HE Qur’an has just been translated into Kabyle. A thousand copies have been printed and distributed in the region of Tizi-Ouzou in Kabylia. In an Algeria where Islam is the State religion and the Kabyle language is recognised as the second national language after Arabic by the Algerian constitution, this edition sanctions Islam’s pretension to religious and political supremacy, based on its belief in a divine revelation.

It is thus urgent for us to examine the claims to this belief before becoming Muslims like the Berbers who, nevertheless, were Christians before us Gallo-Romans…

For the last issue of Le Monde de la Bible is enough to make us lose the Faith. Indeed, it learnedly explains that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are « legendary figures »; Moses too; David too… Science has spoken! These holy individuals therefore never existed. Our entire “Sacred History” is to be ranked among the mythologies. On the other hand, no one thinks of calling the existence of Mohammed the Prophet into question in the name of Science!

Fifty years ago, the Abbé de Nantes was already amazed at this paradox: « Catholics and unbelievers are in the habit, even today, despite their hypercritical sense, of considering Islam as an old brother who has proved his worth and remains intact, without a fissure, like an eternal edifice. » He therefore decided to study the question more closely. The result was fifty years of a parallel study of the Bible and the Qur’an leading to the question more closely. The result was fifty years of a parallel study of the Bible and the Qur’an leading to the question more closely.

Consequence: applied to the Qur’an, the “historico-critical” method consists in comparing the legendary story that the Muslim “Tradition” relates to the text of the Qur’an that it claims to explain.

The first question that arises therefore is to know what the text says.

The “official” translations of the Qur’an are not reliable because they depend entirely on the legend, according to the vicious circle that Fr. Lammens denounced when he observed that the writing of the life of Mohammed (sirâ) « comes not from two parallel and independent sources, mutually complementing and verifying one another, but from a single one, the Qur’an, slavishly interpreted and developed by the Tradition following preconceived ideas […] attempting to specify the meaning, to put everywhere dates and proper names. The product of this exegesis, carried out haphazardly, is that the sirâ remains to be written, just as the historical Mohammad remains to be discovered. » (quoted in the preface of our translation of the Qur’an, Vol. I, p. xv)

What in fact does the “Tradition” say?

That Mohammed was born at Mecca. Now, as we have said, the name of Mecca is not found in the Qur’an, but only that of « bakka » (III 96).

What does « bakka » mean? That is the whole question. It is apparently insoluble because we do not have at our disposal an Arabic dictionary, for want of Arabic literature prior to the Qur’an.

One thing is certain, however: Mecca, which is traditionally held to be an important stage on the « incense route » from Southern Arabia on the strength of Ptolemy’s Geography. Thus, the first enigma is that of the location where the founding events of Islam took place!

The second enigma is that of the author of the Qur’an, for Mohammed is not in attested history any more than “Mecca” is in true geography… There is only a writer who claims the divine name of muhammad, misunderstood by commentators and incorrectly interpreted as a proper name.

As for Fr. Lammens, he did not attempt to resolve the enigma, nor did anyone after him, « the scientific exegesis of the Qur’an remaining to be created », as he

The first part of this study was published under the title “To Serve in the Dialogue with Islam”, in He is Risen n° 52, January 2007, pp.7-18.
acknowledged, without venturing to do it himself. Failing which, Islamology continued on for a hundred years in a verbosity that is contrary not only to the “historico-critical” method, but to simple common sense.

**INTERPRETATION KEY**

The Abbé de Nantes insisted on continually comparing the official translation with the one that we were proposing, so that the reader would be able to judge for himself. He suggested a good example to us in his postscript to Volume II of our translation: « Ah my son, what a collection of pearls you offer us here! It must be read to be believed: “(The sons of Israel) plotted (against Jesus, but) Allah plotted (against them) and he is the best of those who plot.” Those are the exact words! It is signed Régis Blachère, professor at the Paris Faculty of Letters. “To plot the plot”, that is a first-rate riddle! » (Georges de Nantes, *postscript* to our Volume II, p. 290)

Here is the solution. It is a passage from Sura III concerning Jesus. This verse is disconcertingly terse, with a single verb, repeated three times, the first time with no subject or complement: *makârû*. What is the key to the enigma? This Arabic verb is the pure and simple transposition of the Hebrew verb *mâkhar*, « to sell », used in the Bible with regard to Joseph sold by his brothers: « They sold (yÎmÎkrû) Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver pieces. » (Gn 37.28)

Consequently, the verse is translated thus:

« So, they betrayed and the God will betray, but the God delivers those who are betrayed. » (III 54).

Who « betrayed » whom? According to the Gospel, it was Judas who betrayed Jesus (Mk 14.10-11 ; cf. Jn 6.71). According to this passage of the Qur’an dedicated to « Jesus, son of Mary », it is « those who followed » Jesus, that is his disciples, calling themselves « the Nazoreans of the God », and claiming to be « perfect (muслиmûn) »; not « submissive » but « perfect », as we will explain below:

« Those who followed said : “We are the Nazoreans of the God. We believe in the God. Be thus witness to it: we are perfect.” » (III 52)

The disciples of Jesus proclaim themselves « perfect (muслиmûn) », because of their profession of faith. Not only do they give themselves this good testimony, but they even call Jesus as a witness to it. It is, in comparison with the Gospel, where the disciples of Jesus are the witnesses to His own « perfection » (Jn 8.46), a complete reversal of roles!

