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# A Quranic Concept with Universal Appeal: The Innate Monotheistic Disposition (Fitra)

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## Abstract

The aim of this article is to present some of the main issues relating to fitra - a term generally understood as designating an innate monotheistic disposition in humans - in the Qur'an alone, without any subsequent exegetical or traditional contribution<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, it gives pride of place to the intertextual approach, which allows us to situate this notion in a thematic line going back to Ancient Greece, and which gave rise to theories developed in various monotheistic circles of Late Antiquity, particularly Jewish, Judeo-Christian and Christian.

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### *Index terms*—

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Abstract-The aim of this article is to present some of the main issues relating to fitra -a term generally understood as designating an innate monotheistic disposition in humans -in the Qur'an alone, without any subsequent exegetical or traditional contribution<sup>1</sup> lthough the fields of thought mobilized by fitra are particularly numerous and extensive, the brevitas, (ijâz) or "condensation of meanings", quality of the Qur'anic text, is such that much of them can be detected at first glance in verse 30, 30 -the only one that mentions it -as well as in its immediate context.

"Raise your face for worship as a pure monotheistic believer (aqim wajhaka li-d-dîni hanîfan) in accordance with God's original nature according to which He created humans (fîtrata-l-Lâhi allati fatara-nnâsa 'alayhâ). No change to God's creation (lâ tabdîla likhalqi-l-Lâhi) (or: no change in the state conferred by God on humans). This is the unchanging worship (hâdha-d-dînu-l-qayyimu). But most people have no knowledge of it (wa akthar an-nâsi lâ ya 'lamûn)."

Referring solely to the content of the verse, it is possible to highlight eight semantic fields relating to fitra, which appear in the following order:

. On the other hand, it gives pride of place to the intertextual approach, which allows us to situate this notion in a thematic line going back to Ancient Greece, and which gave rise to theories developed in various monotheistic circles of Late Antiquity, particularly Jewish, Judeo-Christian and Christian.

The Qur'anic Co-Text -The physical ability to raise one's face to the sky in order to render due worship to God. -The fact that this worship (ad-dîn) is the only authentic one, by differentiation from the multiple erroneous cults (al-adyân) that exist in the world. -The fact that this behavior is that of the pure monotheistic believer (hanîfan; complement of manner (hâl) in this sentence). -The fact that fitra, affixed to the preceding term, designates a way of believing, being and behaving, and not an instituted religion.

-The origin of fitra, which is "of God", an expression that can cover several levels of relationship and belonging. -The assertion that fitra is the direct result of an act of creation, designated by the same verbal root (fatara).

-The fact that it is a specific characteristic of the human being (insân plur. nâs), both universal and impossible to modify, which leads to authentic and unchanging monotheistic worship (ad-dîn alqayyim). -Finally, the fact that most human beings have no useful science (meaning of 'alîma in the Qur'an) -of this process, even when they have some theoretical knowledge of it.

These semantic fields, which overlap and complement each other in the Qur'anic text, correspond to intertextual references from different periods and origins. For the sake of convenience, we will approach them in an order different from that of the verse, grouping them under headings that enable us to grasp their scope and thematic resonances.

## A Quranic Concept with Universal Appeal: The Innate Monotheistic Disposition (Fitra)

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48 Fa.ta.ra in the Qur'an: Semitic origins and attestations in pre-Qur'anic religious corpuses F.T.R. is a  
49 triconsonantal Semitic root whose earliest attestation dates back to hieroglyphic texts, in which it designates  
50 the slits or "the openings of the celestial windows" through which the gods observe our world ?? . In Syriac, it  
51 covers the idea of "opening by separation", and refers to mushrooms and fruits that have just hatched, emerging  
52 by splitting a husk or bursting a pod. In Arabic, it refers to the appearance of a camel's tooth that has just  
53 pierced the gum ?? In five verses (C 19,90), (C 42,5), (C 67,3), (C 73,18), (C 82,1), F.T.R. takes on several  
54 nuances of this meaning in verbal forms such as tafa , or the "emergence" of a well, dug by a Bedouin in the  
55 desert. ttara or infatara: to split, to be dislocated, separated, shattered, used to describe the disintegration of  
56 the universe at the end of time ?? In Hebrew, the meaning of cleft and opening extends to the designation of  
57 first-born children who . have literally "split the womb" 5 . This idea of inaugural appearance is associated  
58 with that of purity (already attested in ancient Babylonian, a language in which the root puturu means to free  
59 from disease, to purify), which is also used to designate the non-fermentation of food, as in the case of the  
60 azymes consumed at the breaking of the fast (fitr), designated by the same root in Arabic ?? The meaning of "to  
61 create" is first attested in Gue'ez (classical Ethiopian), in the 5th century translation of the Gospels. We find  
62 the expression fâtrè samâya wa-mdra, creator of the heavens and the earth (in Arabic translation-transcription:  
63 fâtir as-samawâti wal-ard) present in six Qur'anic verses (C 6, 14); (C 12, 10); (C 14, 10); (C 35, 1); (C 39, 46);  
64 (C 42, 11) ), as well as the word ftrât, equivalent to fitra (C 30, 30), with the meanings of: creation, beginning,  
65 principle, created thing, but also nature, for example : the nature of Christ (Ka'ase ftrât) . 7

66 This vocation to immortality is evoked by several Quranic uses of the root F.T.R., in cases where it refers to  
67 the creation of humans . Finally, a passage in the Wisdom translated into this language uses the verb fatara to  
68 convey the idea that "God created man for incorruptibility. He made him the image of his own nature." (2, 23),  
69 8 In this respect, it should be remembered that, according to the Qur'an, the Resurrection may occur after their  
70 emergence from the earth in view of the Judgment, in the manner of plants, following the descent of a celestial  
71 water . Particular mention should be made of the verses (C 17, 49-51), which provide a decisive argument in this  
72 direction by establishing a link between the evocation of the return to life and the verb fatara: "(49): They said:  
73 "When we are bones and dust, shall we be resurrected into a new creation? (50) Answer: "Be stone, or iron,  
74 or any created thing, that you can conceive..."(51) They will say "Who then will bring us back?" Answer: "He  
75 who created you (fatarakum) for the first time". 9 5 Exodus, 13-2. ?? In Hebrew, the word fatîr, borrowed from  
76 Aramaic from around the 15th century, is used to designate unleavened bread. In Christian Syriac vocabulary,  
77 the term fatîra is used to refer to Passover, the day of unleavened bread. Thesaurus de Payne Smith STP, oxinii  
78 et typographes clarendoniano, 1879, root F.T.R. ?? Translation of Judith 13, 18: "Blessed be the God who  
79 created heaven and earth" See Lexicon linguae Ethiopicae, Lipsiae, T.O. Weigel, 1865. ?? As we showed in detail  
80 in our article: "Fatara et Fitra, quelques acceptions oubliées", En hommage au père Jacques Jomier, o.p, Le  
81 Cerf, Patrimoines, Paris, 2002, pp. 101-120. , a metaphorical formulation 9 Numerous mutually complementary  
82 passages confirm this comparison by evoking a creation of humans described by fatara in contexts where the  
83 theme of the Resurrection dominates, preceded by a revival by water descended from heaven. The verse (C 36,  
84 22): "Why should I not worship the one who created me (fataranî), you will be brought back to him" comes  
85 just before the following statement (verse 34): "Here is a sign for them: the dead earth which we revive and  
86 from which we bring forth grain which they eat". The verse (C 30, 30) "Raise your face for worship as a pure  
87 monotheistic believer in designating the "sound wave" of the cry that will call them back to life 10 . After this  
88 first stage, the moment of their entry into eternity, corresponding to the new creation, will depend on how each  
89 person reacts at the precise moment of his or her emergence from the grave 11 , by approving or refusing to  
90 follow the call that all have heard, God giving man freedom to determine what will happen to him, until the end  
91 12 1) The "coming into being" they share with all living creatures. It occurs through birth when they come into  
92 the world, and is partially repeated in the revival that will take place when they leave the tomb for the Last  
93 Judgment at the end of time, the "Day of . Thus, as in the Gospel passages translated into Gue'ez, in the Qur'an  
94 the root fatara is used to describe two types of creation: that of all the components of the universe, which is  
95 "creation arising", and that specific to human beings, which is at the same time "creation differentiation". From  
96 this point of view, the condition of being created takes on a double meaning when it comes to them : accordance  
97 with God's original nature according to which He created humans (fitrata-l-Lâhi allati fatara-n-nâsa 'alayhâ), is  
98 preceded by the following descriptions: (verse 24): "He sends down water from heaven by which he gives life to  
99 the earth when it is dead" and (verse 27) "It is he who gives a beginning to creation, then he will renew it, that is  
100 easy for him". Finally, the verse (C 11, 51): "O my people! I do not ask you for a wage for this. My wages belong  
101 only to him who created me (fataranî). Do you not understand?" is directly adjoined to the following passage:  
102 (verse 52) "O my people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then return to Him. He will send you abundant rain  
103 from the sky, and He will add strength to your strength", and a little further on we find verse 61: "O My people,  
104 worship Allâh! You have no God but Him; it is He who has produced you from the earth and made you dwell  
105 therein". ??0 The Koran devotes several passages to this question, one of the most remarkable being the one in  
106 which Abraham asks God how he brings the dead back to life. The answer is given in a parabolic representation:  
107 (C 2, 160): "God said: -Take an aviary (lit.: "a foursome") of birds and accustom them to you (to your voice).  
108 Then arrange some of them on each mountain (kulli jabalin= on different mountains) and call them. The fact  
109 that this special water actually represents "a sound wave" is confirmed by the description of the zajra, the cry  
110 that will call back the dead -(C 37, 14-21): " (16) When we are dead and become dust and bones, will we be

111 raised (17) ourselves and our first ancestors too? (18) Say: "Yes, and you will humble yourselves! (19) There will  
112 be but one cry (vocal signal which is a reviving wave) (zajratun wâhidatun); then they will see (20) and they  
113 will say: "Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgement! -which echoes Ezekiel's vision (43, 2) of the "sound of many  
114 waters": "And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east. His voice was like the sound of many  
115 waters, and the earth shone with his glory". ???1 The Qur'an presents the example of those who, too attached  
116 to the things of earthly life, will not understand what is happening on the Day of Rising (or of awakening: yawm  
117 al-qiyâma). This is why they will exclaim, convinced that there is no life except in this world, "Who then has  
118 torn us (ba'athanâ) from our beds (lit.: propelled or sent us out of our beds (marqadinâ)?" (C 36, 52). On that  
119 day, they will not be heading towards the Resurrection with the chosen ones. 12 (C 14, 4): "We have never sent  
120 a messenger except in the language of his people so that it (the message) may be clear to them. God lets go  
121 astray whoever wants to go astray and guides whoever wants to be guided" (Allâhu yahdî man yashâ' wa-yudillu  
122 man yashâ'). He is the Glorious, the Wise" and (C 18, 29) "whoever wills, let him believe; whoever wills, let him  
123 disbelieve".

