

teológicas que subyacen al texto analizando una serie de principios teológicos implícitos en el mismo.

20. Hatham Saed, “Christian and Mandaean Perspectives on Baptism” (pp. 320-347). Análisis comparativo del ritual del bautismo en sus dos vertientes cristiana y mandea, a través del cual Saed aprecia similitudes entre ambos. Dichas similitudes las halla el autor en los significados simbólicos, no en el proceso ritual del bautismo en sí que para el autor ha acabado cambiando con el transcurso de los siglos y los cambios operados en el ritual cristiano desde los mismos días de Jesús, frente al inmovilismo del ritual mandeo, característica que – siempre según Saed – constituye la base explicativa para toda una serie de cuestiones relacionadas con el bautismo cristiano y judío.

El volumen cierra con una serie de 3 índices: 1. Obras y autores antiguos (pp. 349-351); 2. Autores modernos (351-355) y 3. Manuscritos (pp. 355-356).

Esta octava entrega de los *Symposia Syriaca*, ya lo he indicado al principio, sigue la estela marcada por los siete volúmenes anteriores. La sigue en rigor y en calidad científica, pero también en dignidad y, sobre todo, con el orgullo de mantener viva una tradición que va camino de alcanzar, dentro de no mucho, el primer lustro de unión y colaboración estrecha de los colegas siriólogos. Y esa unión y esa colaboración tiene en estos *Symposia* cuatrienales una impronta a la vez ejemplar e insustituible, la del esfuerzo conjunto para proseguir con una labor tan importante y necesaria como es la de estudiar y difundir, dignificar en suma, la cultura siríaca, pasada y presente, aún tan completamente desconocida para tantos.

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EBIED, Rifaat & THOMAS, David (eds.), *Muslim-Christian Polemic during the Crusades: the Letter from the People of Cyprus and Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī's Response*. «The History of Christian-Muslim Relations» 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 516 pp. ISBN: 90-04-13589-8

As the title implies, the present work is a critical edition and translation of the letter sent by Christians in Cyprus in defense of their faith and the response to it composed in 721/1321 by a Damascus scholar Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Anṣārī al-Ṣūfī al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1327). *The Letter from the People*

of Cyprus, as clearly pointed out in the present volume, was based on Paul of Antioch's (a Melkite Bishop of Sidon) *Letter to a Muslim Friend*, written some time between the mid- fifth/eleventh and the early seventh/thirteenth centuries.

Apparently, Paul's letter had circulated widely and it was refuted by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 684/1258) in his *al-Ajwiba al-fākhira 'an al-as'ila al-fājira*. Sometime in the early eighth/fourteenth century an anonymous Christian scholar in Cyprus revised Paul's letter and sent the new version to two prominent Muslim scholars in Damascus, Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya in 716/1316, and our author Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Dimashqī in 721/1321. They responded to the letter in their respective works *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* and *Jawāb risālat ahl jazīrat al-Qubruṣ*.

This work presents both the text of the Christian letter from Cyprus [accompanied with Paul of Antioch's letter in parallel columns] (pp. 53-147) and the text of al-Dimashqī's response (pp. 149-497) in a usable format, together with an English translation. A comprehensive introduction (pp. 1-35) sheds light upon the historical background and theological context, where, for example, the differences and divergences between two letters, i.e. Paul's and that of the anonymous Cypriot, are thoroughly elucidated. Actually, the Cypriot editor removes some parts of Paul's letter, probably in order to sound less antagonistic, yet he maintains Paul's general intention, which is to show that Muslim scripture supports Christian beliefs (pp. 60-74, 82, 84, 88, 116, 142, 144). His main argument is based on the premise that the Bible has not been corrupted, and can therefore be used as a proof-text binding Muslims as well. Instead of rational arguments the author prefers to use scripture. Thus, although he preserves Paul's structure, he adds many supporting verses from the Qur'an (pp. 58, 60, 64, 68, 70, 96, 98, 124, 126) and Bible (pp. 76, 78, 80, 84-88, 94, 100-120), since he prefers scriptural proofs to Paul's logical proofs. Therefore, he is more than just an editor, as Ebied and Thomas observe.

In identifying the anonymous Cypriot editor-reviser-author, a number of issues are taken into account. It is obvious from the way he writes that he is fluent in reading and writing Arabic. Further, he corrects Paul of Antioch's alterations in his Qur'anic quotations, which proves his knowledge of the Qur'an. (pp. 66, 74). As the editors rightly point out, all these seem to indicate that the author was an

Oriental Christian, a native Arabic speaker who is more likely to have been an immigrant to Cyprus from the eastern mainland than a native of the island.

The Cypriot letter consists of eighteen sections, which can be divided into three main thematic parts: 1. The Qur'an is not intended for the Christians (i-ii); 2. Christian beliefs are confirmed by the Qur'an (iii-ix); 3. The Trinity and the Incarnation are supported by the Old Testament, the Qur'an, and reason (x-xviii).

In the Cypriot's letter Muḥammad is presented as no more than a local preacher, whose mission was directed only to Arab pagans in order to bring them to the true monotheistic faith (p. 58). This view is similar to the approach of the Nestorian Patriarch Timothy I (d. 823), who did not go beyond saying that 'Muhammad walked on the path of the prophets'. Thus, following the common line of Arab Christian apologetics, the letter from Cyprus holds that it is not the Christians who need to abandon their religion (p. 54), but rather that it is Muslims who should move on from their faith in search for a complete and final truth.

