

Does Jesus announce Muhammad in the Koran?

Surah *AS-Saff* (the rank, battle array) verse 6 / Q. 61:6

Following the Islamic logic of « successive revelations », according to which the Christian religion came to supplant the Hebrew one, and Islam came to replace both, it would seem appropriate that Jesus announced the Messenger of the third and ultimate religion, whose name is Muhammad. There is only one problem: in the Gospel, except for the *false* prophets who are expected to rise after him, Jesus does not announce anyone resembling Muhammad.

Making the Paraclete coincide with Muhammad

Yet, it is expected that Jesus must have done so. And behold, in Chapter 14 of Saint John's gospel, Jesus announces a *Paraclete* who is to come. This *Paraclete* then must have something to do with Muhammad in one way or another; and the Koranic text must be saying that Jesus announced something related to both that *Paraclete* and Islam's « Prophet ». This is what is happening in the middle of verse 6 of surah 61, which reads:

“When Jesus, the son of Mary, said: *O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of God to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad.*

But when he came to them with clear signs, they said: *This is obvious sorcery.*” (Q. 61:6).

Ahmad obviously is a surrogate for *Muhammad*, in a sentence that thus seems less unlikely than if Jesus was coldly said to have announced Muhammad. One just has to say that the *Paraclete* coincides with *Ahmad*.

In the Greek version of John's gospel, the word *Paraklètos*, meaning *he who speaks for another*, designates an advocate intervening on behalf of his client during a trial. This legal term entered the Aramaic language in the form of *Paraqlita* with a slightly altered meaning, as the Parthian and Semitic world was governed by norms different than that of the Greco-Roman ones: then, people testifying in person presented their own case in court, but could be assisted discreetly by someone who would *whisper* in his ears what had to be said. This role of *Paraqlita-whisperer* is perceptible in the Johannine Gospel [1], but offers no possible approximation with Muhammad.

But we could almost forget the vivid imagination of the Arabic speaking apologists in the service of the Caliphs. Transcribed in the Arabic fashion (leaving out vowels), the Greek word *paraklètos* becomes *brklts* (read: *biriklutos*), and is the rough written equivalent of another Greek-turned-Arabic term: *périklutos*, whose meaning is *renowned*, therefore *praised*. If *muhammad* could somehow be made to signify « *he who is praised* » (or: « *in whom praise is given* »), within the strict parameters of Arabic apologetics (based on a false reading), one could say that Jesus announced *Ahmad*, the *praised one*, in other words the « Prophet of Islam ». All the authors had to do was to give the root « *hmd* » the meaning of *praising*.

1 The Johannine passages in which the role of the *Paraclete* is mentioned are:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate ⁸ to be with you always, the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:16-17a).

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning” (Jn 15:26-27).

“But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming” (Jn 16:13).

In the Bible and in Aramaic (as well as in the Koran read in its co-text), « *hmd* » means *to desire* (and, in the passive voice, the root actually means: *to please*). To say *praise*, there exist several other roots in Arabic (*atna*, *madaha* and mostly *sabaha* [2]). However, the authorities imposed a shift on the meaning of the word, from *be desired* to *be praised*. Now Muhammad-ahmad fits the *périkultos-paraklétos-paraclete*, and there you are! [3].

Making Jesus announce Ahmad in the Koran

Of course, the trick can only function in Arabic: this is what we call an « internal apologetic device », destined to a Muslim Arabic public. The final step has the same public in mind: if the Gospel according to Saint John announced Muhammad, and if the Koran is divinely inspired, the latter then has to confirm what the Gospel is supposed to mean: somewhere in the Koran, Jesus must necessarily announce Muhammad (or its equivalent Ahmad). Where does this find a place?

A proof of the hesitations felt by the craftsmen of the Koran is furnished by the Ubayy Ibn Ka'ab version. Although none of its manuscript copies managed to escape the systematic destructions of the 7th and 8th Centuries documents ordered by the Islamic authorities, we know how it rendered verse 6 of surah 61, thanks to surviving quotations of that earlier version – that's the one that interests us. Let us compare the verse according to the **usual Koran** (in green) with that of the **Ubayy version** (in red), while the **common text to both versions** will be highlighted in blue:

When Jesus, the son of Mary, said: "O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God to you,

confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." But when he came to them with clear signs,

And I announce to you a prophet (*nabiy*) whose *community (umma)* will be the last community and by which God will put a seal on prophets (*nabiyûn*) and messengers (*rusul*)",

they said: this is obvious sorcery!