124 Riding" (yawm al-qiyâma) (C 22, 69). This is to be followed by the Resurrection, second creation comparable  
125 to a second birth.

126 2) The "differentiation" that distinguishes them from all other creatures. This is the exceptional possibility  
127 offered to them, thanks to the particular type of consciousness with which they have been endowed, of  
128 participating in the fulfillment of their resurrection by conforming or not their earthly life to their true vocation,  
129 and consequently accessing or not, from the Day of Riding, to a happy eternal existence.

130 In this sense, the fitra bears witness to the freedom conferred on them by God in all matters concerning their  
131 adherence to the faith, and their access to the path leading to salvation.

132 The coherence of the various aspects of this last meaning is completed in the Qur'an by the reminder of the  
133 fundamental impact of the upright posture "raise your face (aqim wajhaka)" (C 30, 30), which is specific to the  
134 human being, a posture he will regain at the time of the Final Rising (qiyâma).

## 135 **1 The innate monotheism of the human being in relation to his** 136 **upright posture: the bashar's transmutation into insân.**

137 The relationship between man's upright posture and his natural ability to access authentic monotheistic worship  
138 is the continuation of a theological thinking of late antique authors who sought to highlight the harmony that  
139 reigns between the state of the creation and the economy of salvation.

140 The Qur'anic notion of fitra is, in this perspective, the culmination of the historical unfolding of a very ancient  
141 philosophical-religious tradition that goes back, in part, to Epicurus (342-270 BC), considered to be the first  
142 to have argued in favor of the existence of divinity by means of the observation that every human being has a  
143 prenotation (anticipatio), or innate knowledge of it ???3 The idea of a natural and universal apprehension of the  
144 divine was then developed by the Stoics (300 BC-200 AC), who declared that the gods had created "standing  
145 man", as opposed to animals whose faces are turned towards the ground, so that he could raise his face to heaven  
146 to find celestial deities in place of earthly idols .

## 147 **2 14**

148 . These philosophers were alluding to the astral divinities of the Greek pantheon, celestial bodies animated by  
149 regular movements having been considered the true gods since the "Pythagorean revolution", a term covering a  
150 set of doctrines which had drawn this consequence from the discovery, by the Babylonian Magi, of their regular  
151 cyclical revolutions ???5 This theme is also found in the corpus of Hermes Trismegistus ???6 In monotheistic circles,  
152 the question was first developed by Philo of Alexandria, who argued that only the Jewish people, by virtue of  
153 their fidelity to the one transcendent God, had made themselves worthy of the religious knowledge conferred on  
154 all human beings by their original nature. He added the statement that the Creator having deemed it profitable  
155 for his work, man, to be able to form an idea of the One who in making him sent him from above a breath of  
156 his own deity, the invisible divinity has therefore imprinted in the human soul the marks of its own being, which  
157 differentiates it from the rest of creation .

158 It is in the thought of his Christian disciple, Clement, that we find the same theme in a form that more  
159 significantly resembles the Qur'anic verse, in connection with a criticism of the philosophers, in this case the  
160 Stoics: "On this point the chorus of philosophers is mistaken, who acknowledge that man is truly born for the  
161 contemplation of heaven, but who adore celestial phenomena and the spectacle that is revealed to their eyes.  
162 Let none of you worship the sun, but direct your desires to the maker of the sun; let you not divinize the world,  
163 but seek the creator of the world." . 18 ???6 The theme of the verticality of human stature was addressed by  
164 Xenophon (430-355 BC) in his Memorabilia as follows: "They (the gods) created man to be the only upright  
165 person among all the animals, an attitude that enables him to see further, to look more easily at the objects  
166 above him, and to avoid danger more easily". From the time of the Tusculan Disputations, onwards, this upright  
167 posture had been linked to the purpose of worshipping one or more celestial deities: "Man himself, placed here  
168 below as if to contemplate and honour with worship the sky and the gods (stars)". Cicero takes up this same  
169 argument in his De Natura Deorum (330-7,11)., where he talks about the upright position, the exclusive privilege  
170 of man, who has received it in order to be able to see the sky and, consequently, to attain knowledge of the

### 3 THE HERMENEUTIC THRESHOLD OF DIVINE INSTITUTES: THE MONOTHEISTIC VOCATION OF THE ANTHROPOS

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171 gods: "Man alone has an upright stature, so that he can look up to heaven as to the place of his kinship and his  
172 first abode". H. Festugières notes that this same argument is put forward in *Corpus Hermeticum* XI, 20. The  
173 Hermetic texts state that: "Man contemplates the sky" and that "Everything is clear to him, the sky does not  
174 seem too high". See : *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, II, *Le Dieu Cosmique*, par le R. P. Festugière, Société  
175 d'édition les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1981, ch. XIII, le témoignage de Cicéron sur la religion cosmique, pp. 370-468.  
176 Nevertheless, this is the only common element between the Hermes texts and the Qur'an, since their points of  
177 view diverge radically afterwards, this characteristic of man having as its corollary, for the former, his ability  
178 to "grasp" divine power in the sky, which he brings down into his idols in order to confer it on them. 17 *Quod*  
179 *deterius potiori insidiari soleat*, 86-90. 178 Clement of Alexandria (Protrepticus), *Le Protreptique*, Introduction,  
180 translation and notes by Claude Mondésert, S.J., *Sources Chrétiennes*, Le Cerf, Paris, 1949, IV, 63, 4-5.

181 These are the main elements of the hoopoe's denunciation of the ruler of the Sabâ (queen of Sheba in the  
182 Bible), for having fallen into the error of worshipping the sun, the verse (C 27, 24) echoing Deuteronomy 17, 2.  
183 We also find here the reflection attributed to Abraham in verses (C 6, 76-77).

184 The anonymous Christian text *Letter to Diognetus* includes a reminder of this question: "God gave men reason  
185 and understanding; to them alone he allowed to lift up their eyes to heaven; he formed them in his image" (Gn.  
186 I, 26, 1) 179 . The reference to this passage from Genesis is particularly significant insofar as it echoes Philo's  
187 assertion that all men are born with a spiritual gift that is "something from God". Finally, in a similar vein, the  
188 pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* state that: "The souls of men, by the secret power of God, recognize the One  
189 they must love even before they are instructed" 20 .

### 190 3 The hermeneutic threshold of Divine Institutes: the monothe- 191 istic vocation of the anthropos

192 The Fathers of the Church, as well as the Christian theologians of late antiquity, in turn pondered this concept,  
193 reorganizing its many aspects in various ways. Among them, Lactantius was the first and, it would seem, the  
194 only to establish a direct link between three ideas expressed and presented separately until then:

195 -The universal consensus around the innate natural knowledge of divinity. -The fact that this stems from the  
196 defining characteristic of man's ipseity, created to stand on his own two feet in order to renounce earthly idols  
197 and seek his religion in heaven. -Finally, the decision to reject the stars as celestial divinities in favor of the one  
198 transcendent God.

199 In this case, the natural recognition of an ineffable divinity is linked to man's primary vocation, since he has  
200 been created capable of looking up to heaven, and of drawing the ultimate consequences from this state. God  
201 guides those who remain faithful to the contemplation of heaven, enlightening them on their vocation.

202 The same process is described in the Qur'an, as the following passages testify: *Divine Institutes*, VI, 8, 4, 5.

203 Look not to the earth, but to heaven (...) follow God, serve not our idols of the earth, but (turn) to the god  
204 of heaven (...) Stretch out our gaze towards heaven (...) our steps will be directed on the right path. Qur'an (2,  
205 144) "We often see you with your face turned towards heaven. We will give you a direction that pleases you (...)"

206 Just as the vocation of the human being, created in such a way as to be able to stand upright and turn his face  
207 towards the sky to find there the signs of a unique divinity, constitutes the true meaning of the word *anthropos*  
208 according to Lactantius 21 , so the Qur'an completes the meanings of the notion of *fitra* with that of *hanifiyya*,  
209 (quality of the true believer who rejects astral cults after having turned away from earthly idols) 22 : 179 *Letter*  
210 *to Diognetus* (A Diognète) (anonymous text composed around the second century), 179 *introduction*, translation  
211 and commentary by Henri Irénée Marrou, 2nd ed. *Sources Chrétiennes*, no. 33 bis, Le Cerf, Paris, 1965, X, 2.  
212 20 *Recognitions*, 179V, 179, 179. 21 Lactantius trusted to explain the word *anthropos* by man's ability to look  
213 upwards (*sursum spectare* = *ano atrein*), « he who looks upward s » : "While all the other animals look down on  
214 the earth, man has been given a high face, turned towards the sky, and he has been ordered to contemplate the  
215 heavens, to look up towards the stars. See *Divine Institutes*, II, I, 15 et 16. 1792 As we showed for the first time  
216 in our article: Geneviève Gobillot, "Les Pères de l'Eglise et la pensée de l'Islam", *L'Orient chrétien dans l'empire*  
217 *musulman*, collective work, edited by G. Gobillot and M.Th. Urvoy, expanded edition of the proceedings of the  
218 colloquium held on 15 and 16 October 2004 in homage to Gérard Troupeau, *Les éditions de Paris*, Paris, 2005,  
219 pp. 59-90. If God wanted us to look up to heaven, it's not without reason. We have been given our own right  
220 to fix our gaze on heaven, standing firm, so that we may seek religion up there (*ut religionem ibi quaeramus*)  
221 and contemplate God with our spirit, who has his seat up there, since we cannot do so with our eyes. This is  
222 precisely what he who worships bronze or stone, earthly objects, does not do". (Lactantius alludes in this same  
223 passage to the rejection of the worship of celestial bodies, but in a more abbreviated form than the Qur'an. He  
224 specifies, in order to differentiate the religion of the transcendent god from astral cults): (*Divine Institutes*, II, V,  
225 20-25) "As the philosophers did not distinguish between skill and divine power in the organization of the courses  
226 of the stars, they mistook these stars for living beings. If, then, it is not possible for the planets to be gods,  
227 neither can the sun and moon be gods." 23 (See also *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 21, 1-5). This rejection of  
228 the divinization of the stars in favor of the one, transcendent God corresponds point for point to the Qur'anic  
229 notion of *hanifiyya*.

