

Dynamics in the History of Religions

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Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe

Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives

Edited by

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tradition of learning used the Arabic language in Hebrew script to create some of the cornerstones of the Jewish library for all time.

CHRISTIAN REACTIONS TO MUSLIM CONQUESTS
(1ST-3RD CENTURIES AH; 7TH-9TH CENTURIES AD)

John Tolan

Michael Lecker has described varying Jewish reactions to the Muslim conquests; I will make a brief survey of how *Christians* reacted to the conquests and to finding themselves thrust into the role of *dhimmi*. This is a brief summary of a subject I have treated in greater length elsewhere, in particular in two books, *Saracens* and *Sons of Ishmael*.¹

At first glance, of course, the position of the Christians was very different than that of Jews, both before and after the conquests: they were a ruling majority before the conquests (except in Persia) and they remained a numerical majority for several centuries after the conquest. Whereas the Jews had already a long experience of minority status under the Roman/Byzantine rule, Christians had none since the adoption of Christianity as the state religion in the late 4th century. Many Jews may have welcomed the change from Christian to Muslim rule: Jews had long been banned from living in Jerusalem and had been objects of punitive persecution for their purported role in helping the Persian invaders in the early 7th century.

Christians, one might think, could only lament the passage from dominant state religion to tolerated subservient one. Yet that depends on which Christians one asks. Miaphysites (Jacobites in Syria and Copts in Egypt) had long faced intermittent persecution from Constantinople; the Nestorians had faced harsher persecution – most of them had emigrated to Sassanian Persia. Under Muslim rule, each of these Christian communities was allowed its religious freedom and legal semi-autonomy, just as were the Greek Orthodox (Melkites).

So we in fact find a great diversity of reactions to Muslim expansion from Christian authors, depending on their particular circumstances and point of view: the Christian community they belong to, the status of *dhimmi* in Muslim-ruled lands or on the contrary inhabitant

¹ John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; *Sons of Ishmael: Muslims through European Eyes in the Middle Ages*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008.

of Byzantium or Latin Europe, and various other circumstances. But on the whole, we can roughly distinguish four overlapping phases in Christian reactions to Muslim conquest (phases we see both in Syria/Shams and, a century later, in Spain):

1. Saracen invaders portrayed as a divine scourge (seen as yet another military invader, but not as a threat spiritually or culturally)
2. Saracens painted as precursors to Antichrist (this reflected Church leaders' real fears of growing conversions to Islam)
3. Muslims as heretics with Muḥammad as a heresiarch
4. Christianity defended in the language of Muslim theology.

1. Saracen Invaders as a Divine Scourge

On Christmas Day, 634, the Christians of Jerusalem, unable to go to recently-conquered Bethlehem for the traditional Christmas Mass, stayed in Jerusalem and heard a sermon by their patriarch, Sophronios. He spoke of the invasions and of the fear that they struck into the hearts of Jerusalem's Christians: this was punishment for "countless sins and very serious faults."² Just as Adam and Eve were banished from the earthly paradise by the angel's flaming sword (Gen. 3:24), Sophronios says, so are we Christians prevented by the sword of the Saracens from approaching Bethlehem on Christmas. Just as the pagan gentile "slime" had once prevented King David from reaching Bethlehem so the "godless Saracens" now keep the Christians away.³

The invaders, for Sophronios, present a formidable military threat, but a negligible spiritual menace: he does not bother to find out what their religious beliefs and practices are. Rather, the invaders represent the Scourge of God so familiar to readers of the Old Testament: God, angry with His people, punishes them by sending godless barbarians to conquer them. The path to victory, as always, is repentance:

Therefore I call on and I command and I beg you for the love of Christ the Lord, in so far as it is in our power, let us correct ourselves, let us shine forth with repentance, let us be purified by conversion and let us curb our performance of acts which are hateful to God. If we constrain

² Sophronios, *Christmas Sermon*; trans. Walter Kaegi, "Initial Byzantine Reactions to the Arab Conquest", *Church History* 38 (1969), 139-149.

