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**L'EUROPA NEL TIMORE  
DELLA MINACCIA  
DEL TERRORISMO FONDAMENTALISTA  
E IL VALORE DELLA PERSONA  
E LA LIBERTÀ RELIGIOSA**

***EUROPE IN FEAR OF THE THREAT  
FROM FUNDAMENTALIST TERRORISM,  
AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN PERSON  
AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM***

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EDIZIONI DEHONIANE BOLOGNA

# The Proclamation of Jesus Christ as a Response to the Threat both of Fundamentalism and Terrorism

## 1. Social and Philosophical Background

The main question that will concern us in this paper is whether the Islamic monotheism, which rejects the Word and Spirit of God according to the Christian dogma about God, can lead to fanaticism, fundamentalism, bigotry and extreme forms of terrorism given that the majority of persons engaged in terrorist attacks are members of Islam. This question is coming under heavy scrutiny after the numerous terrorist attacks in France, in Germany, in Turkey, in the United States etc. To give an answer to this question we must compare the dogma of God in Christianity and that of God in Islam.

In most of the cases of dialogue between Christianity and Islam, given that the main goal was and remains the understanding between

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\* The Metropolitan of Constantia and Ammochostos Vasilios Karayiannis, born in Cyprus in 1948, did his theological studies in Athens and is Doctor of Theology of the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. The theme of his PhD was *Maxime le Confesseur. Essence et énergies de Dieu* (Theologie historique 93), Beauchesne, Paris 1993. He worked as Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis in Switzerland and as an associate at the Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Chambésy, Geneva. In 1991 he became head of Inter-Church Relations' Office of the Church of Cyprus and in 2004 he was appointed representative of the Church of Cyprus for European issues. He teaches Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian relations at the Priests Seminary of the Church of Cyprus and has published numerous articles and other writings. In 1996 he was elected by the Synod of the Church of Cyprus as Bishop of Trimithus and in 2007 as Metropolitan of Constantia and Ammochostos.

Christianity and Islam in a multicultural environment, and it could not be otherwise, there was always an effort to emphasize the common teaching between Christianity and Islam.<sup>1</sup> Historically, there are common teaching points in both faiths, like their relation to the Bible, the Old Testament and Judaism. The Koran, besides its influences from the Old Testament, has also many elements from the New Testament. Despite that, there is a different interpretation of biblical texts, including the teaching of God. Islamic monotheism is totally different from the monotheism of Christianity. Although it is more related to the monotheism of Judaism, Islamic monotheism is again different from Judaism.

Before we start a similar discussion, we will make a short reference to the sociological and religious state and construction of western societies, from which Muslims live in the Diaspora, in comparison to Muslim societies. We believe that, apart from the historic and religious backgrounds that are considered to be the reason for the polemic attitude of Islam against Christianity,<sup>2</sup> the social, economic, political and religious state of the Western societies, that create an unbridgeable gap, is also responsible for this clash between them.

Western societies went through different philosophical, social and religious changes. We will focus only on the basic philosophical principles that seem to play a significant role as far as it concerns the setup and construction of the societies. For that reason, we could divide it into *three long periods*, starting from the classic ancient Greek times until our modern era. The *first long period* starts with the Greek philosophers, namely with Aristotle, and is characterized by the interpretation of things and the knowledge which is based on logic. Every kind of knowledge has a logic. This results in the evolution of the meaning of word (λόγος) during the ancient Greek period. This philosophical position that made the West enthusiastic with Aristo-

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<sup>1</sup> «May, 2001, marked the tenth anniversary of the publication of “Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ”. Issued jointly by the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, its stated goal was the “further consideration” of dialogue and proclamation in the evangelizing mission of the Church» (M. PLAISS, «“Dialogue and Proclamation” a Decade Later: A Retreat?», in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* [Spring-Summer 2001], 189 [Questia library, on line]). Obviously, the results of this decade are not evident for the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>2</sup> For the historical and martial conflicts as well as the theological and social challenges between Islam and Christianity cf. J. JOHNS, «Christianity and Islam», in J. McMANNERS (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1990, 162-195 (Academia.edu, on line).