230 Qur'an (30, 30-31) Raise your face (towards heaven) in view of worship (the worship of God which consists  
231 in turning away from all material idols) as a pure monotheist (*hanîfan*), (as a man who has also rejected the

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232 worship of astral divinities) in accordance with the innate nature according to which God created mankind. No  
233 substitution for God's creation (or: no substitution for God's conception of man). This is unchanging worship  
234 (ad-dîn al-qayyim). But most people have no knowledge of it. Return repentant to God, fear Him, perform  
235 the prayer, do not be among the polytheists. (Hanif is the characteristic that most often refers to Abraham in  
236 the Qur'an. It refers to a particularity of this patriarch: his refusal to worship idols, but also heavenly bodies,  
237 divinized, as the following verse indicates):

238 (6, 76-77): "When night enveloped him, he saw a star and said, 'Behold my Lord'. But when it had disappeared,  
239 he added: "I do not love those who disappear". When he saw the moon rising, he said: "This is my Lord. But  
240 when it disappeared, he said: "If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those who go astray". When he  
241 saw the sun rising, he said: "This is my Lord, he is the greatest. But when it was gone, he said: "O my people, I  
242 disown what you associate with God". This argument is itself very old and widespread; one of its earliest known  
243 attestations appears in the Apocalypse of Abraham (VII, 1, 7) 774 . Following Philo, it was taken up by almost  
244 all theologians and Church Fathers 25 . The demonstrative elements follow one another and are organized in  
245 both corpuses according to an almost identical argumentation, the only difference being that the Qur'an adopts a  
246 mostly allusive and discontinuous formulation, whereas Lactantius' text develops each stage of the demonstration  
247 in an explicit and linear manner.

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249 This supports the hypothesis that the earliest readers and listeners of the Qur'anic text were able to refer to the  
250 hermeneutical threshold represented by the Christian theologian's thought, at least for grasping these passages.

251 Both texts refer to the argumentation that had developed in monotheistic circles, especially from the first  
252 century of the Christian era onwards, in response to the theories of Greek philosophers. In addition to the  
253 theories of Philo of Alexandria, the injunction to abandon false astral divinities is present in several texts of Late  
254 Antiquity, for example in the Book of Jubilees 26 . Such a reaction is alluded to in verse (C 37, 89), which shows  
255 Abraham sickened by the idea of worshipping the stars, thereby referring to the content of verses (C 6, 76-79)  
256 which define this attitude of the patriarch as that willed by God, in accordance with the way he created (fatara)  
257 the world (C 4, 79): "I direct my face towards him who created the heavens and the earth in hanif, and I am not  
258 among the polytheists". To be hanif is therefore, according to the Qur'an, as Lactantius indicates in his 773 See  
259 also Epitome of the Divine Institutes, 20, 10. 24 "More than the earth, I will call the sun worthy of veneration,  
260 because it illuminates the world and the different atmospheres with its rays. But neither will I place it among  
261 the gods, for at night its course is obscured by the clouds" and "Nor will I call the moon and the stars "gods",  
262 for they too, in their time, at night, obscure their light". P. Crapon de Caprona, *Le Coran aux sources de la*  
263 *parole oraculaire, Le Coran aux sources de la parole oraculaire : structures rythmiques et sourates mecquoises,*  
264 *Publications orientalistes de France, Paris, 1981, p 105* considers that this attitude of the hanif who turns away  
265 from idols in the same way as Abraham turns away successively from the moon, the sun and the stars is reflected  
266 in the concordance of the two paragrammatical roots h.n.th and h.n. f, one of whose primary meanings is "to  
267 turn away". 775 For Philo (*De vita contemplativa*, 3, 5) : "Will they be those who adore the celestial influences,  
268 the sun, the moon, the other stars, fixed or wandering, the whole sky and the world? These beings, no more than  
269 the others, are not self-made; they are the work of a demiurge, of a profound science". The theme of the standing  
270 man, looking up at the sky in search of pure worship, was not exclusive to monotheistic circles, as this passage  
271 from the *Mathésis* of Firmicus Maternus, written before his conversion to Christianity, a period when he seems to  
272 have been sensitive to a neo-Platonist type of henotheism, proves: "We must not entertain any earthly thoughts,  
273 especially since we know that God, our creator, has made us, with the mastery of a divine craftsman, in such a  
274 way that the shape of our erect body remains free from any humiliating abasement, and that we see nothing else,  
275 as soon as we open our first gaze, but the Sun, the Moon, the stars and their magnificent and immortal home,  
276 the world" *Mathesis*, VIII, I, 3. ed. and trans. Pierre Monat, books III-V, 77UF, Paris, 1994, t. III, p. 232. 26  
277 For the Apocalypse of Abraham, see VII, 1-7, Jubilees XII, 16-17; for Philo : *De decalogo*, 53; *De specialibus*  
278 *legibus*, II, 255; *Letter of Jeremiah*, 59-62. See also: *Targum Neofiti on Genesis*, XVIII, 1; *Chronicle of Nestor*,  
279 year 6494.

280 27 "God fashioned us and endowed us with life not to look at the sky and the sun, as Anaxagoras thought,  
281 but to worship him, the creator of the sun and the sky, with a pure and blameless conscience". *Divine Institutes*,  
282 VI, pp. 117-119. The editor of volume IV of the *Divine Institutions, Institutions divines, Sources Chrétiennes*  
283 n o . 377, *Le Cerf, Paris, 1992, Pierre Monat*, refers for a study of this theme in Lactantius to the work of A.  
284 Wlosock, *Laktanz und die philosophische Gnosis, Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und terminologie des gnostischen*  
285 *77rlösungsvorstellung*, Heidelberg, Winter, 1960, p. 259. 28 As Mary says: (C 3, 47) "I am going to have a child  
286 when no bashar (being with the apparent characteristics of a human being) has touched me". 29 (C 3, 59) : The  
287 likeness of Jesus in Allah's sight is that of Adam: He created him from dust, then said to him, "Be," and he  
288 was. 770 This language corresponds to that of the Qur'an, an Arabic language perfected or "made clear" (lisân  
289 'arabî mubîn) through which God transmits his message to mankind. 771 It is a text whose original language is  
290 Greek and which has also been preserved in Latin and Old Slavonic. It most certainly predates the Council of  
291 Ephesus (431), and some scholars even believe that it dates back to the second century. *Apocryphes chrétiens*  
292 I, *Pléiade edition, edited by François Bovon and Pierre Geoltrain, Gallimard, 1997, pp. 263-295.* The passage  
293 quoted here is on page 290. definition of anthropos, the upright man, to turn away from earthly idols and to

## 5 THE TRANSMUTATION OF BASHAR INTO INSÂN ACCORDING TO THE QUR'AN

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294 refuse, as an extension of this attitude, the divinization of celestial bodies, an error that this author himself  
295 explicitly attributed to the philosophers, as he reminds us by evoking Anaxagoras (a pre-Socratic who died in  
296 428 BC) ??? .

### 297 5 The transmutation of bashar into insân according to the 298 Qur'an

299 According to the Qur'an, hanifiyya, like fitra, is one of the specific capacities conferred on each human being  
300 when he or she comes into the world. Insofar as these are what determine his ipsity, it seems logical that the  
301 mode of creation that characterizes them is that which gave existence to the first man, represented by Adam.

302 To briefly summarize this creative process, the Qur'an relies on the difference between two technical terms:  
303 bashar and insân. The former represents in all its occurrences a "being in human form" endowed with all the  
304 apparent characteristics of man: physical appearance, intellectual capacities, psychological sensitivity. This is  
305 evidenced by the fact that, when the Qur'an refers to a man by the mere fact that he eats, drinks, reproduces,  
306 thinks and speaks, or that he is mortal, it gives him the name bashar 28 . All he lacks are the traits corresponding  
307 to fitra, namely "the perfection of form accomplished by the very hand of God, (ahsan altaqwîm), whose etymology  
308 recalls the straightening of his stature, and the infusion of spirit.

309 A verse also states that, when God wanted to create Adam, he took a "bashar of clay", a fine dust particularly  
310 suited to being molded, and that by a command: "kun" (« be » !) he was a man 29 . He then taught him all  
311 the names directly (wa-'allama Âdama-lasmâ'a kullahâ) (C 2, 31), so that he could turn to what was right and  
312 away from what was wrong, knowing that, according to the Qur'anic theory of divine language, there is no gap  
313 between the name and the object named, the appellation being directly related to the essence of the being it  
314 designates 30 .