It is plain that, according to the Koran of Ubbay, instead of Ahmad, Jesus announces a prophet and a future community; he also affirms that a « seal » will be given to « prophets and messengers », something we find again in verse 40 of surah 33 (common version) [4]. As a matter of fact, neither version of verse 61:6 is more authentic than the other: originally, the verse probably consisted in this one sentence (which fits the co-text perfectly):

"When Jesus, the son of Mary, said: O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God to you, they said: this is obvious sorcery!" (Q. 61:6).

2 Some verses (s.13:13; 17:44; 25:58) even use both roots « *hmd* » and « *sbh* »; they obviously must have a quite different meaning.

3 Cf. KHALIL Samir and collaborators, *Actes du 3e Congrès international d'études arabes chrétiennes*, collection *Paroles de l'Orient* vol. XVI, Kaslik, Lebanon, 1990-1991, p.311-326 ; GALLET Edouard-M., *Le messie et son prophète*, Versailles, éditions de Paris, vol. II, 3.1.6.2 – 3.1.6.4 (= p.141-153 éd. 2005).

4 This verse itself is suspect. It forms a sort of interlude between the two parts that compose surah 33 *Al-ahzāb*, the first part going up to verse 39 (clearly a final verse), the second one comprising the last 33 verses. Verse 40 starts abruptly with the name of the « Prophet »: "Muhammad has never been the father of one of your men, but the messenger of God and the seal of the prophets. God is Omniscient" (s.33:40). To understand the underlying ideological construct, please refer to *Le messie et son prophète*, vol. II, 3.1.6.3.3 (= p.149-150 éd. 2005).

Frank van der Velden's objection ^[5]

Frank van der Velden objected that, thus shortened, verse 6 would be too short in comparison with verse 5, which presents a kind of parallel:

“When Moses said to his people: *O my people, why do you harm me while you certainly know that I am the messenger of God to you?* And when they deviated, God caused their hearts to deviate. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people” (Q. 61:5).

We can observe that this verse also is short and the one before it even shorter:

“Indeed, God loves those who *go so far as to kill (qâatala)* in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly” (Q. 61:4).

This said, it is reasonable to assume that the two versions of the middle part of verse 6 mentioned above came to replace a development around a theme that the Koran had banned: the (material) return of the Messiah Jesus. On a hypothetical basis, the original middle part may be reconstituted with the help of some elements of the co-text:

“When Jesus, the son of Mary, said: *O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of God to you, and I am justified according to the Torah [which is] in your hands ^[6] [and] which announced me as the Messiah by whom God will subject the earth*”.
But a portion of them did not believe (*kafara* ^[7]), and
they said: *this is obvious sorcery!*” (Q. 61:6).

The objection crumbles.

In conclusion:

Once reconstituted according to its short version or with a middle part, verse Q. 61:6 presents plain coherence again with the co-text, and we clearly see how the legend based logic propping up Islamic theology crept into modify this verse.

It can therefore be asserted that the presence of a promise of Ahmad-Muhammad made by Jesus in the Koranic text displays all the characteristics of an interpolation.

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⁵ van der VELDEN Frank, *Kotexte im Konvergenzstrang – die Bedeutung textkritischer Varianten und christlicher Bezugstexte für die Redaktion von Sure 61 und Sure 5:120-119*, in *Oriens Christianus*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, # 92, year 2008, p.137-138.

⁶ The expression “*musadd•qan lima bayna yada –*” is read with the verb in the active voice (“*musaddiqan*”) since, according to Islamic theology, the future « prophet » is expected to « confirm » what was revealed before him. However, common sense would dictate the opposite: the one who is coming needs to be « **justified** by virtue of what is in the hand of –» (“*musaddaqan*” etc. – literally), i.e. what is *already* revealed: the difference lies in one vowel – *a* instead of *i* –, and it is a known fact that vowelization of the Koran happened at a much later date. Cf. SFAR Mondher, *Le Coran est-il authentique ?*, Paris, 2000, p.19 ; *Le messie et...*, vol. II, annex D.3.1 and 3.2 (= p. 463-472 éd. 2005).

⁷ The translation of *kafara* by *reject* or by *deny* – cf. Q. 61:14 ; 2:39-41 ; etc. – does not allow the reader to perceive the original and determining meaning of *cover up* (or *cover* [a fault] if the verb displays the intensive form). On this subject, please refer to the study on [the occurrences of the root kfr in the Koran and in the Bible](#).