For what reason, if not to make Jesus the witness to *Islâm*, the « perfect » religion, and to make all Christians Judases! They betrayed Jesus in spite of their profession of *Islâm*, thus revealing the hypocrisy denounced from the beginning of the Qur’an (cf. II 2-14). The Nazoreans have always betrayed *Islâm*. This is the lesson of the story of Jesus « betrayed ».

The author of the Qur’an, however, states that it was indeed according to the design of God: « They betrayed and the God will betray, but the God delivers those who are betrayed » He speaks as St. Peter did on Pentecost: « This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified by men outside the Law. You killed Him, but God raised Him to life, freeing Him from the pangs of Hades. » (Ac 2.23-24)

Nevertheless, the Qur’an strays from the New Testament by omitting the account of the death and resurrection of Jesus, that of His nativity, and of His life—hidden or public. What remains? « Announcements », that are like prophecies: manifestly, the intention is to propose Jesus as the figure of the one to come, « taken from among » the children of Ishmael, namely, the author himself (*He is Risen* n° 52, p. 15)!

Would this author have experienced a betrayal similar to the one that Jesus suffered on the part of « those who followed him »? This is in fact what a careful but scientific translation of the text of the Qur’an reveals to us, by making known to us a story quite different from the one that the traditional legend relates.

**WRITING (kitâb) AND READING (qur ’ân)**

In the first place, we must not imagine the Arabian peninsula as a vast desert inhabited by the gaunt and quarrelsome nomads described by the Muslim legend, for the sole purpose of making « Mohammed » suddenly emerge from them, holding his holy Book in his hand and beginning the conquest of Mecca, of Arabia and then of the world. Some oasis of the Hedjaz, in the north of the peninsula and the region of the Persian Golf on the one hand, and the well watered mountains of Yemen and Oman on the other, were occupied from very ancient times by sedentary populations, who were rapidly organised into relatively complex states, the main activities of which were agriculture, caravan commerce and, in the south of the peninsula, the production of incense and spices. These states were certainly equipped with administrations that made use of writing. Writing is thus most certainly ancient in Arabia, although the most ancient written documents presently known do not seem to be prior to the sixth or fifth century B.C. On the other hand, Phoenician, from which Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek originate, is prior to the thirteenth century.

And Arabic? The author of the Qur’an affirms that he taught « writing » (kitâb), and « reading » (qur ’ân) to the children of Ishmael. In fact, Sura I constitutes the first literary witness of Arabic writing, derived from Nabataean writing, which itself appeared in the second century as a cursive variant of the Aramaic alphabet. As for Arabic, it does not appear as a commercial language but first of all as a religious language. Epigraphic evidence proves it: it is only in the sixth century A.D. that a truly « Arabic » text emerges for the first time, with the inscription of Zabad (reproduced in *He is Risen*, n° 52, January 2007, p. 10), in the Syro-Mesopotamian region (see the map, *infra.*, p. 14), and this inscription is Christian. The end of the evolution appears to have been reached once and for all with the inscription of
Harran, which bears the date of 568 and is Christian also (ibid., p. 11).

The fact is well known: «It is Christians above all who created alphabets for the peoples whom they converted and who taught them to read and write. The Arabic known as classical is no exception. Its alphabet is due to Christians, for it is among the Christian Arabs of Syria that we find the most ancient specimens of this writing.» (François Nau, Les Arabes chrétiens de Mésopotamie et de Syrie du septième au huitième siècle, Paris, 1933, p. 96)

The two inscriptions from Zabad and from Harran show in fact that in the sixth century Arabic language and writing were fixed and used in the Christian communities of Syria, together with Greek and Syriac.

«It does not seem, however, that Arabic was used much for it was in fact unreadable.» (ibid., p. 98)

At ZABAD, the Greek - Aramaic - Arabic inscription is not strictly speaking a trilingual inscription, for the three languages do not give the same text. It is a bilingual Greek - Syriac inscription, to which new Greek and Arabic proper names were added later on.

At HARRAN, the inscription is bilingual: Greek - Arab. The Greek served as a basis for the laborious attempts to decipher the Arabic. The same goes for the Qur’an: it is necessary to draw upon all the languages in use in the East, especially Hebrew and Aramaic, in order to decipher and translate it. Greek as well, right from the first words: «This Writing contains a Way without quarrel for the predestined.» (II 2)

«A Way (hodan)» is directly transcribed from the Greek hodos, the «Way», which designates Jesus Himself, in the New Testament (Jn 14.6), and those who follow Him (Ac 9.2). In the Qur’an, it is a quite different «Way», the object of a teaching for which the key word is ‘âlîyyâh, «ascent»!

**SEEKING AN ITINERARY**

«Ascend» (ta’âlaw; III, 61), from the Hebrew ‘âlîth. Where ? To Jerusalem (‘as-salam; II 208; IV 90, 91, 94; V 16)! The author speaks like Isaiah: «Come, let us ascend (na’âlêth) to the mountain of Yahweh» (Is 2.2), and he acts like Jesus, who one day «set His Face» to turn towards Jerusalem, «to ascend» there in order to suffer passion and death (cf. Lk 9, 51; 13, 22; 19, 28).