³ This refers to the Philistine occupation of Bethlehem in 1 Chronicles 11:16-19; 2 Samuel 23:14-17.

ourselves, as friendly and beloved of God, we should laugh at the fall of our Saracen adversaries and we would view their not distant death, and we would see their final destruction.⁴

Sophronios looks forward to the imminent destruction of the Saracens, whose role in the divine scheme of history he limits to a brief cameo appearance as divine chastisement, an unpleasant but necessary interlude in the reign of the Christian Roman Empire.⁵ Other church leaders took a similarly dim view of their new overlords. Maximus the Confessor, in a letter written from Alexandria between 634 and 640, bemoaned the losses incurred to the barbarian invaders:

What could be direr than the present evils now encompassing the civilized world? To see a barbarous nation of the desert overrunning another land as if it were their own, to see our civilization laid waste by wild and untamed beasts who have merely the shape of a human form.⁶

These "beasts", for Maximus, are *Jews* and followers of Antichrist; this is all he tells us about their religious orientation. Repentance by Christians is what is needed to repulse the invaders.

Yet to other Christians the situation did not look so bleak. If the Melkite church (i. e., the duophysite "orthodox" church now under Muslim dominion) saw its power and prestige diminished by the Arab conquests, adherents of rival churches on the other hand seemed to breathe a collective sigh of relief. No longer subjected to pressure (and intermittent persecution) from Constantinople, they were granted broader religious freedoms by their new Muslim rulers. Sebeos, an Armenian Miaphysite, wrote in 661 that Muḥammad was learned in the law of Moses, taught the knowledge of God of Abraham to Arabs, who "abandoning the reverence of vain things, ... turned toward the living God, who had appeared to their father Abraham."⁷ God granted to Arabs the lands He had promised to Abraham, and gave them victory over the impious Byzantines. Other seventh-century chroniclers

⁴ Sophronios, *Christmas Sermon*; trans. Kaegi, *Initial Byzantine Reactions*, 141.

⁵ He gives a similar view of the invasions as chastisement for Christians' sins in his *Synodal letter* (PG 87:3146-3200, at 3197D); see Christoph von Schönborn, *Sophrone de Jerusalem: vie monastique et confession dogmatique*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1972, 89-90, 100.

⁶ Translation by John Lamoreaux, "Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam", in: John Tolan (ed.), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*, New York: Garland, 1996, 3-31 (here 14-15), from PG 91:540.

⁷ Quoted by Lamoreaux, *Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam*, 19; see also Alain Ducellier, *Chrétiens d'Orient et Islam au Moyen Age*, Paris: Armand Colin 1996, 27-35.

also painted Islam in positive terms. One, having described how Abraham constructed a shrine to God in the desert, asserts: "the Arabs do nothing new when they adore God in this place, but continue the ancient usage, as is proper for people who honor the ancestor of their race."⁸ Sebeos created a niche in history for the Muslim conquerors by using Daniel's four-empire scheme; contemporary Jewish authors did the same.⁹ But for Sebeos the "Ishmaelites" represented not one of the horns of the beast, but the fourth beast itself, in other words, the last great world empire, an honor generally reserved for Rome.

Various Latin chronicles, written in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, portrayed the Muslim conquests and raids of the 8th and 9th centuries, in similar ways, as a divine scourge, at times presenting the loss of Spain as punishment for the sins (political infighting, sexual crimes) of the Visigothic kings and nobility.¹⁰ Boniface, in a letter to King Ethelbald of Murcia, portrayed the Saracens invasions as punishments against the Christians of Spain and Provence for the sin of fornication.¹¹ Yet the Saracens were not the only such scourge: Zacharias wrote to Boniface of the "tribulation" wrought by "Saracens, Saxons, and Frisians."¹² No effort is made to distinguish the religious beliefs or practices of these groups.

2. Saracens as Precursors to Antichrist

In the midst of the rising tide of conversion and Arabization, a new, darker vision of God's plan was forged: the anonymous Syriac author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (c.692) presented the Muslim

⁸ I am quoting this Nestorian chronicler of c.670 as translated in Claude Cahen, "Note sur l'accueil des chrétiens d'Orient à l'Islam", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 166 (1964), 51-58 (quotation at 52-53).

