

J.-M. Abd-El-Jalil, *Marie et l'Islâm, suivi de Vues musulmanes sur les origines chrétiennes*, Éditions Feuilles, Paris, 2014, 96 p.

The author, Jean Mohammed Abd el-Jalil (1904-1979), came from a Moroccan family and received a good religious formation, including readings from the Koran and the comments from various suras and verses. He learnt what is known in Islam to be the Science of Religion.

In 1922 he arrived in France to initiate in French culture, where he prepared a thesis for a degree in Arabic language and literature. Here, he met Louis Massignon, the great specialist in Islam, who was interested in the political issues in Morocco (p. 7).

Abd-El-Jalil was converted to Christianity and was baptized, receiving both a Christian first name of John, as well as the Muslim name Muhammad, L. Massignon's express desire. Certainly, the latter had a great influence in the conversion of Abd-el-Jalil. The French scientist did not cease to affirm that he obeyed the Koran because it confesses the virginal conception of Mary (p. 8). On the other hand, the young Moroccan liked to remember the miracle through which, baby Jesus speaks in defence of his mother, even from the cradle. He insists that, according to the Qur'an, Mary is immaculate because she has not been touched by the devil at her birth. Thus, the opening of the fervent Christian for the spiritual values of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition is important for the Muslim believer (pp. 8-9).

In the book, the author shows the importance Virgin Mary has in the Islamic thinking and piety, in a concise and precise way, at the same time, but also well documented. He insists upon the extraordinary gifts she received in her life, that are due to the care of God, of the divine Providence. He also makes a comparison between Maria and Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, showing that the Muslims claim that they are superior to each other from different points of view (p. 10). Among the qualities of the two are hospitality and compassion, in their identification recognising the influence of L. Massignon.

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In the Foreword written on September 15, 1949, the author stated his intention to show how the Qur'an presents the Marian psychology, theologies, mystics and the way in which historians have dealt, in time, with the Virgin Mary and that there was a popular Marian cult, particularly among women (p. 17). The author indicates the limits of this book, which contains only some reviews of the theologians and historians of the data of the Qur'an, without reaching a technical study of the problems of history or theology in Islam. The intention is to highlight the common opinion held by the Sunni orthodoxy and even by the moderate Shi'ism (pp. 17-18).

The first chapter called *Mary before the Annunciation* (pp. 21-39) presents all the aspects of the Islamic faith that refer to life before the Virgin's Annunciation. The starting point is the Qur'an, with its references in this regard, which have more to do with the Christian apocrypha about Mary's life, than with the canonical Gospels (Muslim using the term Gospel and not Gospels) (p. 22). Sometimes, Muslim theologians and historians use excerpts from canonical Christian texts from which they begin the analysis and the extraction of the Mariological doctrine.

Regarding the parents of Mary, the Koran knows just her father, Imran, by showing that Islam is concerned with the family genealogy of Mary, which among others include Adam, Noah and Abraham. It is envisaged the confusion that is made by the Koran, not supported in any way by Muslim theologians, between the Mother of God and Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, supporting the idea of an Aaron contemporary of the Mother of God (pp. 25-27). The stories regarding Mary's conception and birth are similar to the apocryphal writings. The virgin birth of the Virgin Mary of her child, Jesus, is unique in the human history, as most Muslim theologians stated, the two being kept away from the touch of the devil, at birth (p. 29). Whenever this privilege of Jesus and Mary is attacked in its existence or significance, by certain Muslim thinkers, representatives of Orthodoxy defended it with increasing force. The author does not neglect the symbolism of the name of Maryam (servant - *al-Khadim*, according to the Muslim texts) given at birth and the promise made by St. Anne, her mother, to entrust her to the Temple in Jerusalem, even if she was not a boy (pp. 31-35).

Chapter I ends with a sub-chapter entitled *Joseph and Mary* (pp. 35-39), the Islamic tradition considering the right Joseph a close relative of Mary, her cousin and her companion in the Jerusalem Temple. Some of the

rare ancient and medieval Muslim historians, such as Al-Ya'qûbî († 891) and Ibn Khaldun († 1406), knew very well the authentic Christian story and have only partially rendered it (p. 35). Most Muslims authors make Joseph Mary's companion in the Temple and in prayer, with an unmatched zeal (p. 36). This intimacy between a man and a young woman did not seem unbelievable to the Muslim exegetes.

Chapter II entitled *Mary after the Annunciation* (pp. 39-57) presents the wonders that accompanied the event of the Annunciation, Our Lady being prepared for this moment since childhood by the angelic apparitions which marked her existence. The author captures the events preceding the Nativity and provides his own translation for some Qur'anic fragments that talk about the Virgin Mary (pp. 40-42). He has several variants of some Muslim theologians about the Annunciation and conception of Jesus (pp. 42-47).

As for the birth of Jesus, the most important event is linked with the defending of Mary by baby Jesus from the cradle and other miracles that occurred that time. The Qur'an does not mention anything about the coming of the Magi from the East, nor about the killing of the innocents in the command of Herod (p. 50). As regarding the flight into Egypt, it is not clearly stated in the Qur'an, but it was inferred by some exegetes in sura 23, verse 52 (pp. 50-51).

Chapter III is entitled *Problems of Mariology* (pp. 57-75) and discusses some aspects of Islamic Mariology. First, the author deals with the Muslim vision of the history seen as a history of the religion of people, of their relationship with the Creator (p. 58). In this history an important role was played by the prophets that God sent to different peoples. History is regarded as being linear, discontinuous, atomistic without an organic development, the prophets' intervention not modifying these traits. In the Qur'an, Jesus is often called "son of Mary", having other names such as "the word", "spirit" and "the Messiah", the author analyzing each of these appointments (pp. 59- 64).

In the subsection entitled *Mary and the Trinity*, the author shows why Islam opposes the worship of the Trinity, as it is understood by Christianity, denying any tendency to associate other deities to Allah, Islam combating the Christian teaching about the Trinity. In this respect, he quotes a selection the most representative Qur'anic verses 4, 170; 5, 77; 5, 116 (p. 64). Islamic dogma remains faithful to postulate of the divine inaccessibil-

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ity, the impossibility of any intimate communication, vital to creatures, completely different from Him, extrinsic to Him and separated from Him (p. 67). On the other hand, some linguistic considerations have to be taken into account, Arabic having a different connotation. For example, the word “son” has a very clear and carnal connotation in Arab and rejects any spiritual, supernatural, hypostatic transfer .

The last chapter is dedicated to *Mary's Dignity* (pp. 69-74). In the Islamic vision, the Virgin Mary occupies a very high position, after her son and all the prophets. The Islamic theology wonders whether she acquired a prophetic dignity, in the broad sense (p. 69). Most theologians do not grant her this status, but only that of holiness, of friendship with God (p. 70). Another aspect of the exceptional character of Mary is linked to the immunity against error and sin. Mary is placed above all women, even above those who belong to the lineage of the Prophet (p. 71). She is for Muslims the true *Sayyida*, i.e. the “Lady” of the women in Paradise, and consequently of all women in the world. The author reminds the Islamic traditions that compares her with other women in the family of the Prophet (pp. 72-73).

The book concludes with other aspects that the veneration of Mary in Islam take, contained in the conclusions at the end of the book (pp. 75-81).

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