tle through the Arabic translations of his works, gave birth to the medieval scholasticism. The *second period*, which is characterized as *modern* and succeeds the classical ancient times, starts with the Enlightenment and states that each proposed knowledge must have the chance to show its correctness. Everything that is not proven in the lab is not true. The main declaration of modernism is the continuous progress connected with continuous change. The third contemporary period, for some scholars starts after the end of the Second World War and for others at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is characterized as the *postmodern era*. In relation to the «metaphysics» of Aristotle it abolishes every institution and knowledge because it considers that knowledge is related to authority. It is somehow «antiauthoritarian» and wants to offer freedom to everybody. The past is like a park that everybody can visit and the future is the extension of the present without any prediction. In this way, all social, political, religious, educational and other structures are abolished.<sup>3</sup> This situation must be compared with the strictly structured societies of the Muslim countries, where the religious law of the Koran is at the same time the law of the state. The principle of «obedience» imposed by the Koran, as a divine demand from the believers, excludes any kind of social reform or antiauthoritarian movement. If there was a separation of state authority from the law of the Koran, then the Muslim religion would be abolished. The setup of the modern Islamic State is based on the principle of equation of the state authority and the law of Koran.

In imitation of the «postmodern» philosophy, «post-patristic» theology was developed as an excess of the limits of patristic theology and creation of a free theology to serve for example the interreligious dialogue. The philosophical, social and religious changes lead to the so-called secularism not only of the societies but of the Churches too. The Protestant Reform put in doubt the ecclesiastical structure of the Church by abolishing the priesthood, the sacraments, the worship and many others. The main feature of *sola scriptura* shakes the foundations of the Church's tradition or even the Church itself as an «institution». For that reason, we have the birth of many, so called, «free» or «spiritual» movements. We don't want to identify *sola scriptura* with

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. D.J. LOSE, *Confessing Jesus Christ: Preaching in a Postmodern World*, W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 2003, 7-29 (Questia library, on line); JOHNS, «Christianity and Islam», 194-195.

the declaration of Islam regarding the *holy «Book»*. We just regard it as a similar and parallel phenomenon.

Along with these phenomena, the diaspora of different people with different cultures and religious beliefs led the people to a forced coexistence within these societies and received an education in a postmodern environment. This encounter in a multicultural postmodern environment caused mainly to the Muslims, who come from different cultures, different social structures and different religious beliefs, a strong shock. They perceived the whole structure of «Christian» western societies as non-religious and, according to their religion, all people are infidels. The final goal is the global dominance of Islam as the real religion.

Jeremy Johns claims that the East had historically a friendlier approach with Islam, in contrast with the hostile attitude of the West towards Islam.<sup>4</sup> We don't have to blame solely the western rearrangement of the sociological, religious and philosophical situations, but additionally, we must take into serious account the interaction of Islam with the modern and postmodern environment since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This interaction was confronted either in a positive way, by considering that it is possible to adopt elements of western modernism without damaging in any way the Islamic faith and culture, or in a negative way, by provoking Islamic fundamentalism.

## 2. Love *versus* Obedience

Saint John Damascene, one of the first proponents of dialogue between Christianity and Islam during the Byzantine period, who experienced also the tragic incidents of the conquest of the Holy Land and all the Middle East by the Muslims, refers to the difference of the dogma of God between them. He wrote two essays about Islam. a) The 100<sup>th</sup> chapter of his work *Concerning Heresy*<sup>5</sup> and b) the discourse of Saracen and Orthodox.<sup>6</sup> We will make a short comment on the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of his second work, which refers to the foundational dogma of God in Islam.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. JOHNS, «Christianity and Islam».

<sup>5</sup> JOHN OF DAMASCUS, *Heresy of the Ishmaelites*, in B. KOTTER (ed.), *Die Schriften Des Johannes Von Damaskos*, IV, New York 1981, 60-67.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 427-438.

