Barbara Crostini, Sergio La Porta (eds.)

Negotiating Co-Existence:

Communities, Cultures and *Convivencia* in Byzantine Society

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Foreword

Thanks are due to the European Science Foundation (ESF) for sponsoring the workshop entitled '*Convivencia* in Byzantium? Cultural Exchanges in a Multi-Lingual and Multi-Ethnic Society', Trinity College Dublin, 1–3 October 2010, under the auspices of its Exploratory Workshops scheme. According to their brief, these workshops aim at bringing together a relatively small number of international scholars to map out an area of research for further study. The purpose of this meeting was therefore that of drawing a broader picture of what is normally understood as 'Byzantium', capturing its multi-cultural essence and emphasizing the manner of interaction between different linguistic, ethnic and religious strands in its midst.

Further thanks go to Dr Sarah Alyn-Stacey, Director of the Centre of Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Trinity, for encouraging and co-sponsoring the event. When Professor Sergio La Porta agreed to act as co-editor of the final volume I could not anticipate how precious his collaboration would be to secure an outcome, and I am deeply indebted to him. Finally, we would like to thank all contributors to the workshop who have made this adventure possible.

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IV. THE DYNAMICS OF CO-EXISTENCE

Reinhold F. Glei

John Damascene on Islam: a Long-Term History in Byzantium

When we look at the history of Christian-Muslim relations in Byzantium[1] from the viewpoint of religious studies,[2] we are tempted to say that it is a history of misunderstandings. Since the rise of Islam in the seventh and early eighth centuries, there is, in Byzantine sources, a continuous series of misinterpretations of Islamic doctrines,[3] mistranslations of Koranic verses,[4] and even misspellings of Arabic words (as we will see later). Byzantine polemics against Islam, however, demonstrates not only the shortcomings of an interreligious 'dialogue' between Christianity and Islam, but also reveals —and perhaps that even to a higher degree— the weakness and uncertainty of some Christian doctrines held by and discussed within the Byzantine church. Studying Christian views on Islam,[5] we learn at least as much (if not

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1 See the useful compendium: *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, Volume 1 (600–900), ed. by David Thomas and Barbara Roggema, History of Christian-Muslim Relations 11 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), and therein my article 'John of Damascus', ibid., pp. 295–301.

2 For a current definition of comparative religious studies, cf. Hans G. Kippenberg and Kocku von Stuckrad, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft: Gegenstände und Begriffe* (Munich: Beck, 2003); Klaus Hock, *Einführung in die Religionswissenschaft*, 3rd edn (Darmstadt: WBG, 2008); Michael Stausberg, *Contemporary Theories of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2009).

3 See, in general, Adel-Théodore Khoury, *Polémique Byzantine contre l'Islam (VIIIe–XIIIe s.)*, 2nd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1972), and idem, *Les Théologiens Byzantins et l'Islam. Textes et auteurs (VIIIe–XIIIe s.)*, 2nd edn (Louvain and Paris: Édition Nauwelaerts, 1969).

4 See my article, 'Der Mistkäfer und andere Missverständnisse. Zur frühbyzantinischen Koranübersetzung', in *Frühe Koranübersetzungen. Europäische und außereuropäische Fallstudien*, ed. by Reinhold F. Glei (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2012), pp. 9–24.

5 For a source-oriented overview, see Wolfgang Eichner, 'Die Nachrichten über den Islam bei den Byzantinern', *Islam* 23 (1936), pp. 133–62 and 197–244; more recently, see Jannis Niehoff-Panagiotidis, 'Byzanz und der Islam. Von der Kontingenzbewältigung zur aneignenden Übersetzung', in *Knotenpunkt Byzanz. Wissensformen und kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen*, ed. by A. Speer and Ph. Steinkrüger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), pp. 123–44.

more) about Christianity as about the religion established by Muhammad and his successors, which was denied to be a new religion at all – a significant fact in itself because it indicates that Christians and Muslims share much more religious belief than is admitted by both sides.