⁹ Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, 206.

¹⁰ Tolan, *Saracens*, ch. 4.

¹¹ "Sicut aliis gentibus Hispaniae et Provinciae et Burgundionum populis contigit; quae sic a Deo recedentes fornicatae sunt, donec iudex omnipotens talium criminum ultrices poenas per ignorantiam legis Dei et per Sarracenos venire et saevire permisit." MGH epp. Sel 1:151. See Ekkehart Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen: das östliche Araberbild und seine Entstehung im Frühmittelalter*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986, 230.257-258.

¹² "tribulatio ... Saracinorum, Saxonum et Fresonum" Zacharias, *Epistola ad Bonifatium* MGH epp. Sel 1:123; Rotter, *Abendland und Sarazenen*, 258.

domination as part of the drama of the last days.¹³ The work bears the title *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* because it purports to be the work of Methodius, Bishop of Olympas (d. c. 311). God had supposedly revealed the course of military and political history to Methodius, from Adam to the world's end. In this vision, the Muslim invasions become both the punishment God metes out to sinful Christians and the "testing furnace" meant to try the true Christians before the ultimate Christian victory. By attributing the *Apocalypse* to the respected Church father Methodius and by placing it in the fourth century, the anonymous author passes off his *descriptions* of the Muslim invasions as authoritative, divinely-inspired *predictions* of the invasions and hopes in turn to lend credibility to his predictions of imminent Christian victory over the "pagan" Ishmaelites.

The author's major preoccupation is to explain Muslim hegemony and the conversion of Christians to Islam in Christian terms. Just as God gave the Holy Land to the Jews to punish the sins of its previous inhabitants, "So too with the sons of Ishmael, it is not because God loves them that He allows them to enter into the kingdom of the Christians, the like of which has never been done in any of the former generations."¹⁴ What are the unprecedented sins being punished? For this author, they are not Christological but sexual, described in lurid detail: men dress in drag as harlots in the market place and fornicate with each other; men take their sons and brothers to whore-houses to share the same prostitutes, men fornicate with men and women with women, etc. The punishment is described in detail as well: Methodius "predicts" the scope and magnitude of the conquests of the Ishmaelites, couching them in terms of apocalyptic destruction: rape and pillage, fire and tempered steel, and - worst of all - tribute and taxes!

Even the mass conversions of Christians to Islam is "predicted" by Methodius, as part of this "furnace of trial." Paul himself had predicted "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils".¹⁵ These "latter times", the

¹³ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, Francisco J. Martinez, ed. & trans., in: *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius* (Dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1985), 58-201; Gemit J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam", in: Averil Cameron/Lawrence Conrad (eds.), *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* 1, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 149-187.

¹⁴ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, § XI, 140.

¹⁵ 1 Timothy 4:1.

world's final days, have come; the mass, voluntary apostasy of Christians is proof of it. During this period, the *Apocalypse* makes clear, the good Christian who perseveres will suffer more persecution than the bad Christian who apostatizes. Why?

It is so that they might be tested, and the faithful might be separated from the unfaithful, and the tares and those who are rejected from the choice wheat, because that time will be a furnace of trial. And God will be patient while His worshipers are persecuted, so that by means of the chastisement the sons might be made known, as the Apostle proclaimed beforehand, "if we are without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards, and not sons".¹⁶ This period of punishment and trial, a rod that a loving father uses to discipline his children, was almost over: God had declared that the Ishmaelites' dominion would last "ten weeks of years" – in other words, seventy years.¹⁷ It is unclear what the author considered the beginning of the seventy-year dominion: perhaps the invasions of Syria in 634–636. The message to Christians of 692 (the probable date of composition) is clear: hang on for a few more years, patiently enduring the "furnace of trial", and you will see vindication and revenge.