We repeat at this point that Islam believes in the absolute monotheism. We are not interested from where it derives this faith in Islam. By simply reading the Koran, it is obvious that references from the Old and the New Testament and some Gnostic Apocrypha texts of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries have been used. For a Muslim, the Christian dogma concerning the Son of God is a scandal. There are three points where there is a different teaching and perception regarding the Word, both in Christianity and Islam. The first point refers to on how Jesus Christ is called in the New Testament and how he is called in the Koran. According to Saint John Damascene, in the Holy Scripture, Jesus Christ is «polynomial» such as wisdom, arm of the Lord or power of God. Therefore, Jesus Christ as the Word of God is not alien from the Holy Scripture. In the Koran, Jesus Christ is called the spirit or the word of God. The next question is whether the Spirit and the Word are created or uncreated, a question posed already by many Christian heresies during the second to the fourth centuries of Christian era. For Christians, there is no doubt that the Word and the Spirit are uncreated, since they have as their origin the substance and are not a result of an action of God. We remind you the struggles of the Church against heresies that were doubting the divinity of the Son and Word of God and the Holy Spirit. The existence of the three persons of the Trinity according to the Christian dogma and faith is rejected completely by Islam, since the existence of a Son or of a Holy Spirit in God cannot be accepted. The uniqueness of God in Islam excludes the possibility of existence of other persons, an «associate» or «associates» of God. Thus, the word and the spirit in God are not uncreated, but Christ, who is identified with the word and the spirit, is a prophet without any divine features. For these reasons, at the beginning of Islam's existence, it was not sure if it was a heresy or a religion. The third question, maybe the most serious and important one, either because it is not included in the sphere of the theological interests of Islam, or because it is an unanswerable argument, is whether the existence of God is possible without the Word (λόγος) and without the Spirit (πνεῦμα).<sup>7</sup> This question of Saint John Dama-

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<sup>7</sup> Ἐάν ἐρωτηθῆς ὑπὸ Σαρακηνοῦ λέγοντος· Τί λέγεις εἶναι τὸν Χριστόν· εἰπέ αὐτῷ· Λόγον θεοῦ, μηδὲν ἐν τούτῳ νομίζων ἀμαρτάνειν, ἐπεὶ καὶ λόγος λέγεται παρὰ τῆ γραφῆ καὶ σοφία καὶ βραχίων καὶ δύναμις θεοῦ καὶ ἄλλα πολλὰ τοιαῦτα· πολυώνυμος γάρ ἐστιν. Καὶ ἀντερότησον αὐτὸν καὶ σὺ λέγων· Τί λέγεται παρὰ τῆ γραφῆ σου ὁ Χριστός· Καὶ ἴσως θελήσει ἐρωτησαί σε ἐκεῖνος ἄλλο τι θέλων ἐκφυγεῖν σε· μὴ ἀποκριθῆς αὐτῷ, ἕως ἂν λύσῃ τὸ ἐρώτημά σου. Ανάγκη

scene, that the denial of the word and of the spirit of God, which, according to him, means the nonexistence of God and the absence of love and consequently this leads to the rise of fundamentalism and terrorism. It leads us also to a further investigation of the meaning and the uniqueness of God in Islam. Maximus the Confessor, who offered his argumentation to Saint John Damascene regarding the ontology of God, compares the ontology of God in Christianity with that of Hellenism, i.e. of paganism, and of Judaism. The first one is polytheism and the other one is monotheism. Saint Maximus states:

On the one hand, paganism proposes polyarchy where the one authority is assigned in different powers and actions and therefore it leads to the cult of many gods. [...] On the other hand, Judaism proposes one authority, but so narrow defined and incomplete that it is almost unsubstantial, since it is deprived of the Word and the Life (Spirit). Therefore, even with a different teaching, Judaism, like paganism, falls in atheism where it assigns the one authority to a single person who exists without the Word and the Spirit, or it is believed that has as features the Word and the Spirit without specifying which God is that who devoid of those, or how it is possible to differentiate from the structured logical beings when the Word and the Spirit exist.<sup>8</sup>

According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, the absence of Word and Spirit in God may lead on the one hand to put in doubt the ontology of an isolated God and on the other hand the impossibility of relations and his communion with the created beings.