315 One passage bears witness both to this transformation of the bashar and to the subtlety that characterized it,  
316 to the extent that it may have remained invisible to some. This is the episode in which God orders the angels  
317 to prostrate themselves before Adam. Iblîs, the only one to refuse, is questioned by God about the reasons for  
318 his behavior. (C 38, 71-76) "When your Lord said to the angels: Behold, I create a bashar of clay (tîn). When  
319 I have fashioned it harmoniously (sawwaytuhu) and breathed into it of my spirit (nafakhtu fihî min ruhî), begin  
320 to prostrate yourselves before it. The angels prostrated themselves, except for Iblîs, who became proud and was  
321 among those who covered up the truth (with lies) (wa-kâna min al-kâfirîn). The first answer he gave when God  
322 asked him about the causes of his attitude is comparable to the one given in the apocryphal text entitled: The  
323 Questions of Bartholomew 31 :

324 The Questions of Bartholomew 4, 54-56. "When I (the Demon) returned from the ends of the world, Michael  
325 said to me: 'Prostrate yourself before the image of God, which he fashioned according to his likeness. But  
326 I replied: I, who am fire from fire, the first angel to be fashioned, should bow down before clay and matter.  
327 Michael said to me: "Prostrate yourself so that God will not be angry with you. I answered, "No, God will not  
328 be angry with me, but I will set up my throne in front of his throne ??? Qur'an (7, 12-13) "God said: -What  
329 prevents you (Iblîs, the Demon) from prostrating yourself (before Adam) when I command you? He said: -I am  
330 better than him; you created me from fire and him from clay. God said: "Come down from here, you don't have  
331 to be proud in this place, come out! You are among the humiliated (saghirîn)!"

332 , and I will be like him. Then God was angry with me and cast me down, commanding the floodgates of  
333 heaven to be opened. ??? Note that this attitude of Satan is also described by Ephrem in his Commentary on the  
334 Diatessaron, Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant ou Diatessaron, introduction, traduction et notes par Louis  
335 Leloir, Sources chrétiennes n° 121, Paris, 1966, p. 191: "I will set my throne on the stars". J.M. Rosenstiehl has  
336 collected a large number of testimonies on this Christian theme (he refers to : Jean-Marc Rosenstiehl, "La chute  
337 de l'ange (origines et développements d'une légende : ses attestations dans la littérature copte) But, according to  
338 the Qur'an, Iblîs also gave another answer relating to Adam's nature: (C 15, 33): "Shall I prostrate myself before  
339 a bashar (a being in human form) whom you have created from a clay similar to that used in pottery, taken from  
340 malleable mud?". This speech expresses his refusal to see that Adam, having received ontological completion and  
341 spiritual breath from God, is no longer a bashar. In this sense, he behaves like a kâfir (concealer of the truth),  
342 in the sense that he remains fixed on the first characteristics of a being whose transmutation corresponding to  
343 the fitra that characterizes him he refuses to take into account.

344 This means that the straightening of man's stature, the only physical difference between bashar and insân, has  
345 been almost imperceptible. On the other hand, the moral and spiritual aspect of this transformation was decisive  
346 for human beings who, from that moment on, embarked on an exceptional earthly adventure, being endowed  
347 with such capacities that God entrusted them with the caliphate, i.e. responsibility for the world around them.

348 A Qur'anic passage, to which many hermeneutical thresholds correspond, points out that the angels themselves  
349 took a step backwards when God announced His decision to them, since they too apparently knew only the  
350 weaknesses of the bashar. Particular mention should be made of the Apocalypse of Paul (dated to the 2nd-3rd  
351 centuries AD) and Pseudo Clementine Recognitions:

352 Apocalypse of Paul (4a-7a) 5a: "Sometimes the moon and stars called out to the Lord: 'Lord, Almighty God,  
353 you have given us the empire of the night. How far must we contemplate the impiety, fornication and homicide  
354 committed by the sons of men? Leave it to us. We will show them what we can, so that they may know that

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355 You alone are God." 5b: "Then a voice came to them and said, 'I know all this, my eye sees and my ear hears,  
356 but my patience bears with them until they turn and repent. If they do not return to me, I will judge them."  
357 Recognitions V, 27, 4-5.

358 "Creation is eager to unleash its vengeance on the ungodly. Yet God's goodness restrains it and restrains his  
359 indignation against the ungodly by forcing it to yield to his mercy, rather than flare up against the sins and  
360 crimes of men; for God's patience awaits the conversion of men as long as they are in this body."

361 Qur'an 2, 30 "When your Lord said to the angels, 'And behold, I appoint a caliph over the earth'. They said,  
362 "Are you establishing someone who will do evil and shed blood, while we praise and glorify you and proclaim  
363 your holiness?" ??? The Lord said, "I know what you don't know". The allusion to "what they didn't know"  
364 is precisely what distinguishes man's abilities from those of the bashar. While both can behave violently, their  
365 ability to change and improve is very unequal.

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367 Men thus accepted the responsibility entrusted to them, despite the faults and the weaknesses of their character,  
368 which soon began to play nasty tricks on them, as evidenced by the fact that very soon they began to turn away  
369 from the innate monotheism of the first generations of antediluvians to behave like polytheists.

370 In this respect, the Qur'an contradicts the opinion of those who were claiming that polytheism came first,  
371 and that mankind then slowly progressed towards monotheism. In fact, from the very beginning and throughout  
372 its history, mankind has had the capacity to live on the straight path of monotheism, from which it has strayed  
373 both through negligence and indulgence of its passions, and because of their erroneous dogmas and their false  
374 representations of the sacred. This is why God, in his latest revelation, reminds us of the existence of the fitra,  
375 from which humans should never have strayed.

376 The fitra, characteristic of insân, invalidates Evhemère's theory and abrogates the notion of original sin,

377 The Qur'an's concept of the anthropos as characterized by fitra goes hand in hand with a view that Evhemerus'  
378 theory, which was the subject of much polemic, particularly in Christian circles of late antiquity, cannot be  
379 considered relevant. Indeed, insofar as the tendency to monotheism is innate in man, the cult model that  
380 corresponds to it must necessarily have preceded any form of polytheism in time.

381 Without explicitly mentioning evhemism, the Qur'an, in keeping with its often allusive approach, clearly  
382 demonstrates its obsolescence. To do so, it draws a clear distinction between the "Fathers", close relatives and  
383 ancestors who directly transmit cults of a polytheistic nature to their descendants, and the "first Fathers" or  
384 "most ancient Fathers", distant ancestors close to the first two antediluvian generations, characterized by their  
385 monotheism. On this point, it is particularly enlightening to parallel its reasoning with that of the Divine  
386 Institutes:

387 Divine Institutes V, XIX, 3: "If they are asked the reason for this belief (in false gods), they can offer none,  
388 but have recourse to the authority of the ancestors (maiorum), saying that they were wise men whom they had  
389 approved, that they knew what was best; and they themselves strip themselves of their own ideas and renounce  
390 the use of their reason in order to believe in the errors of others. Thus, trapped in total ignorance, they know  
391 neither themselves nor their gods". II, VI, 7: "These are the religions handed down to them by their ancestors,  
392 which they insist on protecting and defending with the utmost fervor; and they do not examine what they are,  
393 but consider them to be true and proven, since they were handed down by the ancients. II, VI, 10: "What will  
394 you do? Will you rather follow the ancients or reason, which was not introduced into you by a stranger but which  
395 you yourself found and discovered, when you tore down all religions from top to bottom? (11) If filial piety tells  
396 you to follow the ancients, then confess that they were stupid to have put themselves at the service of religions  
397 established against reason." II, VI, 15: This is what these fathers (patres) are, men dressed in skins, men with  
398 rustic hearts, to whose decisions learned and competent people scrupulously submit.

399 Qur'an (5, 104): "When it is said to them: -Come to what God has revealed to the Messenger, they reply:  
400 -The example we find in our fathers is enough for us. What if their fathers (abâ') knew nothing, if they were not  
401 guided? O you who believe, you are responsible for yourselves. Whoever goes astray will not harm you if you  
402 are well guided".

403 (7, 27): "When they commit an abominable act (giving partners to God), they say: 'We found that our fathers  
404 did the same; God ordered us to do it'".

405 (7, 69) : "Have you come to us so that we may worship God, the only One, and abandon what our fathers  
406 worshipped?" (43, 22): They say: "We found our fathers all following the same path. We follow in their footsteps.  
407 (39, 9) "Are those who know and the ignorant equal? The only ones who think are those who have intelligence  
408 of heart".

409 (2, 170): "When they are told, 'Follow what God has revealed', they reply, 'No! They answer: No! We follow  
410 the custom of our fathers. What if their fathers understood nothing and they were not on the right path? The  
411 unbelievers are like cattle that are shouted at and only hear a cry and a call: deaf, dumb, blind, they understand  
412 nothing."

413 The warning against blindly relying on patriarchal tradition was a well-known theme among Christian and  
414 Judeo-Christian apologists of late antiquity. Numerous texts insist on the need for reason to overcome an aberrant  
415 custom, even if it is supported by the ethic of respect and attachment to one's parents. With this in mind, the  
416 hanifiyya of Abraham consists, their descendants if the latter do not decide to put an end to the transmission

417 of misguidance imposed on them by authority. This is evoked by Lactantius through the image he gives of men  
418 dressed in skins, and by the Qur'an through the expression "like cattle".

419 Following these initial observations, other passages that can be paralleled establish a clear difference between  
420 close and distant ancestors:

421 Close ancestors are the progenitors, as well as the few generations that preceded them over a limited period.  
422 They take the child away from its natural monotheism and educate it according to a false religion, or even pagan  
423 polytheism.

424 The distant ancestors represent the first people to populate the earth. They were not polytheists. They  
425 were true monotheists, as the Divine Institutions affirm. For the Qur'an, this monotheism was the object of a  
426 testimony directly inspired by God, which tradition has named "the first covenant" of the Sons of Adam: Divine  
427 Institutes II, 13, 12 They are mistaken who maintain that the worship of gods has existed since the beginning of  
428 the world and that paganism is prior to belief in God, which they believe to have been invented later, because  
429 they are ignorant of the source and origin of truth". IV, I, 4-5 "Men ceased to lift their faces to heaven, while  
430 their minds, nailed to the ground, remained fixed there by everything earthly in their possessions as in their  
431 religions. The result (of belief in the multiple gods represented by idols) was a division of mankind, as well as all  
432 kinds of deception and sacrilege.

## 433 7 II, 13, 8 -12

434 As for the direct descendants of the father, they were called the Hebrews; it was among them that the religion  
435 of God remained. But as their numbers multiplied enormously, they went into exile to seek new lands (...) The  
436 others (descendants of Ham) who were scattered over the earth (after the flood), contemplated the elements of  
437 the world with admiration and began to venerate the sky, the sun, the earth and the sea. In time, they began to  
438 build temples and statues for their most powerful kings, and decided to worship them with victims and perfumes.  
439 Thus were formed the nations (gentes) who have no knowledge of God.