The other, however, ascends there as a warlord:

«Ascend! Summon our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, ourselves and yourselves; then we will spread terror and call down the curse of the God on the liars.» (III 61)

His call is a series of biblical reminiscences, with a powerful eschatological echo, as though for a last judgement.

A short synoptic table suffices to shed light on the deep knowledge that the author had of the Bible, to which he refers moreover by the very term, transcribing into Arabic the Greek term biblia (II 102).

The word “procession”, transcribed from the Hebrew, designates in the Book of Nehemiah the ceremony that marked the dedication of the new ramparts of Jerusalem, after the return from the Exile (Ne 12.31).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sura II, verse 195)</th>
<th>(Jeremiah 50. 8)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Go !</td>
<td>Go !</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Isaiah 48. 20)</td>
<td>(Isaiah 40. 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Go away from Babylon!</td>
<td>Prepare in the wilderness a way for Yahweh</td>
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<td>(Apocalypse 18. 4)</td>
<td>Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.</td>
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<tr>
<td>in the path of God</td>
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<td>strength your hands</td>
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<td>until the procession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Isaiah 35. 3)</td>
<td>Strengthen all weary hands, steady all trembling knees.</td>
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Like a new Nehemiah, the author resolves to form the «procession» when the children of Ishmael would have won a victory.

Beginning with the «departure» on the «path of the God», renewing the first «pilgrimage» (hajj) of the children of Israel departed from Egypt and marching towards the Promised Land, they would end their «ascent» (‘âlîyyâh) at Jerusalem in order to celebrate there the new Pasch (II 158, 196).

One enters Jerusalem by the «gates of the God» (II 158) designated by their names: "as-ṣafâ, the Arabic transcription of ha-ṣophim, «the sentry», the name of a knoll situated north of Jerusalem from which one has a view of the Holy City as from an observatory, on the one hand; and 'al-marwat, the transcription of mûrôt, a locality of the mountain of Juda situated «at the gate (le-ṣa’ar)», according to the Book of Mîcah (Mi 1.12), on the other.

«Yes, 'as-ṣafâ and 'al-marwat are among the gates (ṣa’â’irî) of the God.» (II 158)

**THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM**

What is Jerusalem doing here? This Holy City is quite simply the aim of the pilgrimage (hajj), the pilgrimage par excellence from the time of antiquity. After the conversion of Constantine, Christians began to go to Jerusalem, via Mount Nebo, and Arabia! in the footsteps of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, thus identifying themselves with the people of God who followed Moses in the desert, but in order to go to the Promised Land.

The “Muslims” are only a new kind of “pilgrim”… What did they find at Jerusalem?

To answer this question, it suffices to read the newspaper… in 2007 A.D.! We learn in it that the Israelis are undertaking supporting works under the
Esplanade of the Mosques at Jerusalem; the beginning of the works gave rise to violent confrontations last month between the Israeli police force and the Palestinians. The mufti stigmatised the works and denounced the « policy of the Judaisation of Jerusalem ». According to the office for the protection of Muslim religious properties, these works threaten the foundations of the esplanade on which is built the Al-Aqsa mosque.

There is nothing new under the sun! We have explained that the restoration of the « foundations of the Temple » was precisely the aim set by the author of the Qur’an (II 127; cf. He Is Risen, n° 52, January 2007, p. 7-18). In Arabic, the expression is today understood by everyone: restore the foundations, ‘al-gawâ’ida.

Did you say: Al Qa’ida?

« Abraham will re-establish the foundations of the Temple... with Ishmael. » This is how Israel is excluded to the benefit of Ishmael! We see here that the reference to Abraham is a stumbling block, a cause of discord rather than “interfaith” concord, and has been for thirteen centuries!

It would be quite different if we turned towards the daughter of Abraham, the Virgin Mary. This is what we are going to discover.

Already in the fourth century, during the reign of Julian the Apostle (361-363), the project of the Jews was to reconstruct the Temple. They obtained permission from the emperor. However, « an earthquake and a fire that shot up from the foundations brought the works, which had scarcely begun, to a halt, not only because they made the continuation of the work impossible materially, but because they were understood as a divine chastisement of the enterprise. (Françoise Thelamon, Païens et chrétiens au quatrième siècle. L’apport de l’“Histoire ecclésiastique” de Rufin d’Aquilée, Études augustiniennes, 1981, p. 294-309)»

We must read Rufinus of Aquileia (beginning of the fifth century) to understand the immense repercussions of the event on the men of that time and on the following generations:

« Now on the night before the work began there occurred a violent earthquake. Not only were the foundation stones heaved up on all sides but almost every structure on the site was demolished. The public porticos, occupied by a large number of Jews involved in the construction work, collapsed and crushed all the Jews who were there. Yet, when day broke, believing that they had escaped the disaster, others ran up looking for those who had been buried under the debris.