Islam indeed confesses the uniqueness of God: «la ilaha illa Allah» – «There is no god but God».<sup>9</sup> This uniqueness of God, although

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πάσα ἀποκριθήσεται σοι λέγων· Παρά τῆ γραφῆ μου πνεῦμα καὶ λόγος θεοῦ λέγεται ὁ Χριστός. Καὶ τότε εἰπέ αὐτῷ σὺ πάλιν· Τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὁ λόγος παρὰ τῆ γραφῆ σου ἄκτιστα λέγονται ἢ κτιστά; Καὶ ἐὰν εἶπῃ, ὅτι ἄκτιστα, εἰπέ αὐτῷ· Ἰδοὺ ὁμοφωνεῖς μοι· καὶ γὰρ τὸ μὴ κτισθὲν ὑπὸ τινος, ἀλλὰ κτίζον θεὸς ἐστίν. Εἰ δὲ ὄλωσ τολμήσει εἰπεῖν, ὅτι κτιστά εἰσιν, εἰπέ αὐτῷ· Καὶ τίς ἐκτίσεν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ; Καὶ ἐὰν ἐξ ἀπορίας εἶπῃ, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ ἐκτίσεν, εἰπέ αὐτῷ· Πρό μικροῦ ἔλεγεσ, ἄκτιστα εἶναι, καὶ ἄρτίως λέγεισ, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς αὐτὰ ἐκτίσεν. Ἰδοὺ, εἰ ἔλεγον ἐγὼ πρὸς σε τοῦ λοιποῦ οὐ πιστεύω σοι, ὅσα ἂν εἶπῃς. Ὅμως οὖν καὶ τοῦτο ἐρωτῶ σε· Πρό τοῦ κτίσαι ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸν λόγον οὐκ εἶχεν πνεῦμα οὐδὲ λόγον; Καὶ φεῦξεταί ἀπὸ σοῦ μὴ ἔχον τι ἀποκριθῆναι σοι—αἱρετικοὶ γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι κατὰ Σαρακηνοῦσ καὶ πάνυ βδελυκτοὶ καὶ ἀπόβλητοι—καί, ἐὰν αὐτὸν θελήσῃς δημοσιεῦσαι τοῖσ λοιποῖσ Σαρακηνοῖσ, φοβηθήσεται σε πολὺ.

<sup>8</sup> MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *Commentary on the Our Father. A Brief Explanation of the Prayer Our Father to a Certain Friend of Christ*, in Id., *Selected Writings*, translation and notes by G.C. BERTHOLD, introduction by J. PELIKAN, Preface by I.-H. DALMAIS O.P., SPCK, London 1985, 110 (Questia library, on line).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. ARCHBISHOP OF TIRANA AND ALL ALBANIA ANASTASIOS, «Λατρευτική ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰσλάμ», in Πνευματικὴ Διακονία. Περιοδικὴ ἔκδοσις Ἱ. Μητροπόλεωσ Κωνσταντίας-Ἀμμοχώστου. Ἔτος 8(2015)22, 4-12.

it seems similar to the uniqueness of God in Judaism and Christianity, it differentiates to such extent that it cannot be compared with the uniqueness of God in both Christianity and Judaism. «And your God is one God! There is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful» (2<sup>nd</sup> Surah, 163). The difference can be found also on the meaning and on the qualities attributed to God. The basic characteristics, which can be attributed to the faith of God in Islam, can be summed up by the following main points: *a) The uniqueness of God.* This can be considered that God is transcendent in the Islamic faith, that the absolute power is transcendent. We would judge that God in the Koran is «tailored» with the historic situations and circumstances so he can adjust on the governance of the Muslim community. *b) Many qualities are attributed to God* such as beneficent, merciful, alive, self-sufficient, sustainer of existence, powerful, bearer of the power to reward, wise, he is the one who revealed the Torah, the Gospel and the Koran (Surah 3:1-10). *c) God does not have an «associate» or «associates».* His uniqueness is absolute. This statement goes against the Trinity in Christianity, where it is believed and confessed that «He is one in three and three in one».<sup>10</sup> *d) Even though it is rejected that the teaching of the Word of God as blasphemy against Allah,<sup>11</sup> the Koran itself takes the position of the Word,* since it came from God and revealed the will of Allah. *e) God, as powerful, knows and controls everything,* that's why he is the regulator of all the actions of humans through the Koranic law. Therefore, all societies believing in Allah are completely theocratic. Everything and anything that put in doubt the theocratic structure of these societies is considered as an unfaithful action and is punishable. *f) From the beginning until the end of the Koran, Allah separates people into *believers and infidels.*<sup>12</sup> It is more seen as a Manichean division between good*