440 Qur'an (7, 172) "When your Lord drew offspring from the loins of the sons of Adam, He made them testify  
441 against themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: "Yes, we bear witness! And this is so that you will not say  
442 on the Day of Rectification (yawm al-qiyâma): We were caught unawares, or that you will not say: Our fathers  
443 were once polytheists, we are their descendants. Will you make us perish because of the deeds performed by  
444 impostors?"

## 445 8 2, 213

446 "Men formed a single community. God sent them the prophets (al-nabiyîna) to bring them good news and to  
447 warn them".

## 448 9 7, 168

449 "We divided them (the Sons of Israel) on earth into communities, there are among them the righteous and others  
450 who are not".

## 451 10 7, 69

452 "Remember! When your Lord made you caliphs after the disappearance of the people of Noah, He developed  
453 your expansion in the world."

454 (The Qur'an speaks here of the people of 'Âd, i.e. ancient Arabs, to whom it attributes this expansion on  
455 earth. They will be followed by the Thamûd, then the Madian, all of whom will refuse Noah's inheritance of the  
456 true faith, which was intended for them).

457 Both texts convey the idea that a fraction of the Sons of Israel, despite having received the true monotheistic  
458 religion from the beginning, had a share of responsibility in the subsequent communal divisions of humanity.  
459 However, the Qur'an attaches greater importance to the fact that, after the Deluge, the torch of monotheism was  
460 first offered to the Arabs, who, having accepted from the caliphate only the earthly power conferred on them  
461 by God to exercise it ??4 Finally, each corpus defines in its own way the distinction between two categories  
462 of forefathers: those close to us, polytheistic or misguided, and the most distant ancestors, the first men on  
463 earth, monotheistic, disowned and persecuted the prophets sent to them (Hûd, then Sâlih), thereby delaying  
464 the triumph of Truth in the world. ??4 See for example (C 41, 15) "As for the 'Âd, they were unjustly proud  
465 on earth. They said: "Who will be more powerful than us? Did they not see that God, who created them,  
466 is greater than they in strength? Yet they denied our signs". and united, according to the Qur'an, in a single  
467 community that later divided. Lactantius explains this phenomenon by the fact that men belonging to the  
468 generations that had succeeded the first Hebrews no longer "raised their faces to heaven" ??5 According to the  
469 latter, the deviation of mankind would have begun much earlier, in the antediluvian period, which logically  
470 corresponds to the fact that Noah's people would have been destroyed, according to verses 22 and 23 of Sura  
471 71 after expressing their attachment to polytheism: "They plotted an immense , i.e. no longer followed their  
472 natural monotheistic inclination, their fitrahanifiyya according to the Qur'an. ??5 Epitome of Divine Institutes,  
473 (Epitomé des Institutions divines) 20, 4) "If they had raised their eyes and looked up to heaven (...) to worship  
474 earthly objects is to bow down to the ground. Multiple gods are powerless. The attitude received from God (the



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475 upright posture), which is in the image of God, makes it possible to know and confers salvation". ruse and said:  
476 do not forsake (lâ tadharunna) your deities (alihatakum) and do not forsake (wa lâ tadharunna) neither Wadd,  
477 nor Suwâ', nor Yaghûth nor Ya'ûq nor Nasr. They have led many astray. O God, do not increase the unjust  
478 except in misguidance (...). The inaugural monotheistic period would thus be restricted to the first generation  
479 of the sons of Adam's sons, in other words that of his grandsons, as attested by the formula of the testimony of  
480 the descendants of Adam's sons. Indeed, it should be emphasized that the first generation corresponding to the  
481 appellation "descendants of the Sons of Adam" is represented by an emblematic figure: Enoch son of Seth, who  
482 should not be confused with Enoch son of Jared, the seventh patriarch after Adam, to whom Enochian literature  
483 is attributed. This third generation of men to have lived on earth would logically seem to have been the ones  
484 who had to testify before God, since they were already no longer living in his intimacy and meeting him directly,  
485 like the representatives of the two previous generations. Indeed, according to both the Bible and the Apocrypha,  
486 Adam had been created by His hand, and his sons had still been in regular contact with Him. The "Enochian"  
487 generation is, moreover, emblematic in the sense that, according to certain rabbinic traditions, it was the last to  
488 practice pure monotheistic worship. In the Targum of the Pentateuch (Genesis, 4, 26), it is said: "To Seth (the  
489 second human generation) a son was born, and he called his name Enoch. Then the children of men began to  
490 make idols for themselves and to call them by the name of the word of Yahweh".

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492 While in Lactantius' terminology there is a synonymy between the terms maiores and patres, which designate  
493 indifferently the two classes of ancestors, the Qur'an draws a very precise distinction between the abâ' (parents  
494 and close ancestors) and the abâ' al-awwalûn, the "first ancestors", which illustrates the absence of synonymy  
495 characterizing the "made clear" Arabic language (lisân 'arabî mubîn) that characterizes it.

496 The first ancestors are those who recognized the absolute divine suzerainty, the kingship of a single God: (C  
497 37, 125-126): "(Elijah said): Will you invoke the Baals? Will you forsake the best of creators? God, your Lord  
498 and the Lord of your first ancestors?"; (C 44, 8): "There is no God but him. He gives life and causes death. He  
499 is your Lord and the Lord of your first ancestors ??6 .

500 Another expression is used to designate these great elders, as opposed to close ancestors. It is found in (C 26,  
501 70-76), a passage whose context is Abrahamic: (70) He said to his father and his people, "What do you worship?  
502 (71) They said, "We worship our idols. We remain attached to them (72) He said: "Do they hear you when you  
503 invoke them? (73) Are they useful or harmful to you? (74) They said: No! But we found our fathers (close  
504 ancestors) devoted to their worship (75) He said: Have you considered what you worshipped (76) in the time of  
505 your most distant ancestors?" He thus asks them to pay attention to what they (i.e. their people) worshipped  
506 "in the time" of their most ancient ancestors (antum wa-abâ'ukum alaqqdamûna), the particle "wa" here having  
507 the value of a temporal positioning. To do this, it virtually places the interlocutors in chronological conjunction  
508 with their earliest ancestors: lit: "You (your people as a whole) in the time of your earliest ancestors", i.e. the  
509 time when all were monotheists.

510 The expressions al-abâ' al-aqqdamûna (the most ancient Fathers) and al-abâ' al-awwalûn (the first Fathers)  
511 therefore both have the function of designating the "great ancients" with, however, two distinct connotations.  
512 The first expression is used to distinguish them from the "fathers" (abâ') in the sense of progenitors and close  
513 ancestors; the second refers directly to the first antediluvians.

514 This theorization of the existence of a primordial monotheism, common to the Qur'an and the Divine Institutes,  
515 seems originally to have been intended as a response to the positions of late antique theologians who, like Firmicus  
516 Maternus in his *De Errore* (A History of Human Progress towards Truth) 37, defended the idea that polytheism  
517 had been the first form of religion adopted by mankind. Only then did mankind progressively move towards  
518 monotheism. Tertullian takes a similar approach to Lactantius, defending the authority of the Scriptures and  
519 proclaiming their "very high antiquity" 38 37 *De Errore profanarum religionum* XVII, 4, new translation with  
520 text and commentary by G. Heuten, Brussels, 1938, p. 115. On this subject, see the article by Béatrice Caseau,  
521 "Firmicus Maternus, un astrologue converti au christianisme ou la rhétorique du rejet sans appel", *La religion*  
522 *que j'ai quittée*, dir. Daniel Tollet, Presses de l'Université Paris Sorbonne, Paris, 2007, pp. 39-63, p. 54. 38  
523 Pierre Monat, the editor of book IV of *Institutions divines* (Sources chrétiennes, n° 377, Le Cerf, 1992) refers, in  
524 his introduction, p. 15 and note 5, to the *Fragmentum Fuldense* of the *Apologeticum* (19, 1).

525 .

## 526 12 The question of original sin

527 For the Qur'an, just as human beings are not justified, because of their fitra, in invoking the responsibility of  
528 the generations that preceded them to excuse their shortcomings, so it would be absurd for them to invoke,  
529 for the same purpose, a transmissible original stain. Indeed, admitting the existence of an innate disposition  
530 to monotheism and all that it implies renders null and void all theories relating to an original fault, since it is  
531 inconceivable that men born with two opposing predispositions that cancel each other out. Thus, if it is accepted  
532 that the first parents may have committed a serious fault, despite their innate disposition towards monotheism  
533 and all the virtues it entails, it is out of the question to envisage that their descendants are affected by a harmful  
534 ontological state transmitted in the form of original sin.

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535

536 Since it is not possible here to set out all the data concerning the sin of Adam and his female alter ego, we will  
 537 simply point out that nowhere does the Qur'an mention or even suggest anything about a transmissible stain.  
 538 The clearest proof that according to its teaching this concept has no foundation is the verse (C 7, 27) which  
 539 presents this fault, not as a handicap transmitted to all, but as a misstep of the first couple simply liable to be  
 540 reproduced by anyone at any time, and against which God warns: "O sons of Adam! Do not let the Devil tempt  
 541 you as he did on the day he took your parents out of the garden, tearing off their clothes so that they could see  
 542 their nakedness". In this way, the Qur'anic text openly attacks the dogma of original sin, which some people use  
 543 as a pretext for their unacceptable behaviour: "(C 7, 28) We have given demons as friends to those who have no  
 544 faith (in God, here in the sense of doubting His goodness) (lâ yu'minûn) (29) When they commit an abominable  
 545 act (fâhisha), they say: "We found that our fathers had qualified themselves by this same act. God has ordained  
 546 that it should be so for us".