« There was a room buried deep in the lower parts of the Temple, the entrance to which lay between two porticos that had collapsed; there they arranged their tools and everything else needed for the work. Suddenly, a ball of fire appeared and, scouring the whole place, shot about in all directions, burning and killing the Jews who were there. This prodigy, repeating itself at different times and at brief intervals throughout the day, crushed the temerity of these stubborn people with its avenging flames. » (ibid., p. 304)

This prodigy is so well attested that it is impossible to doubt it, whatever explanation historians may give for it: « On 19 May 363 an earthquake in Palestine halted the work which had begun on the 18th. It may have caused an explosion of gas that had accumulated in an underground chamber, followed by a fire which would have destroyed materials and cost lives. (ibid., p. 304)

Two hundred fifty years later, at the beginning of the seventh century, the Qur’an repeats it by testifying to an event that may date from the conquest of Jerusalem by the Persians and their « Saracen » allies in 614. The author relates that « the fire » (‘an-nâr ; III 103) was still present in the « pit », but on this occasion it spared the children of Ishmael, thanks to a « kindness » on the part of the God: « Just when you had reached the edge of a pit [full] of fire, He spared you. »

« Abraham will re-establish the foundations (bayt) of the Temple with Ishmael. » (III 127) The Arab word bayt is transposed from the Hebrew bayit, which means « house », and furthermore « Temple ». It is employed two verses earlier where it designates « the Place of Abraham » (III 125), in other words: the Temple of Jerusalem. A continuous tradition places its construction on Mount Moriah, the place of the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham.

The commentators, the inventors of the “Tradition”, translate bayt by « House » and identify this « House » with the building presently situated in the court of the great mosque of Mecca, called Ka’ba.

Now, it is never a question of Mecca in the Qur’an, as we have said, but only bakka (III 96), which orientalists modify into makka without the least justification. And bakka brings us inexorably back to Jerusalem. It designates the « Valley of Bâkâ » celebrated by the Psalmist (Ps 84.7), or possibly the « Wailing Wall », the only vestige of the Temple constructed by Herod and destroyed by Titus in 70 A.D.

The Hebrew bâkkâ’ in fact means « tear » (cf. Jg 2.5), and perhaps we must translate: « Yes, the first House that gave life to men is that of the tears, blessing and way for the ages. » (III 96) In Psalm 84, the « Valley of Bâkâ » is interpreted « valley of tears » in numerous manuscripts and versions, including that of our divine office: “in valle lacrymarum”. Situated to the north of the Valley of Hinnom, this place was the last stage of those who went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, at the crossroads of the roads coming from the north, the west and the south. (cf. the map of Jerusalem, opposite, p. 9)

The word « blessing (mubârakan) » strengthens the connection with the psalm:

« Passing through the Valley of Bâkâ, the Psalmist sings, they drank at the source, the first rain will clothe it with blessings (berâkhôt). » (Ps 84.7)

The affirmation according to which this place « gave life » also seems taken from Psalm 84 that celebrates « the porch of Yahweh », the goal of the pilgrim marching towards the porch of the Temple of Jerusalem, as a source of « grace » and « glory » (cf. Ps 42 ; cf. Ezr 47.9).

(continued on p. 10)
In the fourth century, the victory of Christianity in the West and the conquest of the East by Constantine gave back to Jerusalem her character of a Holy City for a golden age of three hundred years. Raised in 451 to the same rank of patriarchate as Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople, she attracted throngs of pilgrims. Monasteries and churches abounded thanks to the generosity of Empress Eudocia, who resided at Jerusalem from 444 until her death in 460. The most important of these constructions was the "NEW CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD", commonly called the Néa, built by Emperor Justinian in 544. A two-hundred bed hospital was linked to it. It was the last great Christian edifice built in Jerusalem before the Arab invasion.

JERUSALEM (‘as-salam ; II 208 and passim), before her destruction by the Persians and her conquest by the children of Ishmael, was therefore a lively city, full of churches and holy places and monasteries. Inside the walls, only a vast rectangular area, the esplanade of the Temple, « Place of Abraham » (maqâm ʾibrâhim ; II 125) remained desolate, « devastated » (hârâm ; II 144), visited only by Jews in mourning. In IV 38, we read, perhaps, an allusion to the pinnacle (qarîn) of the Temple where the Devil transported Jesus.

SCOPOS (‘aš-safa ; II 158) is the hellenised name in rabbinical literature for a hill situated to the north, a continuation of the Mount of Olives, from which one has a view of the Holy City as from an observatory, as its Hebrew name indicates ba-šôphîm, « the sentry », transposed into Arabic : aš-safa.

This hill is also called « gate of the God », along with al-marwat, a locality in the mountains of Judah.

When the author of the Qur’an promised « those who believe » to make them enter into the « gardens » where rivers will flow « from beneath » (min taštihâ ; IV 13 and passim), the expression corresponds very precisely to the system of irrigation of the « gardens » of Jerusalem, called « paradises » by the Christians, situated in the south-west of the city in the Byzantine period. On the map, « cisterns » designates small underground reservoirs, communicating with the surface by a narrow opening. Rain (cf. II 22) falls abundantly from November to March, especially in December – January. It then fills the cisterns. Later, from May to October, drought occurs worsened by the east wind.

BAKKA (III 96) designates the valley situated to the southwest of Jerusalem.

GEHENNA (jahannam ; II 206 and passim), situated to the south, in the continuation of the valley of bâkâ’, offers a striking contrast with the « paradises » of the « gardens ». Transformed into a public rubbish dump where a fire permanently consumed the refuse, the « fiery Gehenna » (Mt 5.22 ; 18.9) is the symbol of eternal chastisement (IV 14, 93).