<sup>10</sup> JOHNS, «Christianity and Islam», 179-180.

<sup>11</sup> Surah 5:72. «They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary" while the Messiah has said, "O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord". Indeed, he who associates others with Allah – Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers». 5:73. «They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three". And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment». 5:75. «The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded».

<sup>12</sup> Surah 5:51: «O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you – then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. So,

and bad. The good is for those who accept the teaching, who believe and obey blindly in Allah, and fight in any possible way against the bad who is identified with the infidels.<sup>13</sup> g) The rendering of God towards the believers, and the punishment of the infidels take place on earth in many ways but also during the «eschatological» judgment.<sup>14</sup> h) All the qualities attributed to God such as beneficent, merciful, alive, self-sufficient, sustainer of existence, powerful, bearer of the power to reward, wise, apply favorably to the believers, while for the infidels God is the avenger in order either to convert to Islam or to extinguish them since they deny to obey Allah and his messenger the prophet.<sup>15</sup> i) The believers must have an absolute and blind obedience to the orders and will of Allah. j) The promises of Allah towards believers for rewards include magical places with rivers and virgin women, with whom they will have a real marriage. These promises are found in the letter of Mohammed Atta, who was the pilot in one of the planes that crashed into the Twin Towers in 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, a death during a terrorist attack, which is considered to be a war against the infidels, does not count as a death, but is a justification of faith before Allah. k) The Koran mentions often the two religions with the Book that was given by God; Old Testament for Judaism and New Testament for Christianity. The basic declaration of Islam is that Islam preceded Judaism and Christianity as far as it concerns the revelation of the unique God.

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you see those in whose hearts is disease hastening into [association with] them, saying, "We are afraid a misfortune may strike us". But perhaps Allah will bring conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become, over what they have been concealing within themselves, regretful».

<sup>13</sup> The science of religion place this specific question as the confrontation between the sacred and the profane. «L'opposition du sacré au profane trouve ici sa place, mais comme un moment dérivé et subordonné» (W. PANNENBERG, *Théologie systématique*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2008, 184).

<sup>14</sup> Most probably, this division between the believers and the infidels as well as the mission of Mohammed as messenger of Allah, repeats the motive of Prophet Isaiah, according to which the prophet is been sent to the people of God who abandoned His commandments and call them for repentance (cf. Is 6:8-13). This text is considered as messianic, and for this reason is repeated by Jesus Christ as response to his disciples to their question for the meaning of the parables (cf. Mk 4:10-20).

<sup>15</sup> «The God of primitive religion is the nameless one who is all-present» (PANNENBERG, *Théologie systématique*, 190).

<sup>16</sup> «You should feel complete tranquility, because the time between you and your marriage [in heaven] is very short. Afterward begins the happy life, where God is satisfied with you, and eternal bliss "in the company of the prophets, the companions, the martyrs and the good people, who are the best company". Ask God for his mercy and be optimistic, because [the Prophet], peace be upon him, used to prefer optimism in all his affairs» (R. STEIN, *For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA 2010).

