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*Hagi [1] Ibbi [2] to the Jew Ben Joshua, a Muhammadan proselyte in Smyrna*

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It seems to me, Ben Joshua, that there are always wondrous signs that anticipate the birth of extraordinary men, as if nature were undergoing a sort of crisis, and the celestial power could produce only with effort.

There is nothing so marvelous as the birth of Muhammad. God, who by the decrees of his providence had determined from the beginning to send that great Prophet to men to chain Satan, created a light two thousand years before Adam, which passing from one of the elect to another, from one ancestor of Muhammad to another, finally came down to him as an authentic testimony that he was descended from the patriarchs.

It was also because of that same Prophet that God did not wish for any child to be conceived until the nature of the woman had ceased to be unclean, and the virile member was had been subjected to circumcision.

He came into the world circumcised, [3] and joy appeared on his face from the moment of his birth. The earth shuddered three times, as if it had itself given birth ; every idol bowed down ; the thrones of kings were overthrown. Lucifer was cast into the depths of the sea, and it was only after swimming for forty days that he emerged from the abyss, and fled to Mount Cabes, whence with thundering voice he called the angels.

That night God set a limit between man and woman which neither could cross ; the art of the magicians and necromancers was without effect. A voice was heard from heaven which uttered these words : I have sent my faithful friend into the world. [4]

According to the testimony of Isben Aben, an Arab historian, the generations of birds, of clouds, of winds, and of all the battalions of angels joined together to raise that child, and argued over the privilege. The birds said warbling that it was more convenient for them to raise him because they could more easily gather different fruits from various places. The winds murmured, saying : It is rather for us because we can bring him from every place the most agreeable odors. No, said the clouds, no, it is to our care that he shall be entrusted, because we will impart to him at every moment the coolness of the waters. Thereupon the angry angels cried out : Then what will remain for us to do ? But a voice from heaven was heard, which ended all the disputes : He shall not be taken from the hands of mortals, for happy are the breasts that will suckle him, and the hands that will touch him ; and the house where he will live, and the bed on which he shall rest.

After so many wondrous testimonies, [5] my dear Joshua, it would take a heart of iron not to believe his holy law. What more could heaven do to authorize his divine mission, unless it be to overturn nature, and bring death upon the very men it wished to persuade ?

*Paris this 20th day of the moon of Rhegeb 1713*

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[1] A Hagi is a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca [author's note].

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[2] Sole mention of this character.

[3] A traditional detail (Chardin, III, 207 ; Bayle, DHC (1734), article "Mahomet," remarque I).

[4] These last two paragraphs are directly translated from Hermannus Dalmata, *De generatione Machumetis* (p. 207-208), but evidently also recall the Gospel : "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

[5] The Qur'an (3:43-44) asserts that evident signs had accompanied the mission of Jesus as well as that of Muhammad.