The KA’BA (V 95) is a monument situated on the road that, from Holy Sion, the place of the « dormition » of the Blessed Virgin Mary, leads to Her « tomb », at Gethsemane.
The «House of Bakka» was thus 1° a source of «life», 2° «blessing», 3° «Way», and it remains so «for the ages (li-l-‘ilamina)». We see the polemical point of this affirmation, which contradicts the words of Jesus who gave Himself as «The Way, the Truth and the Life» (Jn 14.6), and who substituted His own Body for the Temple (Jn 2.21). According to the author, however, a modernist before the word existed, the disciples of Jesus ascribed to Him words that He never said.

This is why, in order to refer to «the Gospel», he uses the pejorative acronym (‘al-‘injîl; III 3, 48, 65), formed by the three letters ain-waw-ghimel, a rabbinical abbreviation to designate a «servant of idols».

Thus, the anti-Christian polemical point rises to the surface and becomes more precise as the context is unveiled in which like Jesus, for whom he substitutes himself, (He is Risen n° 52, January 2007, pp.14-16), the aforementioned «beloved (muhammad)» undertakes to «ascend» to Jerusalem (III 61), and attempts to take the «people of Scripture» along with him, Jews and Nazoreans together, like a new Moses leading them «on the path of the God», the path of war that must be waged to open the road to Jerusalem.

The author argues against those who «count» as «part of Scripture» that which is only human «language», namely the Evangelists. For example, for men to be «told» by «a flesh (başan)», Jesus, the “Word made flesh” (Jn 1.14), to whom «the God (Allah)» gave Scripture and Wisdom and Prophecy: «Be servants for me rather than for the God» is «to lie against the God», it is «to apostasise», it is to renounce the state of «perfection (muslimûn)», it is «to become crazy», to be «schismatic» (III 78-82).

It is also remarkable that the author of the Qur’an does not accuse Jesus of having uttered such a blasphemy, but His disciples, the «Nazoreans», those who «came afterwards», «giving [him] glory» as to «a child» of the God, as one «gives glory» to the God himself, thus «confusing» him with the God, in a Book written by their hand: «the Gospel». A «beloved» however – the name that Jesus received at the time of His baptism and Transfiguration, the author does not deny it – a «beloved» is only an «oracle» a rasul, a prophet, an organ of the God but not God Himself.

The author of the Qur’an also attacks the New Testament that shows Jesus attributing to Himself words that He never said. For example, for men to be «told» by «a flesh (başan)», Jesus, the “Word made flesh” (Jn 1.14), to whom «the God (Allah)» gave Scripture and Wisdom and Prophecy: «Be servants for me rather than for the God» is «to lie against the God», it is «to apostasise», it is to renounce the state of «perfection (muslimûn)», it is «to become crazy», to be «schismatic» (III 78-82).

The author of the Qur’an attacks the New Testament that shows Jesus attributing to Himself the Name revealed to Moses in the Burning Bush: «He is», the unutterable: «the God is» (‘allâha kâna ; IV 11, 17, 24, 26, 92, 104, 111).

**THE KA’BA. THRONE OF GOD**

The «idols» that the author of the Qur’an attacks are therefore not the pebbles that the later tradition has imagined, adored in the temple of the ka’ba by pagan Arabs, but Christ Jesus and the Virgin His Mother: «Do not be misled into idolizing (a woman) “among women”.» (IV 129) This final expression is taken literally from the Gospel according to St. Luke (Lk 1, 42).

Currently, the Ka’ba (Qaaba) refers to a sanctuary situated at Mecca, in the middle of the court of the great mosque. Is this really what the word designates in the Qur’an? It appears for the first time in Sura V at verse 6, to designate the sole of the foot, concerning ritual purification for prayer:

«O you who are faithful, when you rise for prayer, wash yourselves and your hands to the elbow, and rub the head and the feet right to their soles with ointment (‘ilâ l-ka’bayn)», literally: «right to the base», since the Greek word kubos, «cube», of which the Arab word is only the transposition, designates the foundation stones of a house. This is why the word is used to designate certain sanctuaries that are cubic in form including the one that today shelters the “Black Stone” at Mecca.

We have established, however, that the events attested to by the Qur’an must refer to the Holy City of Jerusalem and to the “foundations” of its destroyed Temple. (He is Risen, n° 52, January 2007, p. 12) Well! At the time when the author of the Qur’an wrote, the Greek name kubos designated a small shrine built on the outskirts of the Holy City to commemorate the dramatic halt caused by Jephonias, a miscreant Jew, of the funeral procession of the “sleeping” Virgin, taking Her to Her “tomb” at Gethsemane before Her Assumption. Let us remark that in Sura IV, the impious act of Jephonias is described as an «enormous loathsome deed, buhtânân ‘azîman» (IV 156).

Now, the Jews renewed this sacrilegious act at the time of the capture of Jerusalem by the Persians in 614. Taking part in the battle on the side of the invaders, they attacked with devastating fury the Néa, the church of the Virgin, even more than the Holy Sepulchre itself. Their alliance with the Persians, however, did not last. In 617, the Persians were treating Christians considerably and forgetting all the promises made to the Jews, children of Israel. The Arabs, children of Ishmael, who had taken part in the invasion, suffered the same disgrace, as a «calvary» (III 140, 172), literally «a bald-calvary (qarîn)».

The word is transposed from the biblical Hebrew qâráh, «to shave, make bald». The substantive qorisjäh has the meaning of «depopulation» in Talmudic Hebrew, for example referring to the extermination of the Jews planned by Haman according to the Book of Esther. In the Qur’an, the word is used three times only, as the word «Calvary» is only used twice in the New Testament (Mt 27.33 ; Jn 19.17).