A similar apocalyptic vision is given by Cordoban Paulus Alvarus, in his *Indiculus luminosus* (written in the 850s). Alvarus, writing to defend the voluntary martyrs of the Cordova martyr movement, weaves an elaborate exegetical argument to identify Muḥammad as the Antichrist, or rather as a *praecursor Antichristi*, since he affirms (in the conservative tradition of Augustine) that there are many Antichrists. In a series long and intricate exegetical calculations, he identifies Muḥammad with the eleventh king in the Prophet Daniel's description of the beast. Like Pseudo-Methodius, Alvarus seeks to convince his Christian readers that Muslims are following Antichrist, that their religion has no legitimacy; the goal is to justify the strident opposition of the voluntary martyrs as the only true Christian response to a pernicious enemy.¹⁸ Yet the apocalyptic fear-mongering of these authors did little or nothing to stem the conversion of Christian *dhimmi* to Islam; other churchmen tried other strategies.

¹⁶ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, § XIII, 147–148; Heb. 12:8.

¹⁷ *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, § V, 130; § X, 139.

¹⁸ Tolan, *Saracens*, ch. 4.

3. Muslims as Heretics, Muḥammad as Heresiarch

It is in this context that John of Damascus completed, in 743, his *On the Heresies*, a erudite tract of polemics meant to describe and refute 100 heresies that have plagued Christianity since the days of the Apostles. Islam is heresy no. 100: the latest in a long line of deviant strains of Christianity. John presents Muḥammad as a false prophet and heresiarch, schooled by an Arian monk, who then concocted his own ridiculous doctrine which he set down in writing.

What is absurd and risible in Islam, for John, is its rejection of the divinity of Christ, of the crucifixion, and of other fundamental Christian doctrines. Here John turns and interrogates a hypothetical Muslim adversary, asking him to produce witnesses to prove the legitimacy of the prophet's revelation. He contrasts Muḥammad to Moses, who received the law on Mount Sinai in full view of the people. Your law requires witnesses for weddings, land sales, and other transactions; why do you not ask for witnesses to prove that the Koran is truly revealed by God? Such arguments are unlikely to convince a real Muslim, who could retort that Christians accept the Gospels and the books of the Hebrew Prophets without any witnesses. The very lack of theological sophistication in this argument shows that this is not so much *polemical* (i. e., an offensive attack on Islam) as *apologetical* (a defensive strategy designed to slow down the defection of Christians to the Muslim camp). John seems to be furnishing arguments that could be deployed by Christians wishing to defend their faith to Muslim interlocutors and is certainly not offering an attack which Muslim thinkers could take seriously. He needs to convince his reader of the efficacy and irrefutability of his arguments, in response to which, he asserts, his Muslim opponents were "surprised and at a loss"; "they remain silent because of shame".¹⁹ The practical, defensive nature of his apologetics becomes even clearer in the two sections that follow, offering aggressive counter-arguments against two common Muslim objections to Christianity. "They call us *associators*, because, they say, we introduce beside God an associate to Him by saying that Christ

¹⁹ John of Damascus, *Liber de haeresibus*, in: P. Bonifatius Kotter (ed.), *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* (5 vols.; Berlin, 1969–1981), 4:62; english translation by Daniel Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites"*, Leiden: Brill, 1972, 134–135.

is the Son of God and God".²⁰ John responds with two arguments, defensive and offensive. First, the defensive argument: the prophets announced Christ's coming and the Gospels confirmed it; if we are wrong, they are wrong. Second, the offensive argument:

Again we respond to them: "Since you say the Christ is Word and Spirit of God, how do you scold us as *associators*? For the Word and the Spirit is inseparable each from the one in whom this has the origin; if, therefore, the Word is in God it is obvious that he is God as well. If, on the other hand, this is outside of God, then God, according to you, is without word and without spirit. Thus, trying to avoid making associates to God you have mutilated Him ... Therefore, by accusing us falsely, you call us *associators*; we, however, call you *mutilators* (κοπτας) of God".²¹

In other words, by depriving the divinity of the Word and the Spirit, Muslim "mutilators" deprive God of his key attributes. Such Trinitarian arguments, based on triads of divine attributes, are to become standard fare in Christian polemic against Islam. Here John gives a simplified version of such an argument, primarily, it seems, to provide the Christian with a handy insult word to bandy back against any Muslim who accuses him of being an associator.

