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*Tra fallimenti e speranze*

*Costruire ponti tra Cristianesimo e Islam*

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Unfortunately, in every century some dishonest ideologies attempt to alter religious culture and the responsibility of the vicars of God on earth with an interpretation that is either sectarian and exclusive or, on the contrary, secularized and profane. Religious values and the universality of faith are thus artificially made coincide with a exclusive religious form or, on the contrary, life is reinterpreted discarding any reference to the divine, to spiritual paths and to the teachings of masters from every religious tradition that go up to prophets and messengers of God. This nihilist and materialistic «culture» that sees society only as a consumption market without any balance has progressively modified the perception of men, leading them to seek ambitions of power, wealth and ego-affirmation. Individualism and indifference seem to be the consequences of the crisis of values and references to the ontology of human and universe creation.

The Holy Quran says: «Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned, that (Allah) may give them a taste of some of their deeds: in order that they may turn back (from Evil)».[[1]](#footnote-1)

Besides this decline, some religious communities are cyclically the victims of this «dominant culture» and are discriminated for still remaining coherent towards ancient commandments, doctrines, traditional wisdom and rituals that reflect the constant spiritual and intellectual dialogue between God and Man.

The cultural chaos between profane philosophy and the defence of one’s own religious identity has stirred up paradoxical conflicts including amongst diverse majority or minority religious communities, as if the compromise between power and religion would only generate a monopoly of a totalitarian system of government, culture and even religious confession.

The tragic experiences of these centuries have perhaps summoned Christians and Muslims to a new consciousness and awareness that do not conflict with regards to one’s own theological tradition with artificial revolutions or reforms, that do not counterpose the arrogance of an atheist theology and, most of all, rediscovers the advantage and harmony of a much enlarged fraternity between Christian and Muslim believers and, in a different way, both with other believers and with those who define themselves as non believers who are seeking shared Truth and Peace.

«You will not be perfect believer until you do not love for your brother what you love for yourself», says Prophet Muhammad.[[2]](#footnote-2)

«All God’s creatures are His family; and he or she is the most beloved of God who tries to do most good to God’s creatures».[[3]](#footnote-3)

While in some parts of the world we witness the instrumentalization of religious identity as a presumed justification for fratricide violence, several worldwide initiatives, starting from the historical 1986 encounter of Assisi that was promoted by Pope John Paul II, gather authentic religious authorities, wise theologians, honest intellectuals, simple believers and citizens actively involved in social cohesion, reciprocal respect, inter-religious dialogue and solidarity. The voices and the impact of the pious work of these men and women do not seem to be relevant in front of the dramatic images of criminals and victims but are still, actually, the antidote to the barbary of violence and represent the concrete hope of a sane and saint perspective of Man’s life on earth.

Throughout centuries, popular wisdoms, theologians, monks from different Christian contemplative orders, priests and nuns, masters and disciples from various Islamic brotherhoods, associations of religious inspiration that operate in civil society, especially in education and moral assistance, have all contributed to promoting this evidence.

The added value of this qualitative work that every religious leader promotes in his specific field and territory providentially intertwines with the work achieved by other believers in other fields and places, spreading thus a religious culture that becomes providentially an inter-religious culture when the members of the Christian and Muslim community ally and march together towards common good.

The Holy Quran says: «By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy».[[4]](#footnote-4)

Interreligious culture is never a loss of the specific religious identities and theological traditions but represents rather, in this globalized world, a new network of communication and collaboration where sensibility towards the sacred and the decline of universal values from fideistic inspiration find their suitable divergence sustaining and protecting Man from the loss of values and traditional references that may throw his identity and the meaning of life itself in crisis.

For centuries, inside churches and mosques, parishes and universities, theological, juridical and spiritual schools, Christianity and Islam have contributed not only to the development of a religious instruction but also and most of all to the renewal of thought and to the preservation of a mentality that is «open to the High», spreading a culture that remains a bedrock for moral elevation for both Western and Eastern societies. The Holy Quran says: «For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord».[[5]](#footnote-5)

At the heart of this culture aimed at the remembrance of God, at the consciousness of his call and at the function of gratitude of being altogether his guests on earth lies the culture of inter-religious dialogue.

In an era of religion ignorance and the spread of alternative cultures that stimulate Man’s virtual appetites and irrational sensitivity, inter-religious culture gives back to the people the perspective of an empathy and an orientation towards the shared management of the world as a temple of the spirit and not as a resource for avarice and individual interests.

The Holy Quran says: «O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters».[[6]](#footnote-6)

The main interest of the Muslim believer is always that of achieving interior and exterior peace, never that of causing war between people and nations. This peace is the result of the fostering of dialogue and interpersonal relationships, intra and interreligious and, in times of crisis, when modern ideologies transform from alternatives to religious systems to instrumentalizations of religious sentiment, it becomes even more important and urgent to coordinate and promote culture and interreligious cooperation in order to protect the authenticity of the sacred from its parody.

The Holy Quran says: «And He helps thee with a powerful help. It is He Who sent down the great Peace into the hearts of the Believers, that they may add faith to their faith; for to God belong the Forces of the heavens and the earth; and God is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom».[[7]](#footnote-7)

Indeed, it is not only the survival of some noble human lives and the destiny of some regions on earth that are on stake but most of all the breath of a religious and interreligious culture as a qualifying element of men and women. It is in fact about avoiding that extremism of a confessionnal matrice causes by contrast a worse extremism such as as that of denying the religious and interreligious matrice of the culture of Mankind.

The Holy Quran says: «That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high- handedness or mischief on earth: and the end is (best) for the righteous».[[8]](#footnote-8)

What kind of Man would be a man deprived of his culture, a man denied from culture as an expression of his faith in God, a humanity deprived of the extraordinary pageant of intercultural and interreligious dialogue as an essential foundation of World’s culture and of life itself?

What Islamic and Christian doctrines have taught humanity for centuries is sharing values that allow recognizing the profound Relationship between God, Man and the universe, inspiring thus the symbolic and effective value of the relationship between the interior and the exterior world, the superior and the terrestrial world, as a cosmologic and cyclic reconnection between the environment of the spirit and the nature of the manifestation.

A great Muslim saint, the Sheikh Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi said «Just as Man is central to the universe as a vicar of God on earth, as a microcosm of the macrocosm, the soul is central to human being and is the vicar of God Inside of us». The contribution of religions helps Man act according to this perspective of union and spiritual progress that allow consequently the retransmission of a harmony between the people through a mutual care of earth’s resources.

Let us be aware to those pseudo-cultural tendencies that would like to reduce religions only to «good feelings» and to a «melting pot», depriving us of the endowment of traditions and providential dogmatic specificities. Our roots will have to be well stable in order to avoid artificial ambientalist creations that attempt to modify either reality or the aesthetics, only to avoid following the Master path, that of spiritual discipline and soul pacification that our masters and sacred writings teach us.

Even the recent encyclical *Laudato Si’* of Pope Francis represents for us Muslims a recall for a shared responsibility and respect for the nature of Man and the world as a reflection of the order of God.

We should defend, in a brotherly way, the nature of the sacred and the nature of the mystery that is at the origin and the essence of our respective religious cultures and paths of contemplation and adoration of God. It is only in the faith of this principle that we could altogether intepret both mysteriously and efficiently the discovery of God’s universe that is inside and around everyone of us.

The Holy Quran says: «We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?».[[9]](#footnote-9)

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1. Quran XXX, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Hadith* reported by Bukhari and Muslim. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Quran CIII, 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Quran VIII, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Quran VII, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Quran XLVIII, 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Quran XXVIII, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Quran XLI, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)