«If a calvary (qarîn) strikes you, in times past a similar calvary (qarîn) struck the people.»

For the past, the author is perhaps alluding to the trials that struck the people of Israel at the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D.; undoubtedly he also recalls the «calvary» suffered by the Jews during
the attempted reconstruction of this same Temple undertaken in 363, prevented by the « pit of fire » and the « wind of pebbles » (III 117).

For the present, the term « calvary » designates the failure of the « return » of 614. The word, chosen by reference to the Gospel, gives this failure the meaning of a trial comparable to the crucifixion of Christ. The children of Ishmael in fact had their hopes dashed, at the same time and to the same extent as the Jewish allies of the Persians.

In July 614, when Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Persians, who were joined by the Jews from the south of Palestine and by bands of Saracens, the Jews demanded certain rights to autonomy in the Holy City. By way of an answer… they were deported to Persia!

If I had not come, if I had not spoken to them, they would have been blameless.

After having meditated the lessons of this « calvary » the author confided the fruit of his sorrowful experience in Sura III. Then he reassembled his group… Where? Sura IV and V permit us to answer the question: in Nabataea. This is where he provided them with a law, before bringing them back to the conquest of the Holy Land.

This is when they found, at the gates of Jerusalem, a small shrine (kubos) dedicated to Mary that the Christians had just erected as a tribute of reparation to the Virgin (ka’ba).

In the Qur’an, the Ka’ba is mentioned twice, in verses 95 and 97 of Sura V. Under this name, the author designates the « Sacred House » that he has the mission to rebuild with the help of the God strong and rich in mercy, « the Lord of the Ka’ba ».

This expression can also be translated « the Lord of the Virgin »; it is in any case the meaning that it has for Christians who reverence Jesus and His Mother, as « two gods, as opposed to the God » (V 116).

Is it not moving to observe that, despite this controversy, far from destroying this “memorial”, the Muslims took it as the symbol of the « House of Abraham » that they wanted to « rebuild »? This initial attitude of nascent Islam, which a scientific exegesis of Sura V brings to light, convokes all, Christians, Jews and Muslims, to the feet of the Daughter of Abraham even today.

The passage that attacks devotion to « Jesus, son of Mary », as though to « two gods », denotes a deep misunderstanding of the New Testament while at the same time an unequivocal will, on the part of the author, to substitute himself for Jesus Christ.

These connections prove that at the time of the events referred to by the Qur’an, Christianity had penetrated deeply into Arabia, ever since the Syrian monk Barsauma converted the Nabateans of Petra in the fifth century.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Sura V, verse 117)</th>
<th>(John 17.8)</th>
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<tr>
<td>I only told them what you ordered me:</td>
<td>The words you gave to Me, I have given to them.</td>
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<tr>
<th>(John 15.13)</th>
<th>(John 20.17)</th>
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<tr>
<td>I shall not call you servants any more,</td>
<td>My Father and your Father, My God and your God.</td>
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<th>(John 15.22)</th>
<th>(John 15.12)</th>
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<td>If I had not come, if I had not spoken to them, they would have been blameless.</td>
<td>When I was with them</td>
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<tr>
<th>(John 17.1)</th>
<th>(17. 5)</th>
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<tr>
<td>And when you glorified me, etc.</td>
<td>Glorify Your Son</td>
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In other words, « perfection (İslâm) » is a « justice (din) », « descended on Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes », and « given to Moses and Jesus and the prophets » without « distinction » or are derived is shâlam, 1° « to be finished », 2° « to be intact, happy, in peace ». Islam is the « fulfilment » of « the Torah and the Gospel » which themselves were only « the prophecy » of what was to be accomplished by the hands of the children of Ishmael, under the direction of the author, himself the true object of divine favours and at the same time the expectation of men. The muhammad, the « beloved », the « desired one » (III 144), it is he!

Islam is the « perfection » of the soul « in peace » with God, in the likeness of Abraham (III 95) responding to God who said to him: « Be perfect! » (‘asîlîm, cf. Gn 17.1) – « I am perfect » (‘aslâmû; II 131). The model of the « musulmans (muslimûn) ».

In this respect, the author of the Qur’an poses as the model of the « musulman (muslim) » for his contemporaries (III 20). A warlord, devoted to the « extermination » of all that resists the establishment of « justice » among the « peoples », he equally dismisses each « fraction » of « those who received the Scripture », Judaism and Christianity, dooming them to the inextinguishable fire of Hell for having introduced « subsequent changes » to this primitive « perfection » of Abraham, through « a secret mutual envy » (III 19), through deceitful « interpretation » (III 21-24), the source of all quarrels.

For Abraham himself was only a « pagan » (hanîf), not Jewish or Nazorean, but a pagan become « perfect ».

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<tr>
<th>(John 17.1)</th>
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<td>And when you glorified me, etc.</td>
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</table>

When all is said and done, what is Islam? The Hebrew root from which the words islâm and musulman...
« separation » between them. This is the theme of the Qur’an. This thought, repeated with insistence in the same terms (II 136, 285 ; III 84-85), effaces the distinction between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and passes the religion of Abraham, Moses and Jesus down to the children of Ishmael, to the Arabs. It excludes from it those who « lost » it, having « apostatised » their initial « faith », and thus plunging into « darkness » (III 86).