Judaism and Christianity follow the prophets Moses and Jesus. The conviction is that both have altered their content, and the Book that was given to Mohammed, the messenger of Allah, corrects these alterations and corruptions. Thus, the believers of these two religions are identified with the description of «infidels». <sup>17</sup> The Koran preaches that there must be a war against the infidels and that the infidels are those who don't accept the Book, don't accept Allah and they deny to obey him. For this reason, fanaticism and terrorism arise. They declare war against the transgressors of the Koran by encouraging the believers to kill the transgressors (4<sup>th</sup> Surah 24:191-194). <sup>18</sup>

We will therefore support that the God who denies having a Word and Spirit, cannot be the God of love and mercy. He is then a tyrant since he cannot experience love. All the above points show that the ontology of God in Islam, unlike Christianity, has nothing to do with love and with the will of God to save people. That's why they commit violent actions, wars, exterminations of the «infidels» and so on. So, those who believe in Allah do these actions as they are dictated to them by their faith. Some texts of the New Testament refer to violent behavior. But, the history of Christianity, despite some extreme behavior and the interpretation of these texts exclude such actions of terrorism and fundamentalism by Christians. <sup>19</sup>

The late fr. Professor Dumitru Staniloae writes:

In Judaism and Islam, God as person is so enclosed in himself that for man no communication with him is possible, only obedience. Between

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<sup>17</sup> «The Islamic faith is said to have emerged in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is a form of Judaism and Christianity which has evolved even further. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the unadulterated word of God as revealed to Muhammad through the angel Jibril (Archangel Gabriel). According to Professor Dr. Hans Jansen this is a liberal view of an extremist belief in which fear of the other dominant beliefs is profound. He explains this by pointing out that all emerging religions undergo a struggle for survival against existing religions. Interestingly, in the beginning of the emergence of Christianity, the Christians were viewed as social pariahs, who were prosecuted and killed for heresy. However, Islam is persistent in its struggle for domination: "Jews are believed to bear the wrath of Allah whilst the Christian are only deceived by wrong beliefs" [Qur'an 1:7]. Therefore, all Jews should be killed while Christian may first be "invited" to convert and killed upon declining to convert» (O. VAN HAASSTRECHT, *Terrorism and Islamic Faith*, Chapter 3: Islam 3.1 «Islam, a short history and the religion today, in relation to terrorism», in Academia.edu, on line).

<sup>18</sup> Onno Van Haastrecht supports that «Islam isn't old, compared with the other dominating religions of the world, Judaism and Christianity. This also means that this religion hasn't had the time to evolve. It means, however that this religion still hasn't been established enough to be able to show a less than extremist view towards other forms of religion» (*ibid.*).

<sup>19</sup> M. EROHUBIE, *The God of Jesus Christ and the Violence in the Bible*, in Academia.edu, on line.

himself and creation a gulf remains. Losky says that a single divine Person cannot communicate its nature. But it could be said that the person thus loses the certitude of his existence, and is submerged in this nature which is one with that of the world. In fact, in the God of Judaism and Islam, only his power vis-à-vis the world is emphasized, and this would seem to imply that God does not have life in himself but only in function of the world. His life is the world. Hence, he does not have himself a life he might give to the world, and, without the world, he has no purpose or possibility of existence.<sup>20</sup>

Psychology, by analyzing the relation between Allah and faithful Muslims, compares the God of Islam with the primitive jealous «father» according to Freud, who wants to eliminate his children and for that reason provokes them to make actions that lead them not only to their victims but also to their death. Considering, firstly, the underestimated position of women in Islam, and secondly the demand of the Koran to shave their bodies, take a shower and put perfume before any terrorist attacks, according to psychology, these elements show that the relation of Allah with his believers is a relation between man and a woman, and the person who commits the terrorist attacks takes the position of a woman. In substance, in certain occasions there is an Oedipus complex.<sup>21</sup>

In Christianity, the meaning of Father is very important. Many pictures are used to describe the Father. First, it is the parable of the father with his two sons. It cannot be compared though with the picture of the «primitive» father who leads his children into destruction,

