen zu werden."¹⁴⁴ It was only to be followed by a final acquiescent answer of 'Ā'īša: "You have been an elected one (*ḥnyyirta*)¹⁴⁵ and you are chosen by the One that sent you with the Truth!" In other words: Muḥammad has been in the strict sense (according to Gil's understanding of the term) a *ḥanīf*, that is to say one of the *electi*¹⁴⁶ and so he has been entrusted with the fullness of the divine message, as possessing the entire prophetic Spirit, the 'Spirit Paraclete' as Aphrahat would have said. For such a most high angel, incarnated in a particular prophet living on earth and called *Muḥammad*, the name of «*Aḥmad*» (as an elative form, referring to his supernatural, celestial status¹⁴⁷) could only be an ominous title of honour.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Muṣṭafā as-saqā (e.a., edd.), *Sīrat an-Nabī* 2, 655.

¹⁴⁴ Wehr, H. "Muhammed's letzte Worte." *WZKM* 51 (1952): 283–86; Lüling, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten*, 80.

¹⁴⁵ For this concept of *ḥyr*, compare Luxenberg, C. *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran. Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, 286. Berlin, 2004: *electus*!

¹⁴⁶ Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," 43.

¹⁴⁷ Urvoy, "Annonce de Mahomet," 55.

¹⁴⁸ Thus far I would agree with Luxenberg, C. "Neudeutung der arabischen Inschrift im Felsendom zu Jerusalem." In Ohlig, K.-H., and G.-R. Puin, eds. *Die dunkle Anfänge. Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, 129–30. Berlin, 2005: the name *Muḥammad* may very well be a title, given to the Prophet by his already *ḥanāfi* family, pointing to a prophetic function, similar to that of the 'first' Paraclete Jesus,

Indeed, this title already existed. It is but an altered form of the Persian *Manūhmēd* / *Manvabmēd*, a Manichaean variant of the old Zoroastrian *Vahman* or *Vohu Manah*:¹⁴⁹ the *Intellect* or *Living Spirit* who is incarnating himself in an everlasting prophetic succession.¹⁵⁰ The *Manūhmēd* is the soul of the Paraclete. With a certain reserve, so far as the concepts of the *electi* and the Paraclete are not particular to Manichaeism only, but were widespread categories in Syriac, gnosticizing (Judaean-Christian, Montanite, Messalian, Bardaysanite) Christianity in general, we may eagerly subscribe to Gil's thesis "that Islam's first appearance was a non-conformist off-shoot of Manichaeism".¹⁵¹

without saying however that the Prophet Muḥammad would be an entirely fictitious, invented personality. There is no doubt in my mind, indeed, that he has been an actual living, historical person. All the elaborations in that sense, such as those of Ohlig, K.-H. "Vom muhammad Jesus zum Propheten der Araber. Die Historisierung eines christologischen Prädikats." In Idem, ed. *Der frühe Islam. Eine historisch-kritische Rekonstruktion anhand zeitgenössischer Quellen*, 327–76. Berlin, 2007, are to be totally rejected: they are not a "historisch-kritische Rekonstruktion", but unfortunately only a mere *construction* of historical phantasy. It is to be deplored that Luxenberg has been led astray by all this.

¹⁴⁹ Widengren, G. *The great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God: Studies in Iranian and Manichaean Religion*, Uppsala, 1945; Idem, *Die Religionen Irans*, 12, 79–80.

¹⁵⁰ Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, 306; Havenith, A. *Les Arabes chrétiens nomades au temps de Mohammed*, 95. Collection Cerfaux-Lefort. Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988; Simon, R. "Mānī and Muḥammad." *JSAI* 21 (1997): 134; Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l'Orient ancien*, 413–14; Tardieu, *Manichéisme*, 20; De Blois, F. "Elchasai—Manes—Muḥammad. Manichäismus und Islam in religionshistorischem Vergleich." *Der Islam* 81 (2004): 45–46 and my art. "La zandaqa," 69.

¹⁵¹ Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," 22.