They incur, unless they are converted, not only the eternal and irremediable malediction of God and the angels, but also that of all men.

Thus, the Qur’an itself attests that all began in the seventh century in a Christian Arabia, “ Arabia happy ” to be Christian. The nine Christian capitals now present in the colonnade of the great mosque of Mecca testify to this.

Caution ! I am not saying that Mecca was Christian before becoming Muslim since, before Islam, this city did not exist ; but further south there was Sanaa, in the heart of Yemen, which became Christian in the third and forth centuries. The Christian capitals of the mosque of Mecca come from there. We will relate later on why and how, if God so wills.

In the north, there was the rock city of Petra, the capital of the Roman province of Nabataea, converted to Christianity in the fifth century. Between Yemen and Nabataea, caravan trails and maritime routes transported incense… and the Gospel, the “ good news ” spread by Byzantine and Ethiopian missionaries, until the day when a great heresiarch of genius intervened.

THE ROCK OF THE DESERT

The big question, which remains unresolved, is that of his identity. In good historical criticism, “Mohammed”, the one of the legendary Muslim “ Tradition ”, did not exist, any more than Mecca did. In place of this legendary being, we see emerging from our translation… « the author of the Qur’an, a literary genius, creator of a language, the vocabulary of which you have discovered word by word, like a new Champollion discovering the language of the hieroglyphs », our Father wrote to me, in his postscript to Volume III of our translation.

« My hypothesis, he continued, is that he appears to be a large-tented Himyrite who was a man of letters, religious, educated at the best Jewish and Christian schools. That is to say, in short, a subject of the Queen of Sheba, or at least one of her successors in the Himyrite kingdom. »

He cited two clues, particularly significant in his eyes : « The fact that “the Sabaeans” ( ‘as-sâbi ‘ûnâ) are marked by the author with a discreet pre-eminence (V 69) undoubtedly indicates that he was of their race. What confirms, to my mind, this affiliation is the polemical tone in which he alludes to some “ Nabataean ” or other who betrayed him (IV 72) »

It must be said that between the north and the south of the peninsula, between Petra and Sanaa, communications were intensive, by caravan and maritime routes.

The most important god in the Nabataean pantheon gave his name to the massif that shelters Petra : ‘ashšârâ. This term, derived from the Hebrew word ‘ashérah, the Canaanite goddess of fertility and love, is taken by the author to designate the cross, object of adoration for Christians : « And we have brought out against their sacred stakes (‘âjâarih), by Jesus Son of Mary, a justification for what is “ in his hands ” of the Torah and we have given him the Gospel in which [there is] a Way and a Light and a justification for what is “ in his hands ” of the Torah, and a Way and a counsel for the predestined. » (V 46)

The expression « for what is “ in his hands ” » alludes to the insistence with which the sacred text of the « Torah » specifically emphasises that Moses held the divine Scripture « in his hand »:

« Moses made his way down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hand (be-yâdô), tablets inscribed on both sides, inscribed on the front and on the back. These tablets were the work of God, and the writing on them was God’s writing engraved on the two tablets. » (Ex 32.15-16)

The insistence on emphasising that Moses held the divine Scripture « in his hand » (Dt 9.15) is perhaps at the origin of the developments of the rabbinical tradition on the theme of the hands of Moses, which crops up in the Qur’an (cf. II 97). The author applies it to Jesus, probably because of the words of St. John the Baptist : « The Father loves the Son ; and He has given all things into His hand » (Jn 3.35), the basis for the kingship of Christ against which the author engages in polemics (cf. V 40). In any case, the insistence on this theme evokes the Nabataeans, whose graffiti have been found at Medain Saleh, an oasis situated in the extreme south of Nabataea, representing numerous hands traced on the rock, and figures standing or crouching, stretching their arms heavenwards in an attitude of prayer :

« These hands, Fr. Jaussen and Fr. Savignac wrote, of which we have found other examples, though rare, elsewhere, are identical to those that we see in Jerusa-
lem and in all Palestine on the doors and walls of the houses of Arab, and especially of Jewish, homes. We must undoubtedly ascribe to them the same value. They are probably prophylactic signs against the evil eye, illness, or any other misfortune. The idea of such a power attached to pictures of hands is as ancient as it is widespread. As for the figures noted, they are probably not the simple product of the amusement of some one with nothing to do either. We must also give them a religious meaning or some superstitious value.» (Jauussen et Savignac, Mission archéologique en Arabie, tome I : De Jérusalem au Hedjaz, Médaïn Saleh, Paris, 1909, p. 122).

According to our exegesis, the word « Nabataean », transposed from the Greek Nabataioi, is found once in the Qur’an (IV 72 ; cf. 1 M 5.25 ; 9.35). A caravan people of South Arabic origin, the successors of the Edomites in the Trans-Jordan, with Petra as their capital, the Nabataeans are the « Arabs » of the time of the Maccabean war (2 M 5.8 ; 12.10), to whom the author alludes due to the analogy of the situations.

After a violent engagement against the soldiers of Judas Maccabeus, these nomads entered into an alliance with the Jews in war against the Seleucid Greeks (2 M 12.10-12).