547 Thus, the Qur'an proposes to correct the concept of original fault by reminding mankind that God has never  
 548 deprived them of anything, nor will He ever deprive them of anything, but that He has, on the contrary, endowed  
 549 them with the garments and spiritual finery that they will be able to wear on the Day of Judgment, such as piety  
 550 and natural monotheism 39 . He makes a point of showing that the fault of the First Parents has done nothing  
 551 to alter this divine provision, which is unchangeable by nature. Their descendants, therefore, are not born with  
 552 any handicap or original blemish. On the contrary, they are endowed with the most beautiful and noble spiritual  
 553 aptitudes, for God does not punish children for the faults of their parents, as confirmed in particular by the  
 554 Qur'an abrogation of the tenth plague of Egypt 40 39 Spiritual adornment (zînat-Allâhi) "belongs to believers  
 555 during their life in this world, but especially on the Day of Rising (yawm al-qiyâma, which will be the Day of  
 556 Resurrection for them)" (C 7, 32).

557 . ??? In the Qur'an there is no mention of plagues, but of "signs" (C 17, 101): "We gave Moses nine clear  
 558 signs (ayât). So ask the Children of Israel, when he came to them and Pharaoh said to him: "O Moses, I think  
 559 you are bewitched" and in (C 27, 12) "Put your hand in the opening of your tunic. It will come out white  
 560 and without any harm -It follows that human baptism with water has no raison d'être, as human beings are  
 561 born in a state of absolute purity. The Qur'an replaces it with the notion of "God's baptism" (sibghat Allâh).  
 562 This is a purely spiritual baptism, in line with this declaration of Ephrem : "He has made it clear about the  
 563 last heralds who baptise in the Spirit that they are greater than he who baptised in water (John).» 41 , and  
 564 reflects the sacramental nature of the administration of fitra. This baptism by God is therefore definitive, and  
 565 its effects immutable, to the extent that man's heart remains accessible to the Good, whatever faults he may  
 566 have committed, and he will always be able to return to God by following the path indicated by his fitra as 'Abd  
 567 al-Karîm al-Jilî clearly understood ??? This verse itself refers, by analogy with verbal and thematic faith, to a  
 568 parabolic story whose most likely hermeneutical threshold is a passage from Lactantius' Divine Institutions. It  
 569 is the example of the ship in distress.

### 14 . A certain precariousness of the human condition is conducive to keeping fitra active.

570

571

572 The notion of fitra provides at least part of the answer to a crucial theological problem that has been raised at  
 573 every period and in every philosophical and religious circle, from antiquity to the present day: why do human  
 574 beings find themselves subjected to more or less terrible trials throughout their lives?

575 The relationship between the two motives is shown in the two verses that immediately follow the "fitra verse"  
 576 (C 30, 33 and 34) (33) And when an evil afflicts people, they call upon their Lord, returning to Him repentant.  
 577 (34) And if He gives them a taste of mercy from Him, behold, some of them give their Lord partners, one of  
 578 the nine signs (ayât) to Pharaoh and his people, for they are truly perverse people". These signs are not all the  
 579 same as those cited in the Bible, the most important of which is the death of the eldest sons of the Egyptians.  
 580 ??aris, 1966, p. 177. 42 This mystical author in fact mentions the existence in Hell of a door adjoining the  
 581 part of Paradise called the "garden of fitra". Through this opening, those who reach the required state of purity  
 582 after a certain period of time pass directly from one (p; 103) to the other, as one enters this garden by right, by  
 583 virtue of fitra alone. Al-insân al-kâmil, Muhammad 'Alî Subayh edition, 2 volumes, 1 volume, Cairo, undated, p.  
 584 34. Divine Institutes, II, I, 8-12 "This (recognizing and proclaiming a supreme god) they do not do when their  
 585 situation is prosperous; but as soon as some heavy difficulty overwhelms them, there they are who remember  
 586 God. If someone is tossed about at sea by a furious wind, it is he (God) whom he invokes (...) So they never  
 587 remember God, except when they are in misfortune, but once fear has left them and perils have passed, there  
 588 they are, running all gaily to the temples of the gods, offering them libations, sacrifices and crowns. As for God,  
 589 whom they had implored in the midst of their needs, they don't even have a word to thank him for" (Here the  
 590 worship given to God is non-sacrificial, as opposed to that given to the gods of paganism).

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592 Qur'an (17, 67) "When misfortune befalls you at sea, those you call upon go astray, except him, but when he has  
 593 saved you and brought you to land, you turn away. Man is very ungrateful" (29, 65) "When they get on a boat,

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594 they invoke God with pure worship (monotheistic non-sacrificial). But when God rescues them by bringing them  
595 ashore, they give Him associates.”

596 In both the Qur’an and the Divine Institutes the theme of the usefulness of fear is part of the polemic against  
597 polytheism. This motif is included in demonstrations relating to the argument that Pierre Monat, editor of  
598 many of Lactantius’s works describes as a ”commonplace of ancient philosophy”, according to which worshippers  
599 of the gods often recognise and even proclaim a supreme God. Starting from this line, Lactantius produced a  
600 demonstration that was both polemical and rhetorical of the existence of an ”anima naturaliter christiana”, which  
601 in many respects fulfils the role of a prefiguration of the Qur’anic fitra and is evoked in slightly different forms  
602 by Tertullian and Minucius Felix 43

603 It would seem, moreover, that the Nicomedian rhetorician himself drew his parable from the figuration of the  
604 ship in the storm in Aesop’s fable The Navigators: ”Some people embarked and set sail. One of the passengers,  
605 while tearing off his clothes, cried out and moaned to the gods of his homeland, to whom he promised ex voto  
606 if he survived. The storm ceased, and calm returned: then the passengers began to feast, dance and caper,  
607 like people who get out of an unforeseen predicament”. It is this first part of the fable that probably served as  
608 Lactantius’ inspiration, and its ending leads to a different kind of conclusion, which is the wisdom that fortune  
609 varies, and that the fact of having been saved once does not augur well for the future. The text ends as follows:  
610 ”But the pilot, a man of strong character, spoke to them as follows: ”Let us rejoice, my friends, but as people  
611 who may be in for another storm”

612 . He draws on the theme of the impact of the sudden and violent fear experienced by a man on a sinking ship.

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614 Lactantius did not keep this epilogue, but replaced it with the observation that men, having proclaimed themselves  
615 faithful to a monotheistic conception of the divine at the moment of danger, turn . ??? Tertullien, Apol. 17, 3-6  
616 ; ’Ã?” testimonium animae naturaliter christianae! Minutius Felix. Octavius, 18, 44 Aesop, Fables, trad. Daniel  
617 Loayza, Flammarion, Paris, 1995, p. 105.

618 to idols as soon as the danger has passed, an attitude identically mentioned in the Qur’an.

619 It is also likely that Lactantius’ use of the concept of fear as catharsis has a Greek, and more specifically  
620 Aristotelian, basis. His approach is based on the view that divine wisdom sustains this catharsis of fear, which  
621 awakens in human nature a readiness to listen to the word of God, just as ancient tragedy, according to Aristotle,  
622 produced an upheaval which, through the pity felt for the hero, awakened in the spectators a fear for themselves  
623 likely to enable them to open up to the word of the gods ??? Finally it should be noted that the Qur’an does  
624 not just mention the impact of fear. It also recalls the effectiveness of hope, which leads human beings to turn  
625 . Similarly, the Qur’an uses a description of the fear felt by sailors in danger to stimulate the reader to turn to  
626 the one God.

627 Finally, it insists that it would be unreasonable to weigh the suffering caused by fear against the benefit it  
628 ultimately brings to mankind: (C 2, 155): ”We test you with a little fear (...)”. Moreover, he affirms that there  
629 are individuals to whom the experience of fear confers a lasting, and even definitive, benefit: (C 31, 32) ”After  
630 God has saved them by bringing them back to dry land, some of them remain on the right path. Only the fickle  
631 (khabbâr) and the ungrateful (kafûr) deny our signs”.

632 By taking account of the diversity of human psychological dispositions in this way, he clearly steps back from  
633 theological thinking such as that in the Homilies, which is based on the idea that human weaknesses are incurable  
634 and that, once the fear has passed, everyone, without exception, returns to their idols, which also seems to be  
635 the point of view of Lactantius. to the mercy of the one God to overcome the difficulties that beset them, such  
636 as the calamities caused by drought, which lead them to hope for beneficial water from heaven. His thinking on  
637 this point corresponds to the hermeneutical threshold of the pseudo-Clementine corpus with which he shares this  
638 theme, that Lactantius, on the other hand, seems not to have addressed:

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640 Homilies XI, 13, 3-4

641 (3) Why then, when the rains cease, do you always turn your eyes towards heaven with your prayers and  
642 supplications and, when you have obtained satisfaction, hasten to forget? (4) For once the harvest or the grape  
643 harvest is done, you soon offer the first-fruits to idols who are nothing, soon forgetting the author of the blessing,  
644 who is God”.

645 Recognitions (Reconnaissances pseudo clémentines) V, 30, 5-6 How is it that, when the rain is held off for  
646 a long period without clouds, we raise our eyes to the heavens and ask Almighty God for the gift of rain and,  
647 pouring out our prayers at his feet, all of us with our little children implore his compassions? ”But in reality, as  
648 soon as they have obtained an answer, ungrateful souls immediately forget. In fact, after harvesting the crops  
649 or the grapes, men immediately bring the first fruits of their wealth to deaf and dumb statues, and for the gifts  
650 that God has granted them, they fulfil their vows in the temples or sacred groves where they offer sacrifices to  
651 the demons; they have received a benefit, but they are mistaken about the author of the benefit.

652 Qur’an 29, 62 ”If you ask them, ’Who sent down water from heaven by which the earth is revived after its  
653 death? They will surely reply: ”It is God.” Say, praise be to God, but most men do not understand. 112, 2 :

654 "God is the only one to be implored for what we desire". 13, 14: "True invocation is addressed to Him. Those  
 655 whom men invoke apart from him do not answer them in any way; any more than water reaches the mouth of  
 656 one who stretches out his two hands towards it so that it reaches it. The invocation of the unbelievers is nothing  
 657 but vanity". 10, 21: "When we give men a taste of mercy (rahma, such as rain) after a misfortune has befallen  
 658 them (drought), behold, they use stratagems against our signs". 11, 10: "If we make a man taste a benefit after  
 659 misfortune has befallen him, he will say: 'Evil has departed from me' and he will be joyful and proud". 14, 16:  
 660 "Say, will you take masters besides him who have neither profit nor damage for themselves? Despite his many  
 661 weaknesses, man remains, according to the Qur'an, the only creature capable of caring for creation, provided  
 662 that he remembers the abilities he received at birth. Indeed, it shows that his fitra not only enables him to form  
 663 an accurate idea of the Creator and his goodness, but also to understand that he is destined by this specific trait  
 664 of his nature to conform his behaviour as far as possible to the models that God proposes to him. One of the  
 665 most remarkable of these is the harmony that the Creator has established between the object of authentic faith  
 666 and the disposition to attain it. Fitra goes hand in hand with the non-violence of monotheism and predisposes  
 667 mankind to establish universal peace.