Al-Dimashqī's response comprises a short introduction and thirteen sections, which can be summarized as follows: 1. Muḥammad was sent to the whole world and thus the Qur'anic message was universal, addressed to all people. His coming was announced in the Torah, Gospel, and other Biblical books (i-ii). 2. The Torah and Gospel have not been preserved intact, and therefore the Qur'an was sent to correct their errors (iii-iv). 3. The Christians misinterpret the Qur'anic verses in order to show that the Qur'an acknowledges them. The Trinity and the Incarnation are nothing but polytheism and falsehood. Neither the Torah nor the Gospel support Christians in their beliefs. Christians are also philosophically incoherent in their teachings of the Trinity and Incarnation (v-xiii).

Al-Dimashqī attributes substitution (*tabdīl*) and alteration (*taghyīr*) to the Christian scripture and criticizes them for the lack of *tawātur* in their transmission (pp. 268, 364). However, this does not prevent him from using Gospel passages to prove the humanity of Christ (pp. 346-50) and from relying on the Christian scripture whenever he needs to strengthen his argument. For example, in his fictitious discussion whether Christ should be defined as 'sent' (*rasūl*) or 'Sender' (*rāsīl*) al-Dimashqī addresses the Christians with the words: 'If you say that he was sent, you deny your Gospels which witness that he was divine

and worshipped. And if you say that he was Sender, you deny Christ's words' that his teaching was not from himself but from One who sent him as it is described in various passages in John's Gospel (p. 378). Thus, with this kind of argument, al-Dimashqī tries to prove the inconsistencies both within the Christian scripture and between the scripture and doctrine itself. The Gospel attestations that Christ is a prophet sent, yet the Son of God, and also God himself, are seen by al-Dimashqī as proof for the existence of contradictions in the Gospels. For him, it is a self-contradiction to assert that Christ is both man and God, created and Creator (p. 382).

From the arguments employed it is obvious that al-Dimashqī was very well informed about the writings of the previous polemicists. For example, when it comes to the issue of crucifixion, following the line of his predecessors, al-Dimashqī relies on the theory of substitution and holds that it was Judas Iscariot who was crucified instead of Jesus (p. 208-10). Another classical critique is that against Paul and his activities (pp. 396-402), which parallels the stories recorded in various Muslim polemics. Furthermore, his words, 'Constantine brought people into Christianity willy-nilly' (p. 212) are especially reminiscent of those of Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār (d. 415/1025) in his *Tathbūt*, according to whom it was under fear of the sword (*khawf al-sayf*) that the distorted version of Christianity was imposed by Constantine.

This volume is a valuable document and historical testimony to Christian and Muslim attitudes towards each other, specifically in the later period of the Crusades. It is an excellent read for both the students of the area and non-expert readers, thus appealing to a wide audience. Ebied and Thomas accompany their critical edition of the original Arabic texts of the Cypriot's letter and al-Dimashqī's response with an annotated, well readable English translation. The Arabic text and its English translation are given on facing pages, which facilitates comparisons between the Arabic and English versions. The edition of the *Letter from the People of Cyprus* is based on three manuscripts: Par. Ar. 204, 214 and 215. Moreover, in parallel columns, the text of Paul of Antioch's letter, as published by Paul Khoury [*Paul d'Antioche, évêque melkite de Sidon (xii^e s.)*, Beirut, 1964, pp. 59-83], is also supplied. The edition of al-Dimashqī's *Jawāb* is based on two manuscripts, Utrecht Codex 40, preserved in University Library, Utrecht, the Netherlands and Marsh 40, preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Although the Biblical and Qur'anic

quotations and references in al-Dimashqī's response are shown in the footnotes, those in the Cypriot's letter are, instead, given only in the index at the end of the volume. Although a very minor difficulty, perhaps it would have been easier for the reader had they been uniform.

A few sporadic observations: pp. 192, 194, 196, 198, 200, 210, 216 read نكتة instead of نكتة meaning 'a subtle remark, point of discussion'; p. 260 line 3 read قار الوها instead of قار الوهي which could be translated as 'permanently weak, i.e. impotent'; p. 158 line 11 read آتهم instead of أتهم. Some confusions with *hamza*: p. 336 line 15 read إحدى instead of إحدى; often the initial *hamza* is missing such as in إسرائيل, إبراهيم, إسماعيل (pp. 162, 164, 172, 240, 252, 296, 308, 348, 356, 358, etc.). Although throughout the book the Middle Arabic replacement of *hamza* by *yā'* has been corrected in accordance with the standard classical Arabic, there are some inconsistencies in writing مائة. Sometimes it is left as مائة (pp. 72, 76, 100, 118, 248, 264, 274, 278, 308, 386) and sometimes we see the corrected version of مائة (pp. 150, 154, 170, 182, 320, 356).

Overall, the book makes a very useful contribution to the understanding of Christian-Muslim intellectual exchanges in the Middle Ages, more specifically those in the period of the crusades. It is highly informative about the content of the Christian-Muslim polemics, the methodology used, and arguments developed by both sides. This well organized volume of the critical edition and translation of the medieval texts provides a clear account of the historical data, thereby helping the general readership to understand contemporary issues relating to this area.

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EPALZA, Mikel de (coord.), *Traducir del árabe* (Barcelona: Gedisa Editorial, 2004), 340 pp. ISBN: 84-9784-001-1.

Toda tarea traductológica requiere una labor introductoria de estudio de los dos universos culturales involucrados, en este caso, el árabe y el español. Dicha labor ha sido desarrollada por los participantes en el presente volumen a lo largo de sus ocho capítulos, cada uno de ellos dedicados a un aspecto específico de la traducción especializada, tal y como se señala en la presentación del libro (pp. 13-15). Esta presentación esta seguida de un útil listado de los autores (pp. 16-