For Byzantine chronicler Theophanes, Muḥammad is "the leader and false prophet of the Saracens".²² Theophanes claims that the Jews had first flocked to Muḥammad, thinking he was their long-awaited Messiah; when they saw him eating camel (a forbidden food), they realized their error, yet some of them stayed with him out of fear "and taught him illicit things directed against us, Christians".²³ Theophanes describes Muḥammad's marriage to Khadija and his travels in Palestine where he sought out the writings of Jews and Christians. Muḥammad had an epileptic seizure, and at this Khadija became distressed; he soothed her by telling her: "I keep seeing a vision of a certain angel called Gabriel, and being unable to bear his sight, I faint

²⁰ John of Damascus, *Liber de haeresibus*, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 4:63; Sahas, *John of Damascus*, 134-139.

²¹ John of Damascus, *Liber de haeresibus*, in: *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos* 4:63-64; Sahas, *John of Damascus*, 136-137.

²² Theophanes, *Chronographia* 333-334; Theophanes. English translation by Cyril Mango/Roger Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes the Confessor*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, 464-465. It is unclear what Theophanes' sources of information about Muḥammad; see Anne Proudfoot, "The Sources of Theophanes for the Heraclian Period", *Byzantion* 44 (1974), 367-439; esp. 386.

²³ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 333; Mango/Scott trans., 464.

and fall down".²⁴ Khadija sought the advice of "a certain monk living there, a friend of hers (who had been exiled for his depraved doctrine)"; this heretical monk seems to be based on the Muslim legends around Waraqa and Bahira.²⁵ The monk told Khadija that Muḥammad was indeed a prophet to whom the Angel Gabriel came in visions. With such beginnings, his "heresy" soon was spread by force. Theophanes recounts that Muḥammad promised to all who fell fighting the enemy a paradise full of sensual delights: eating, drinking, and sex. He said "many other things full of profligacy and stupidity"²⁶ Eulogius of Cordova, like his ninth-century contemporary Alvarus, was an apologist for the Cordovan martyr movement (and martyr himself in 859). He again shows that categories of heresiarch and Antichrist overlap. In 850, Eulogius travels to Navarra; in the monastery of Leyre, he discovers a brief biography of Muḥammad in a Latin manuscript. He copies it and includes it in his *Liber apologeticus martyrum*. This short text shows some knowledge of Islam: it describes Muḥammad's marriage with Khadija, the role of Gabriel in the revelation of the Qur'an, the titles of various Qur'anic Suras, and Muḥammad's marriage to Zaynab. All of these events, however, are presented in the worst possible light, twisted almost beyond recognition by the hostile pen of the author. Muḥammad's death is described in a manner which has nothing to do with Muslim tradition, but comes straight out of Christian traditions about Antichrist: before dying, Muḥammad predicts that the third day after his death the archangel Gabriel will come to bring him back from the dead. This is course fails to happen; his disciples decide finally to abandon his cadaver; dogs, not angels come.²⁷

4. Christianity Defended in the Language of Muslim Theology

Other churchmen, however, sought less to stem the tide of conversion than to justify and defend their own role as *dhimmi* in Muslim soci-

²⁴ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 334; Mango/Scott trans., 464. Theophanes is the first author to charge Muḥammad of being an epileptic, an accusation that will be repeated by many later polemicists; see Astérios Argyriou, "Éléments biographiques concernant le prophète Muhammad dans la littérature grecque des trois premiers siècles de l'Hégire", in: Toufic Fahd (ed.), *La vie du prophète Mahomet: Colloque de Strasbourg (octobre 1980)*, Paris, 1983, 160-182, esp. 168; Ducellier, *Chrétiens d'Orient*, 127.

²⁵ See Tolán, *Saracens*, ch. 2.

²⁶ Theophanes, *Chronographia* 334; Mango/Scott trans., 464-465.