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<sup>20</sup> D. STANILOAE, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, I: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God. The Experience of God*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994, 68. We should note that, contrary to this position of Fr. Staniloae, for Judaism the Law of the Old Testament includes the love of God and the love of the neighbor, independently of the Rabbinic hermeneutic.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. STEIN, *For Love of the Father*. The following texts of the Koran are indicative: «74. So, let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory – We will bestow upon him a great reward. 75. And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, “Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper”? 76. Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So, fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak. 77. Have you not seen those who were told, “Restrain your hands [from fighting] and establish prayer and give zakah”? But then when fighting was ordained for them, at once a party of them feared men as they fear Allah or with [even] greater fear. They said, “Our Lord, why have You decreed upon us fighting? If only You had postponed [it for] us for a short time”. Say, “The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah. And injustice will not be done to you, [even] as much as a thread [inside a date seed]”» (Surah 4, An-Nisa. Part 5:74-77).

but on the contrary, it constitutes the space and the person for the salvation of his children. Christ develops through his teaching the relation between God and humans as a relation between a father and his children. «And do not call anyone on earth “father”, for you have one Father, and he is in heaven» (Mt 23:9). Thus, humans are adopted by God via Jesus Christ, and therefore have the privilege to pray and call God as their «father» (Mt 6:6-13).<sup>22</sup>

For the dogma and the faith of God, Trinitarian relations have as a principle the Father who generates the Son who is begotten, and from which proceeds the Holy Spirit, and the Father constitutes the Monarchy in the Trinity. The Father is the source and the cause of divinity. The uniqueness of God lies on the one substance of the three divine Persons, who are distinct between themselves in «only theory», as Saint John Damascene said, with the hypostatic properties: the unborn of the Father, the begotten of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifest their relations between them. Saint Augustine has developed the theology of relations of the divine persons as relations of love. Between the Trinitarian similitudes of the Holy Trinity he uses the Trinitarian form: the one who loves, the one who is loved and love (*amans, amatus, amor*).

When I, love anything, there are three things concerned – myself, and that which I love, and love itself. For I do not love love, except I love a lover; for there is no love where nothing is loved. Therefore, there are three things – he who loves, and that which is loved, and love.<sup>23</sup>

The mutuality of the relations of the Persons of the Trinity is not restricted only in the relations between them, that means «theology», but their relations also with the created beings, that means the «economy». For Saint Maximus the Confessor, love «is the door, through which the one who enters finds himself in the Holy of Holies, and is made worthy to behold the unapproachable beauty of the holy and royal Trinity».<sup>24</sup>

Due to this love of God towards humans, the Son of God became the «Son of Man» so the human becomes god by grace. Love, which comes from God, defines the relation of humans with the Trinitar-

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<sup>22</sup> For the evolution of the meaning of «Father» from Judaism to Christianity, cf. PAN-  
NENBERG, *Théologie systématique*, 337-364.

<sup>23</sup> SAINT AUGUSTINE, *De Trinitate* IX,xx,2.

<sup>24</sup> MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, «Letter 2» to John Cubicularius, about love: *PG* 91,404A.

ian God, because it is the way and the means of knowing God. It is the way of spiritual and moral fulfilment of humans because it leads to purification. Love is the power in which saints face every kind of temptation or even death itself. It is unbelievable in Christianity, because of love, for a man to do violent actions or terrorist actions in the name of the God of Love. Contrary, the believers carry their own cross and accept death in the name of Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup>

John the evangelist, in his first catholic letter, develops on the one hand, the relation of love between the persons of the Holy Trinity, and on the other hand, the relation of love between humans in the same way as the love between the persons of the Holy Trinity.<sup>26</sup> First principle for John the evangelist is that love derives from God himself, since «God is love» (A' Jn 7:8). God showed his love by sending his Son to the world to give us life. The second principle is about this action of God, which is not conditional to the fact that we love God and it is His response to this love, but God showed us love by sending his Son to the world in order to «forgive our sins» (A' Jn 7:10). Therefore, God reveals his love for two reasons: first, to offer life to the deceased sinner and secondly to become the «forgiver» of our sins.