668 The exclamation: "no compulsion in the true worship", with its double connotation of statement and  
 669 injunction, appears almost identically in the Qur'an and the Divine Institutes. Divine Institutes, II, 4, 7:

670 "Where is truth? (Ubi ergo veritas est?) Where no constraint can weigh on religion (Ubi nulla vis adhiberi  
 671 potest religioni), where nothing can fall victim to violence (ubi nihil quod violari possit apparet), where there can  
 672 be no sacrilege. But everything that falls under the eyes or under the senses, all that, because it is perishable,  
 673 remains totally foreign to the notion of immortality." This passage is preceded in Divine Institutes by a critique of  
 674 the fragility of idols, which, as material objects, are liable to destruction, fire or plunder, and the author concludes:  
 675 "How can one seek protection from that which cannot protect itself?" This is followed almost immediately by  
 676 the assertion that: "Only he is God who has not been made, and who, for this reason, can destroy others, but  
 677 he himself cannot be destroyed. He will therefore always remain in the state in which he was, because he was  
 678 not begotten from outside, and his origin and birth do not depend on any other thing, which could modify  
 679 and destroy him. God is as he willed to be: impassible, immutable, incorruptible, blessed and eternal" Divine  
 680 Institutes, II, 8, 44. Qur'an (2, 255-256): "God, there is no God but He, the living One, He who subsists by  
 681 Himself! Neither slumber nor sleep has any power over Him! All that is in the heavens and on earth belongs to  
 682 Him. Who can intercede with him without his permission? He knows what lies before men and what lies behind  
 683 them, while they embrace from his knowledge only what he wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the  
 684 earth: their continuance in existence is no burden to Him; He is the Most High, the unapproachable. (??56  
 685 This same idea is completed in another passage, which adds the assertion that "There is no need for violence  
 686 and injustice to convince, because religion cannot be born of constraint (non est opus vi et injuria quia religio  
 687 eogi non potest). We must use the verb rather than the rod if we are to achieve a voluntary act. This is why no  
 688 one is ever held back by us in spite of himself, and yet no one moves away, for truth alone holds back our ranks."  
 689 (Divine Institutes V, 19, 11-13) The logical succession of ideas, condensed in the Qur'anic text and developed  
 690 more fully in Lactantius, is nonetheless identical in both texts: the only true religion is that which worships a  
 691 god who can undergo neither constraint nor change: he neither sleeps nor tires, the maintenance of his creation  
 692 in existence does not weigh heavily on him (reminiscent of Psalm 121:4) ??6 . Everything depends on him, since  
 693 even intercession can only be heard and achieved with his approval (C 20:109).

694 In other words, the truth of a religion that recognizes a totally transcendent God is self-evident and  
 695 unambiguously distinct from error. It imposes itself on the mind of every human being, like a priori knowledge,  
 696 corresponding to the natural religious tendency. It is therefore totally superfluous to use violence to impose it.  
 697 What's more, a monotheistic community acting in this way would be degrading itself to the rank of polytheists,  
 698 and doing irreparable harm to the true worship due to God 47 .

699 From this, Lactantius' expression Ubi nulla vis adhiberi potest religioni corresponds point by point to the  
 700 Qur'anic injunction: lâ ikrâha fî-d-dîn: the only true religion is that which is addressed to a totally transcendent  
 701 God, who is not subject to any constraint. Consequently and jointly, this true religion has no need to use violence  
 702 to impose itself. It spontaneously attracts the support of all those who become acquainted with it and remain  
 703 faithful to it, without the need to hold them back by force. This same idea is expressed in the pseudo-Clementine  
 704 Homilies: "Truth springs from the intelligence, which is innate and pure, and is given by reflection to the good"  
 705 ??8 .

706 So to engage in violence of any kind for religious reasons is to attribute error and weakness to oneself; in  
 707 other words, it is to display the falsity of one's own religion for all to see. The rationality of Qur'anic thought  
 708 therefore dictates that, contrary to those who have claimed the contrary, even for commentators who accept the  
 709 principle of the abrogation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an, this verse is totally intangible in essence, since it sets  
 710 out the necessary condition that the "right" ??6 Ephrem of Nisibe mentions, in his Hymns on Paradise (VI, 10)  
 711 ; Hymnes sur le Paradis, Introduction and notes by Fr. Graffin, Collection Sources Chrétiennes, no. 137, Le  
 712 Cerf, Paris, 1968, first edition, , p. 85: "Power without effort And an arm without fatigue Planted Paradise". 47  
 713 "Les Pères de l'Eglise et la pensée de l'Islam", contribution in homage to G. Troupeau, L'Orient chrétien dans  
 714 l'empire musulman, Les éditions Paris, October 2005, pp. 59-90. ??8 Homilies, XVII, 17, 5.

715 worship must fulfil if it is to lay claim to truthfulness ??9 . "No compulsion in religion" means that divine  
 716 transcendence manifests itself in such perfection that it imposes itself naturally and without any violence. In this

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717 respect, the monotheistic religion is the only one that suits his nature, since it does not need to be imposed by  
718 coercion. On the other hand, polytheistic religions, which are at odds with natural reason, need to resort to this  
719 kind of practice. As a result, it is clear that polytheism breeds violence, whereas authentic monotheism can only  
720 be accompanied by peace.

721 The immediate corollary of the concept of a natural monotheistic tendency is the need to abstain from all  
722 violence, especially when it comes to working in the service of true religion and true faith, which are destined to  
723 impose themselves on beings with this innate capacity. False cults, on the other hand, are ??9 However, not all  
724 commentators read it in this way, and it even led to a chain of enlightening reactions following Pope Benedict XVI's  
725 conference in Regensburg on 12 September 2006. Before quoting Manuel II Palaeologus on Islam's relationship  
726 with violence (*Entretiens avec un musulman, 7ème controverse*, ed. Théodore Khoury, Sources chrétiennes no.  
727 115, Le Cerf, Paris 1996), the Pope takes up this verse and notes: "The emperor addresses the theme of jihād, of  
728 holy war. Surely he knew that in Sura 2, verse 256, it says: 'No compulsion in religion'. This is one of the suras  
729 from the initial period, say the specialists, when Muhammad himself had no power and was under threat. But  
730 of course the emperor was also aware of the provisions on holy war that were subsequently developed and laid  
731 down in the Qur'an. As he later clarified, he was merely paraphrasing T. Khoury, the editor of the text, who  
732 had expressed himself in the following way, in which the allusion to the abrogation of the Qur'an by the Qur'an  
733 appears even more clearly: "This verse (an expression in this case more precise than that of the Pope, who speaks  
734 of "sura". Sura 2 is in fact made up of strata from different periods) dates from the period preceding Muhammad's  
735 great struggles. Determinations relating to jihād can be found in Sura 9: it is the expression of Muhammad's  
736 last will on the subject". Following various indignant publications and demonstrations of discontent, this position  
737 was called into question, from a scientific point of view, in "La lettre des oulémas au Pape Benoît XVI" signed  
738 by 38 imāms from all over the world, published in the book by Jean Bollack, Christian Jambet and Abdelwahab  
739 Meddeb, *La conférence de Ratisbonne, enjeux et controverses*, Bayard, 2007, pp. 101-116, which declared that the  
740 verse (C 2, 256) was not only unwritable, but was also addressed to Muslims in a position of power, inviting them  
741 not to use violence against those they wished to convert. This open letter was extended on 13 October 2007 to a  
742 letter of 138, drafted on the initiative of the Ahl al-Bayt Royal Institute for Islamic Thought in Amman, Jordan.  
743 However, in the meantime, another response had sadly confirmed the position of some on this issue: the murder  
744 on 17 September 2006 of Sister Leonella Sgorbati, who worked in a paediatric hospital in Mogadishu, with local  
745 Islamic representatives telling the Reuter agency that the murder was a sign of protest against the words spoken  
746 by Benedict XVI on Islam. The irenic behaviour that accompanies true religion is recalled on several occasions  
747 by the attitude of Abraham, a model of monotheism. The Qur'an says that he was gentle and compassionate  
748 (halīm) (C 11, 75) and that he was kindness itself (C 9, 114), which explains why he spontaneously wanted to  
749 intercede on behalf of Lot's people (C 11, 74), as well as for his own father (C 19, 47), until he was told that this  
750 was impossible (C 11, 76).

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752 These traits attributed to Abraham by the Qur'an correspond to a model found in the Torah in Genesis 18, 16-  
753 33, which relates his intercession on behalf of Sodom. It is particularly developed and generalised in apocryphal  
754 literature. According to the Apocalypse of Abraham, for example, he tries to draw God's attention to the  
755 righteous, while asking God to overlook the evil committed by the unrighteous (XXVII, 5-8): "O Lord, O  
756 Mighty One, let the evil deeds of the unrighteous now pass away, but let the righteous who have fulfilled the  
757 commandments remain. For you can do this. He shares this compassionate character with many of the heroes of  
758 the apocalyptic heavenly journeys, such as Sedrash, Ezra and Baruch.

759 The Qur'an indicates in numerous details that the wisdom of the ancient prophets and patriarchs, such as  
760 Solomon and Moses, already transcended earthly laws in favour of the rules of peace and mercy that Jesus  
761 describes as being those of the Kingdom of God 49 .

762 On the other hand, he underlines the fact that belonging to a religion of the Book is not an absolute guarantee  
763 of non-violence on the part of its followers. Were they not the first to kill the messengers and prophets sent  
764 to them by God, as verses (C 3, 21) and (C 3, 112) indicate? In doing so, they behaved like unbelievers and  
765 polytheists.

