

EDITORIAL

Could have it been possible that Islamochristiana should not dedicate an entire number to Fr Maurice Borrmans, who was among its founders in 1975 and was its editor almost uninterruptedly until 2004? We have explicitly chosen not to dedicate a 'special' volume to him, to be included in the series 'Studi Arabo-Islamici del PISAI', but rather, an 'ordinary' number of Islamochristiana, the journal that he always considered his most beloved creature and to which, as we have already written in the previous issue (43/2017), he collaborated with passion until the end of life.

We thought about asking a contribution from some people, chosen especially in the academic field, who knew Fr Maurice, who were his friends, or his students, or who studied with him or who were his collaborators. Not everyone answered positively or felt they could send an article; we could have asked many others, who would have been happy to contribute, but we would have gone much further than the size of a normal issue of Islamochristiana. We also decided that the contributions did not necessarily have to focus on what Fr Borrmans wrote or taught, but rather that they addressed some particular aspect of his interests as a scholar, professor and author. Obviously, we take responsibility for this choice.

Only the first three contributions directly regard his person: the Archbishop, and his brother Missionary of Africa, Michael L. Fitzgerald, traces a brief biographical profile, with particular attention to his intellectual and academic path, which complements the In memoriam which appeared in Islamochristiana (43/2017) by André Ferré, M.Afr.; Giampiero Alberti, a priest of the diocese of Milan, presents a moving testimony of Fr Maurice above all as a friend; Vincent Feroldi, Director of the 'Service national pour les relations avec les musulmans de la Conférence des évêques de France', reflects on the passion of Fr Borrmans for dialogue with Muslims. They are presented here, as the rest of the following contributions, in the three languages most used by Fr Maurice: French, Italian and English. Missing, unfortunately, is Arabic, because we were not able to collect any contribution in this language.

Among the specific interests of Fr Borrmans was the study of the Qur'ān, explored in all its aspects of language and content, cultural and religious, and especially as regards the figure of Jesus Christ. A good number of contributions presented in this issue of Islamochristiana are centered on the Qur'ān. Geneviève Gobillot dedicates her long article to the Qur'ānic foundations of interreligious dialogue with a particular focus on the figure of Jesus, while Giuseppe Rizzardi starts

from the suggestions of Fr Borrmans to rethink in a fresh way the function and personality of Jesus in Islam and in Christianity. Two studies are devoted directly to the Qur'ānic text and its possible translation: Paolo Branca proposes some challenges posed to translators by the hapax of the Qur'ān while Michel Lagarde exposes the problem of translation of the sacred text as it is already found in *Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*. Then, with Bartolomeo Pirone, we move on to a specific content of the Qur'ān with a reflection on the theme of suffering.

Another series of contributions concerns the interest that Fr Borrmans expressed for *kalām* and *falsafa*, for Islamic Studies in general and for the history of relations between Christians and Muslims. Michel Younès raises questions about the relationship between the Qur'an and *kalām* on the one hand, and the Bible and Christian theology on the other; Diego Sarrió Cucarella examines a treaty of Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, Nestorian author of the IX century, concerning the criteria for recognising true religion, while Emmanuel Pisani reports on the fierce criticism of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī against the *bāṭinites* missionaries; Cristina D'Ancona, finally, reflects on the cosmological argument that necessarily postulates a divine cause, examining it in *kalām* and *falsafa* until arriving at St. Thomas Aquinas.

Family law aroused the interest of Fr Borrmans from the start, becoming the subject of his doctoral thesis and then of long years of teaching. For this, Roberta Aluffi Beck Peccoz devotes a study to the interesting topic of the *kafāla*, situating it harmoniously in the context of Islamic law.

Fr Maurice collaborated with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and was passionate about the current affairs of the Muslim world and of Islamic-Christian relations. Laurent Basanese presents a critical overview of recent reforms in Islam, while Emil Anton examines the thought of Pope Benedict XVI about the thorny topic of the relationship between religion and violence.

The series of contributions closes with two different articles: Rémi Caucanas remembers Étienne Renaud, former general of the White Fathers and rector of PISAI, and friend and confrere of Fr Borrmans; Alan Godlas and Jason Welle take up and update a small note which appeared in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* of Pope Francis concerning 'Alī al-Ḥawwāṣ (cfr. *Islamochristiana* 43/2017).

In addition to articles in memory and in honor of Fr Borrmans, *Islamochristiana* continues with its usual rhythm, presenting a great number of meetings between Christians and Muslims in the section Notes and documents. It will be noted that this year we have extended the period of coverage of what has happened in the world of Islamic-Christian dialogue until December 2018. In fact, we did not want to postpone to next year an account, albeit succinct, of the beatification of the 19 martyrs of Algeria that took place at Oran on 18 December 2018; it was an absolutely unique event, because it was the first in an almost exclusively Muslim territory and also because seven of these martyrs had been PISAI students: four Missionaries of Africa (Jean Chevillard, Charles Deckers, Alain Dieulangard and Christian Chessel), an Augustinian missionary nun (Sister Esther Paniagua Alonso), a Little Sister of the Sacred Heart (Sister Odette Prévost) and, perhaps the most famous of all, the Trappist

Christian de Chergé, whose correspondence with Fr Borrmans has been recently published. As you will remember, in that obscure decade of the history of Algeria, the first and most numerous victims were Muslims, including many imams. How could we not remember in particular the young Muslim Mohamed Bouchikhi, driver and friend of the bishop of Oran, Pierre Claverie, who was killed with him? The reception of the authorities, of religious representatives and of the population was, in the testimonies of the participants, truly moving – a further sign that the meeting and dialogue between Muslim and Christian believers is possible when they combine faith in God and trust in their common belonging to humanity.

It is on this line that Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, operated for years; sadly, he left us on 5 July 2018. It is also the firm and consistent teaching of Pope Francis, in particular in his meetings with senior members of the Islamic world and on his travels to Muslim countries. His recent visit to the United Arab Emirates (3-5 February 2019), and the joint signing with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Aḥmed al-Tayyib of the important planning document on 'Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together', has acquired a particular importance, to which we will give attention in the next issue of Islamochristiana. Signs of hope.

A rich harvest of book reviews and presentations closes this issue of the journal, which continues in the footsteps of Maurice Borrmans, a teacher and a protagonist of the Islamic-Christian dialogue.

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