The transposition is compelling: seven hundred and fifty years later, new « Nabataeans » wage war against the Byzantine Greeks alongside, the Jews for the conquest of Jerusalem, designated several times by her biblical name: « Enter into Salem ! » (II 208). This is the abbreviated name of Jerusalem, as in the psalm: « His tent is pitched in Salem, be-Sâlem » (Ps 76.3) with the article, « in the Salem », in the manner of St. Paul opposing « The heavenly Jerusalem » to « The present Jerusalem », assimilated by the Apostle precisely to « Arabia »!

We have three accounts of this event.

The first is Christian. It has come down to us in Arabic and Gregorian versions. Probably translated from Greek, this anonymous account is attributed to a monk of Saint Sabas.

The second account is Jewish. It has come down to us in the Apocalypse of Zerubbabel, written in Palestine between 629 and 636.

The third account is Qur’anic, according to our hypothesis, corroborated by many points of contact with the two preceding documents.

The author of the Apocalypse of Zerubbabel has the same preoccupations as the author of the Qur’an concerning the reconstruction of the Temple, dominated by the theme, borrowed from Ezekiel, of a return to life of those who were dead.

These contacts are not fortuitous. They allow us to attach the Qur’an to the series of Apocalypses that the events of 614 generated.

The author of the Qur’an does better: he identifies himself with Moses, for it is not only a matter of a pilgrimage but of a reconquest. In fact the Arabs are descendants of Abraham through Hagar, his servant – not his spouse – but his servant who gave him Ishmael. The Jews, on the other hand, are descendants of Abraham through Sarah, his spouse, who gave him Isaac, the son of the promise. One day Sarah, jealous, said to Abraham: « Drive away that slave girl and her son » (Gn 21.10), which he did in order to have peace. This is how the Jews, the descendants of Isaac, occupied the Promised Land while the Arabs, the descendants of Ishmael, found themselves in the desert…

For the children of Hagar the « servant », and of « her son » Ishmael, the hour of vengeance had come! « And kill them everywhere you corner them, and drive them out from where they drove you. » Topical!

Show no mercy! « For it is worse to let yourself be charmed than to kill. » (II 191) This is a warning to those who think that they can obtain peace through “dialogue”!

« Combat in the path of the God those who combat you. Do not attack however: No, the God does not love those who attack ! » (II 190)

The manner of conduct is the same as that observed by the chosen people on march towards the Promised Land in times past: not to attack first. The law of that holy war, however, was the extermination of every living being, men and animals, formerly decreed by God Himself (Dt 7.1-2 ; 1 S 15.3 and passim) in order to preserve His people from the seduction of the gods of the pagans (Dt 7.3-6 and passim).

The objective is thus not Heaven, as for Christians, but « the devastated Temple »: « Already, we see that you are turning towards Heaven. Well we will have you embrace a tradition that you will accept: Turn towards the devastated Temple ! » (II 144)

The children of Ishmael are invited to go on pilgrimage to the site of the Temple destroyed by Titus on 29 August 70 A.D., and to rediscover a « tradition (qibla) » from which the Jews and Christians have turned away. The word qibla is a transposition of the Hebrew root qâbal that means literally: « to take, to receive, to accept ». From this comes the first meaning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apocalypse of Zerubbabel</th>
<th>Sura II, verse 186</th>
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<tr>
<td>A voice calls out to Ze-</td>
<td>« And when my servants</td>
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<tr>
<td>rubbel « from the gates</td>
<td>question you about me, here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Heaven»: « Approach</td>
<td>I am, very near! I answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me, question me and I will</td>
<td>him who calls as soon as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer you. »</td>
<td>he calls. »</td>
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<td>« What could I ask since</td>
<td>« How could you deny the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have many days</td>
<td>God when you were dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to live and I have ful-</td>
<td>and he made you live? Then he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>filled my destiny? »</td>
<td>will make you die, then he will</td>
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<tr>
<td>« I will give you life.</td>
<td>make you live again. » (Cf. II,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« Thereupon, he said:</td>
<td>56, 72-73, 243, 258-260 ; III 27)</td>
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<td>« Live! »</td>
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<tr>
<th>Sura II, verse 186</th>
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<td>« And when my servants</td>
<td>« How could you deny the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>question you about me, here</td>
<td>God when you were dead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« I am, very near! I answer</td>
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<td>will make you die, then he will</td>
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<td>36, 72-73, 243, 258-260 ; III 27)</td>
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of the word: «consent, acceptance, obedience»; and the second: «tradition», in its most general sense of a complement to Scripture. Far from being limited to an «allusion» to the question of the «orientation of prayer» (Blachère), the qibla designates «the orientation of life», as the same Blachère admits. Here, it designates the whole of the Abrahamic tradition to which the «Jews» and «Nazareans» showed themselves unfaithful.

With the aim of restoring it the author, like Abraham, «left his tent» and «posted the faithful for combat» (III 121). If we impugn the legend in order to confine ourselves to the text, a hypothesis arises from the confrontation of the text with the known history of that era: the leader of the Saracen expedition that joined the Judeo-Persian coalition of 614, the author, like Joshua, led the children of Ishmael to the conquest of the «Country» (II 11, 168). Which «Country»? 'ard, «land», Arabic transcription of the Hebrew 'érès, which designates either the world, orbis terrarum (Gn 1.1; 11 and passim), or a particular country. In the second case, employed absolutely, it designates for a certainty the Holy Land (Ps 37.9; 11. 22. 29 and passim). At least to begin with, while waiting to go off to conquer the world.

(To be continued)  

Brother Bruno of Jesus.