²⁷ See Tolán, *Saracens*, ch. 4; Tolán, *Sons of Ishmael*, ch. 1.

ety. They sought less to attack Islam through polemics than to defend Christianity through apologetics. While John of Damascus portrayed Muslim doctrine from a Greek Christian perspective as a Christological heresy, Theodore Abû Qurrah (d. c. 820) attempted to justify Christianity in the terms of Muslim theology. Some of Abû Qurrah's works show a practical, apologetic aim: he denies that Islam had supplanted or abrogated Christianity in God's favor just as Christianity had supplanted Judaism²⁸ he defends Christian veneration of images against the charge of Idolatry.²⁹ He wrote his *Refutation of Outsiders*, he says, because when he came out of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem with some friends, a group of Muslims accosted them and began questioning them about their faith. Theodore's *On True Religion* is much more ambitious: it purports to prove the superiority of Christianity over other religions through rational, objective criteria.³⁰

Abû Qurrah starts with a philosophical proof of the creation of the universe and of the existence of a creator, God. His point of departure is a Neoplatonic view of the universe: the effects of God as creator are evident in the order and harmony among the elements of the universe. He concludes that God as cause must be greater than his effects: he must be eternal, unchanging, good, wise, etc.: here he provides a long list of the divine attributes commonly accorded to God by Muslim thinkers. Having established certain truths about God from a rational, non-sectarian perspective, he then asks which religion is true: he briefly describes each of nine prominent religions. Only one of these religions can be true, he says, but how are we to tell which one? He imagines a man from a remote mountainous region coming down into a city, seeing that people have different religions, and trying to determine which one he should choose. He proposes to compare the scriptural tenets of each of these religions with the philosophical truths about God enumerated in the beginning of his treatise. Unsurprisingly, he will conclude that only Christianity is consistent with what an objective, philosophically-minded person can ascertain about God.

²⁸ Sahas, *John of Damascus*, 157–159; on the common charge of abrogation (*naskh*) see c35–41.

²⁹ Griffith, "Theodore Abû Qurrah's Arabic Tract on the Christian Practice of Venerating Images", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105 (1985), 66–67.

³⁰ On this text, see Sydney Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalâm: Theodore Abû Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion", in: Samir Khalil Samir/Jørgen S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, 1–43.

His arguments are both apologetical (in defense of the Trinity, for example) and polemical: he criticizes Islam for condoning violence and for promising sensual rewards in this life and the next. Islam, like most other religions, spread with the military and political power of its adherents; base, worldly reasons (political ambition, greed, etc.) play a prominent role in encouraging conversions to Islam. Not so for Christianity, says Abû Qurrah: it spread far and wide despite the best efforts of the Romans to extinguish it; this shows that its adherents are inspired only by a desire for God and for the rewards of the world to come, not by earthly ambitions.³¹

Abû Qurrah's *On True Religion* rejects Islam's spiritual claims directly and unequivocally. Yet it does so in a very different way from the other texts we have examined. Abû Qurrah places himself in a (fictional) non-sectarian viewpoint and attempts to prove the superiority of Christianity in rational, objective terms. While John of Damascus portrayed Islam in Melkite terms as a Christological heresy, Abû Qurrah attempts to justify Christianity through the vocabulary and ideas of the *mutakallimûn* of 'Abassid Baghdad. He calmly accepts the existence of Islam on the political and social level: we are all seekers of truth, he seems to be saying to Muslims; you just happen to be wrong. Abû Qurrah, like the anonymous Christian who wrote the first Arab apology for Christianity a few years earlier, was an Arab who thought and wrote using the vocabulary of the Koran and the intellectual categories of his Muslim contemporaries.³² The Muslim intellectuals of Baghdad are not the horrible barbarians of Sophronios or Pseudo-Methodius; they are his companions. Yet they are companions who have erroneously picked the wrong religion for understandable but insufficient reasons. Islam is the religion of enjoyment of this world; Christianity is the religion of the next. In this way, it seems, Abû Qurrah hopes to persuade his Christian readers to remain faithful to Christianity while at the same time explain to them the success of Islam.

