

GOD IS FATHER

I am writing you a text following a dialogue I had with a Muslim friend. The latter, of good faith, argued that we cannot consider ourselves sons of God without offending God and thus deserving his Wrath. To be pleasing to God, he insisted, one should consider himself a slave.

This mentality is widespread in the Muslim world because of a misunderstood verse in the Qur'an: "He begot no one, nor was He begotten", which is to be understood "as the gods of polytheistic mythology used to do" at the time when the Qur'an was inspired. This verse is therefore a response to polytheist mythology, and does not in any way target the spiritual paternity of God.

Christians, for their part, call God their Father, yet, and most often, behave as timid slaves, not confident sons. Their formal worship and timid, calculated manners are evidence. And yet, St John says "In love there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because to fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love." (1 John 4,18)

All Biblical Revelation proclaims our adoption by God in Jesus. Here are some texts:

1. In the Old Testament, God had already said through Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 3,19: "And I was thinking: How I wanted to rank you with my sons... I had thought you would call me: My Father, and would never cease to follow me."

2. Jesus, at his turn, asks us to address ourselves to God as Father:

Matthew 6,9 / Luke 11,1: "So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven..."

3. St John confirms this truth:

John 1,12: "But to all who did accept Him (*Jesus*) he gave power to become children of God."

1 John 3,1-2: "Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My beloved, we are already the children of God."

4. St Paul equally insists, with force, of our divine adoption in Jesus:

Romans 8,14-16: "Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God."

Galatians 4,4-7: "... God sent his Son... to enable us to be adopted as sons. The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts: the Spirit that cries, 'Abba, Father!', and it is this that makes you a son, you are not a slave anymore; and if God has made you son, then he has made you heir."

This revelation by Paul teaches us that, through Jesus, we receive a spirit, a new conception of our relationship with God. We are not slaves but sons. One should have the Spirit of God to understand that. Those who do not have the Spirit of God will understand nothing. This is why, in our discussions with others, we do not seek to convince. It suffices that we inform and testify, to sow the seed and continue our route without persistence.

Those who have the Spirit of God, they alone will understand.

God wants sons, not slaves. Jesus came to liberate us, and not render us slaves (John 8, 31-36). We are "sons of God" or "slaves of the devil". There are no slaves in Heaven, only children; there

are no children with the devil, only slaves. To refuse God as Father, is to become slave of the devil. Such is the teaching of Divine Revelation.

Furthermore, the Qur'an does not incite believers to reject the divine paternity. When the Qur'an incites believers to "adore" God, it is in a spirit of liberty, not of slavery that they are invited to do so; with love, not fear, knowing they are sons, not strangers. And yet, some even refuse a relationship of love with God and prefer a relationship of respect. Love does not exclude respect; on the contrary, it imposes it. It is "shameful" to love God, some claim. Nowhere in the Qur'an is this taught.

On the contrary, several Quranic verses underline love, even the tender love between God and true believers:

"Among people there are those who, instead of God, attach themselves to peers whom they love as much as they love God. But the faithful **love God (*Houb*)** most." (Qur'an II; The Cow,165)

"Ask your Lord's forgiveness and repent to Him: my Lord is **Compassionate to each, All-Tender (*Wadoud*)**." (Qur'an XI; Hud,90)

"But those who believed and did good deeds, the All-Merciful **shall show them tender Love (*Wudd*)**." (Qur'an XIX; Mary,96)

Indeed, it is about love (HOUB), and tender love (WUDD), and of the One who loves tenderly (WADOUD). It is touching to be "WADOUD", to love with tenderness. Yes indeed, this is the way our Father loves us: "I am gentle and humble in heart (*WADOUD*)...", Jesus said (Matthew 11,29).

As for the Bible, it pushes us to "love God with all our heart, with all our strength..." (Deuteronomy 6,5 / Luke 10,25-28). St John declares: "Love is from God, everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. Whoever fails to love does not know God, because God is Love" (1 John 4,7-8).

Those who think differently are not inspired by God, but by the satanic spirit, the deceiver, who ends up in moving them away from God's love, from the divine adoption, to make of them, in the end, slaves of demons. Those who reject the relationship of love between God and man in the name of the Qur'an, do not know the Spirit of the Qur'an and misunderstand Muhammad, the noble prophet of Islam who, like all the prophets, was inflamed by the Divine Love.

My beloved, I am writing to you so that you realize the merit of our vocation in Jesus. Without any vainglory, but great pride, we are "already" children of God and God is our marvelous Father by His endless love. All men are invited to this espousal. We answer this call with love and immense joy. We certainly do not have a monopoly over this divine espousal; well to the contrary, we wish that all men respond to this divine call with an easiness of heart. Jesus came to give to mankind such a Father.

Happy are those who accept him and do not let themselves get lost in human reasoning, inspired by the devil.

With an infinite gratitude, we dare call God "Abba! (*Dad*) Our Father".