The response of man to this manifestation of love by God is to love our neighbors. The man who loves is reborn through God and knows God. The man who doesn't love cannot encounter God. The love and the knowledge of God pass through the other persons. Thus, the commandment of God is to love not only those who love us, but our enemies too.<sup>27</sup> According to Saint Maximus the Confessor, the man must imitate Christ and give love to all.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibid.*: PG 91,404ABCD.

<sup>26</sup> «Beloved, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us» (A' Jn 4:7-12).

<sup>27</sup> Mt 5:43-48: «You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy". But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect».

<sup>28</sup> «The one who loves Christ thoroughly imitates him as much as he can. Thus, Christ did not cease to do good to men. Treated ungratefully and blasphemed, he was patient;

### 3. Christ Is Proclaimed and in That I Rejoice, Yes, and I Shall Rejoice

Apostle Paul wrote from the jail to Philippians:

Christ is proclaimed. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death (Phil 1:18-20).

Of all the points we have deployed, by supporting that the absence and the rejection of the Word and the Spirit of God makes God himself «sterile», as Maximus the Confessor said, Christianity and Islam are in conflict. What however is the answer of Christianity against the violence and terrorist actions of the Islamists who commit terrorist attacks, but mainly the answer of Christianity against the accusation of Islam that Christians are «infidels» and they must be exterminated so Islam will prevail globally?

There are of course various answers. It is a possibility to accept the words of Jesus Christ himself, that «blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me» (Mt 5:10-11). Or even, «If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me» (Jn 15:20-21). These were the foundations of the Christians during the persecutions of the first centuries or even the persecutions during all centuries.

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beaten and put to death by them, he endured, not thinking ill of anyone at all. These three are the works of love of neighbor in the absence of which a person who says he loves Christ or possesses his kingdom deceives himself. For he says, "Not the one who says to me 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father". And again, "The one who loves me will keep my commandments", and so forth. The whole purpose of the Savior's commandments is to free the mind from incontinence and hate and bring it to the love of him and of one's neighbor, from which there springs the splendor of holy knowledge in all its actuality» (MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* 4,55-56: PG 90,1060s).

The other position is to perceive the answer of love as a weakness and therefore terrorism and fundamentalism will worsen. But the weakness of the Cross of Jesus Christ, who is persecuted by the Muslim extremists, constitutes the power for the victory against those powers that want to eliminate the love of the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ.

Is there a solution to this problem so that Islam stops the terrorist attacks against Christians and Christianity? The problem is complicated, because apart from the theological differences, there are also other issues involved such as political, military (the case of the Islamic State), economic interests and geostrategic goals.

We will not get involved in this discussion but we will do a theological reflection. We clarify that Christianity will neither step back as far as it concerns the faith to the Trinitarian God nor take a minimalism approach of Christology, so that Christ is regarded as a simple prophet, as Islam demands, and not as the Son of God. Without saying that all Muslims are terrorists unfortunately most of those who commit terrorist attacks in our days are Muslims.

We will very briefly examine whether Christ, who is the touchstone for Islam, can become the common ground of understanding between Christianity and Islam. In general, we would say that for the Jews Christ is the anticipated Messiah. This is something that they still deny until today. For the Christians, Christ is the Son and Word of God who saves us. For the Muslims, Christ is a Prophet, who gave the Gospel to those who followed him. The Koran is very explicit about that. But Christianity shouldn't be flattered about these quotations because as we already pointed out, for Islam, both Judaism and Christianity altered the content of the relevant texts which God gave, therefore for Islam, Jews and Christians are infidels.

It is possible that fundamentalism and terrorism, for the so called Christian western societies, can pose a challenge which will lead to a re-evaluation of their postmodern position about faith in God and thus put it back into the center of their spiritual quests. Saint Paul writes:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified (Rom 8:28-30).

The teaching of the Koran is absolute and does not accept any doubts about its position against Judaism and Christianity. From the beginning until the end, the Koran, except some «enlightened» historical examples, has «obsessions» about the two revelations of God: Moses and Christ. Only enlightened personalities of the Islamic world can lead Islam outside of fundamentalism, hatred, rivalry and terrorism.