766 This situation reminds us that authentic and efficient monotheism in all its dimensions must be a personal  
767 acquisition for each person, which corresponds to the injunction addressed to believers to behave as *hunafā'*,  
768 taking Abraham as an example, both for his faith and for the mercy that characterised him.

769 Here we come to a final aspect of the functions of fitra, which is to seek the model of ideal worship in heaven.  
770 To raise one's head towards heaven is in fact to ??9 See Matthew 18:32-35: "(32) Then he (the Master) sent  
771 for him (his servant) and said to him, 'Evil servant! I had forgiven you all this debt because you had begged  
772 me; (33) should you not, in your turn, have mercy on your fellow servant, as I myself had mercy on you?' The  
773 Qur'an invites us to note, for example, that although Solomon had learned that the people of Sheba worshipped  
774 the sun after having been monotheists, instead of applying the law of Deuteronomy (17, 2) in such cases, namely  
775 stoning, he brought their digigeant to him in order to bring her back to the true faith at the end of an initiation  
776 (C 27, 38-42).

777 turn towards a double model. Its first aspect is the visible model of the "harmony of the spheres" which, by its  
778 very existence, pays homage to the Creator 50 . By its very existence, it pays homage to the one who conceived

779 it and gives access to its second aspect, which is the awareness that to have created such a work, the creator  
 780 must, in addition to his omnipotence, be good and merciful and love peace and harmony. It is from this double  
 781 model that man can draw the conclusion that the worship approved by God consists above all in respecting these  
 782 attributes and putting them into practice in the world by striving to establish peace everywhere, starting with  
 783 his fellow human beings.

784 Conclusion: What is at Stake in the Qur'anic Invitation to a Universal Awareness of the Implications of Fitra  
 785 Before the End of Time?

786 All the intertextual comparisons to which the Qur'an invites us on the question of the innate monotheistic  
 787 disposition bear witness to the fact that this principle of philosophical origin, which is close to a Lactan model,  
 788 but also to themes present in the pseudo-Clementine Roman, is integrated into a theological construction of  
 789 remarkable coherence. By abrogating a notion such as original sin by referring to Judeo-Christian and Christian  
 790 commentaries, he invites all people to gather around the testimony of the first Fathers, the most ancient ancestors:  
 791 (Am I not your Lord? They said: -Certainly yes!) A lastu birabbikum? Qâlû bala! It recalls the universality of  
 792 this "Adamic" profession of faith, corresponding to man's innate tendency, by referring to Abraham's model of  
 793 unflinching trust in the goodness of God. In expressing his intention to realise the vision in which he saw himself  
 794 sacrificing his son in the certainty that God would do no harm to this child, which turned out to be true 51 .  
 795 Abraham presents an example of unlimited fidelity to the implications of faith in the tawhîd : oneness of a good  
 796 and merciful God, which characterises hanifiyya.

797 In this context, the verse (C 41, 53) reminds us that mankind is called to seek the signs of God in three areas:  
 798 "We will show them our signs clearly, in the universe and in themselves, until they see clearly that this (the  
 799 Qur'an) is the Truth-Life (al-haqq). If not, would 50 (C 24, 41): "Do you not see that what is in the heavens  
 800 and on earth and the flying celestial bodies (tayr) lined up in order (sâfât) celebrate the praise of God?" and (C  
 801 67, 19) "Have they not seen the flying celestial bodies (tayr) above them, lined up in order (sâfât), and soaring  
 802 (yaqbidna)? Nothing keeps them (balanced in the air) but the Merciful. He sees everything perfectly (20) Would  
 803 such beings, who are an army for you, protect you without (the intervention of) the Merciful? The disbelievers  
 804 are deluded". 51 (C 37, 103): "After they had both shown unshakeable trust and Abraham had thrown his son to  
 805 the ground" and (C 37, 107) "We redeemed his son with a consequent sacrifice (dhabh 'azîm). it not be enough  
 806 (to be convinced) that your Lord knows all things?"

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808 The first of these is none other than the last Revelation which, among other things, through its commentaries  
 809 on biblical examples, speaks directly to them by highlighting the signs they can observe in the other two: on the  
 810 one hand the creation that surrounds them, and on the other what they can see in themselves if they consider  
 811 their interiority. The most remarkable of these is precisely the harmony that governs these three areas equally.  
 812 In this sense, fitra, which makes it possible to access both Truth and eternal Life, which in reality are one and the  
 813 same, is in itself proof of the truthfulness of the harmony of creation. Not only does it enable us to see celestial  
 814 harmony when we contemplate the heavens, it also enables us to understand that God's perfecting of the human  
 815 being is an integral part of this overall harmony.

816 The innate monotheistic disposition thus represents the pivot not only of the anthropological aspect of the  
 817 Qur'an's theological thought, but of the entire "human science" that it proposes to its readers.

818 Understanding its importance in a purely intellectual way is not enough, as is shown by the numerous examples  
 819 that demonstrate how essential it is for humans to appropriate the authentic, unchanging and upright monotheistic  
 820 cult (ad-dîn al-qayyim) to which it directs them.

821 This same expression appears three other times in the Qur'an: in (C 9, 36), a verse in which the sacred  
 822 calendar used for the pilgrimage is defined; in (C 12, 40), to enjoin humans to worship God alone; finally in (C  
 823 30, 43), to remind us that this way of living the innate religious feeling is destined to be adopted by all before  
 824 the end of time comes "Turn to the right (and unchanging) worship (ad-dîn al-qayyim) before an inescapable  
 825 Day from God comes".

826 Just as the Books transmitting divine revelations are "upright books" (kutub qayyima), (C 98, 3) corresponding  
 827 to the Divine Book, the "Mother of the Book", made up of all the passages of the revealed books "founded in  
 828 truth" (muhkamât) 52 , so the human being was created with a body erect, which gives him access to the means  
 829 of participating positively in God's plan for creatures. This plan animates "the worship of the community of  
 830 upright men" (dîn al-qayyima), an expression that designates a gathering of "upright" men who do not change  
 831 their options (C 98, 5). Their worship is pure worship, which consists above all in fulfilling the universal duties  
 832 of piety towards God and kindness towards creatures. ??? (C 3, 7): "It is He (God) who has sent down (anzala)  
 833 the Book to you. There are verses muhkamât "founded in truth", the mother of the Book (Umm al-kitâb), and  
 834 others mutashâbihât "founded only in appearance on the truth". This is not pure intellectual speculation, but  
 835 a vital issue, and the statement in the verse ( C 30, 43) should be seen in the context of the many warnings in  
 836 the Qur'an aimed at making people understand that it is vital for them to adopt an attitude in keeping with  
 837 what Divine Mercy implies before it is too late. The verse (C 5, 64) reminds that "Every time they lit the fire of  
 838 war, God immediately extinguished it", that is to say, He has limited it so that it did not spread to the whole of  
 839 humanity and, through it, to the whole world, which invites us to understand that one day he may tire of acting  
 840 in this way.

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841 From this point of view, his injunction, which proves that all the passages in the Vulgate that call for combat  
842 must be seen as reflections of historical circumstances alien to the Qur'an's axial metaphysical and moral teaching  
843 53, invites us to question the situation in which humans will find themselves when they have to face the imminence  
844 of the Hour. Will they have been able to conform, through the practice of mercy towards all beings, to the  
845 requirements of the vocation to universality for which they were created; or will they have allowed the fire of  
846 passions to overwhelm and destroy them, and with them all creation?

847 53 Some Muslim thinkers are now beginning to subscribe to theses along the same lines as that of Mahmūd  
848 Muhammad Tâha (d. 1985). In his opinion the authentic thought of the Qur'an presented by the "Mekkois  
849 Qur'an" which, although it was revealed first, conveys "the second message of Islam", destined to impose itself  
850 in modern times as the only one that should be preserved, the "Medinese Qur'an" only responding to the  
851 needs -the reasons of State -of a bygone era: *Al-risâla al-thâniyya min al-islâm* (The Second Message of Islam),  
852 first published in 1967, was translated into English in 1996 (The Second Message of Islam, Syracuse, Syracuse  
853 University Press) and into French by Mohamed El-Baroudi-Haddaoui and Caroline Paihe: *Un Islam à vocation*  
*libératrice*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2002. <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11</sup>

### Figure 1:

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<sup>1</sup> We have dealt with all these issues in our publication: G. Gobillot, *La conception originelle, fitra, ses interprétations et fonctions chez les penseurs musulmans*, Cahier des Annales islamologiques 18, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire,

<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pyramid Text, 1078, A-C, Coffin Text, III, 215 B-C.

<sup>4</sup> According to the definitions of the dictionary *Lisân al-'arab*.

<sup>5</sup> This is the case, for example, of the verse (C 73, 18) which speaks of 'the day when the sky will split' (*as-samâ'u munfatir bihi*).

<sup>6</sup> , *De natura deorum*, Book I, XVI, 65, which mentions the Canon of Epicurus.

<sup>7</sup> Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, I, 70..

<sup>8</sup> Louis Rougier, *La religion astrale des Pythagoriciens*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1959.

<sup>9</sup> On the subject of the behaviour of men just after their creation, we can also refer to Lactantius: "Les hommes devenus comme des bêtes sauvages", a theme linked to that of man's fall into animality. *Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, 22,[6][7][8][9]

<sup>10</sup> The use of this expression twice in (C 23:24) and (C 23:68) should be noted here. The first occurrence could raise a doubt as to the meaning of *abâ' al-awwalîn* since Noah's people tell him that what he teaches them, namely monotheism, they never heard from their first ancestors. But the second restores the balance by highlighting their bad faith: "Did something come to them that their first ancestors did not know about? The implication is that this is in no way the case, and that their first ancestors had indeed taken part in monotheism, to which Noah merely urged them to return.

<sup>11</sup> See *Poetics*, ch. VI, 2 : "Tragedy is the imitation of a serious and complete action, of a certain extent, presented in language made pleasant and in such a way that each of the parts which compose it survives separately, developing with characters who act, and not by means of a narrative, and operating by pity and terror, the purgation of passions of the same nature", and XIII, 2.