In ninth-century Spain, Paulus Alvarus had fulminated against Christian youths who preferred Arabic poetry to Latin letters; his own son, it seems, composed Arabic poems. Hafis ibn Albar, according to

³¹ This same line of argumentation is taken by the anonymous author of an earlier Arabic apology for Christianity; see Samir Khalil Samir, "The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity (c. 750)", in: Samir Khalil Samir/Jørgen S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, 103.

³² Samir, *The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity*.

one of his Muslim contemporaries, was the most intelligent and most arabized of the Andalusian Christians. af translated the Psalms from Latin into Arabic verse. He also composed a *Book of Fifty-Seven Questions*, an Arabic apology of Christianity which (although it is now lost) seems to have been much less virulent than his father's.³³ Rather than vilifying Islam, as had his father, he crafted apologetical works which aimed to defend and justify Christianity in the eyes of both Christians and Muslims.³⁴ Mozarab Christians had found the spirit of polite apologetical dialogue familiar to oriental Christians.

We hence see roughly the same range of reactions to Muslim conquest and dominion in Christian Spain in the eighth and ninth centuries that we saw in the East in the seventh and eighth. The Muslims are initially portrayed above all as a scourge sent by God to punish wayward Christians, subsequently as a player in the drama of the eschaton, then as heretical followers of the heresiarch Muḥammad. Finally, minority dhimmi Christians seek to defend their place in Muslim society through apologetics.

³³ Fragments of *Book of Fifty-Seven Questions* survive in al-Qurtubī's *al-ʿIlām*, a thirteenth-century work of anti-Christian polemic. On Hafṣ' ibn Albar, see van Koningsveld, "Christian Arabic Literature from Medieval Spain: an Attempt at Periodization", in: Samir/Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics*, 203–204, esp. 206–212; Hafṣ' ibn Albar, *Le Psautier mozarabe de Hafṣ le Goth*, Marie-Thérèse Urvoy, ed. & trans., Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1994; D. Dunlop, "Hafṣ' ibn Albar, the Last of the Goths?", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1954), 136–151; idem, "Sobre af ibn Albar al-Qūṭī Al-Qurtubī," *Al-Andalus* 20 (1955), 211–213. On al-Qurtubī's use of af ibn Albar, see Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 158–160.

³⁴ This distinction between polemics and apologetics corresponds to the one drawn by Millet-Gérard between "polémique fermée" and "polémique ouverte" (*Chrétiens mozarabes*, 173).

INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN THE HISTORY
OF POLITICAL THOUGHT CHRISTIAN WOLFF,
CHŎNG YAG-YONG AND MATTEO RICCI

Eun-jeung Lee

1. *Encounter between Catholicism and Confucianism*

Even before East Asia came under the sway of European imperialism, an important exchange of ideas and culture had taken place between Europe and East Asia. To give an example, Chinese porcelain and styles became very fashionable in Europe during the 17th and 18th century. This fascination with China became known in the history of art and culture as Chinoiserie, yet it also had an impact in the fields of philosophy, religion and political thought.¹ In fact, it also had a remarkable impact on East Asia. H.G. Creel, a well-known sinologist, holds that this was the beginning of modernity in China.² This might be somewhat exaggerated, but there is little doubt that Western thought had a strong impact on the philosophy and religion of East Asia. Thus, the encounter between Europe and East Asia that began during the European Enlightenment left its mark in Europe as well as in East Asia. In this paper, I will exemplify this encounter in the thought of two thinkers, namely Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Chŏng Yag-yong (1762–1836).

Christian Wolff together with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was a key figure in Europe's philosophical encounter with Confucianism. His speech on the "Practical Philosophy of the Chinese" in 1721 was a heyday in the positive reception of Confucianism in Germany. Chŏng Yag-yong, on the other hand, was a Korean thinker and philosopher

¹ Lee, Eun-jeung: "Anti-Europa". *Die Geschichte der Rezeption von Konfuzianismus und der konfuzianischen Gesellschaft in Europa seit der frühen Aufklärung*, Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003.

² Creel, Herrlee G.: *Confucius, the Man and the Myth*, Seoul: Hangilsa, 1949 (Korean Edition from 1983), 290.