In this article, I will try to show how early views of Islam, as put forward by John Damascene, dominated the Byzantine attitude to Islam for a long time, virtually until this position was 'destroyed' by the Latins, as we will see. Paradoxically, the very nature of these polemics led to a kind of *modus convivendi* with Islam: the new religion was not seen as a completely different 'other' that was, in its otherness, disturbing and bewildering to a Christian's mind, but rather as just another aberration from Christian belief that could be dealt with in a way proven by the Church Fathers for many centuries: there was no 'Orientalism' at all in Byzantine polemics against Islam. So if we take *convivencia* not only as a historical or sociological term, but also as a hermeneutical one, we find a cultural and religious affinity between Christianity and Islam, based on many similarities and proved even by polemics, which stands to reason in view of their shared background.

The earliest known Christian document to deal with Islam in some detail is John Damascene's chapter on the "still prevailing deceptive superstition of the Ismaelites, the fore-runner of the Antichrist".[6] John Damascene, who lived from about 675 until some time before 754, was a high official in Damascus under the Umayyad caliphs Abd al-Malik and perhaps al-Walid I. Under Caliph 'Umar II (r. 717–20) who is assumed to have prohibited *dhimmīs* from holding high positions in government unless they converted to Islam, John retired from office and entered the famous monastery of Mar

[6] The standard edition is *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, ed. Byzantinisches Institut der Abtei Scheyern. IV: *Liber de haeresibus. Opera polemica*, ed. Bonifatius Kotter OSB, Patristische Texte und Studien, 22 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1981), pp. 60–7; for an English translation, see Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam. The* "*Heresy of the Ishmaelites*" (Leiden: Brill, 1972), pp. 133–41 (Greek text taken from PG). See also *Johannes Damaskenos und Theodor Abū Qurra, Schriften zum Islam*, ed. and comm. Reinhold Glei and Adel Theodor Khoury, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 3 (Würzburg: Echter, 1995). The quotation mentioned above is from *De Haeresibus*, ch. 100, ed. Kotter, p. 60, 1–2.

Saba near Jerusalem, where he devoted himself to studying and writing.[7] His main work is the so-called *Fount of Knowledge* (Πηγὴ γνώσεως), a large compendium of the theological knowledge up to his time. The second part of this work forms a group of one hundred chapters called 'heresies', containing not only Christian heresies in the proper sense of the word, but also such varied topics as, e.g., Platonism, Judaism, and Arianism. The final chapter deals with the latest and most dangerous heresy that has deceived so many people in the last decades, i.e. Islam.

The significance of chapter 100 can hardly be overestimated. It formed the Christian image of Islam for many centuries. As will be seen, later writings often only develop and enrich the motifs laid down in the Damascene's description of Muhammad's religion. What we are told about Islam (to give a short abstract of chapter 100) is that the Arabs originated from Ismael, son of Hagar and Abraham, and are therefore called Ismaelites or Hagarenes. In pre-Islamic times, they were idolaters, until, at the time of Emperor Heraclius (r. 610–41), a certain Muhammad appeared who, instructed by an Arian monk,[8] showed his pagan people the way to monotheism, telling them that a holy scripture had come down to him from heaven. But Muhammad was no true prophet because his mission was not confirmed by any witnesses or miracles, and what is even more ridiculous, he got his revelations while asleep. Muhammad's most important doctrine was that there is no God but the one God, creator of all things, who has neither begotten nor was he begotten —clearly a quotation from Surah 112,3 (*lam yalid wa-lam yūlad*), which is a polemical reference to Christology. Yet, by reproaching the Christians for being 'associators' (*mušrikūn* in Arabic), Muhammad at the same time presents God as ἄλογος καὶ ἄπνους ("without word and spirit"),[9] for he denies the Holy Trinity, the Logos and the Spirit being persons (ὑποστάσεις) of the one God. If Christians, then, are 'associators' (ἑταιριασταί in Greek), the Muslims are 'mutilators' (κόπται) of God by making him dumb and stupid, so to speak. Furthermore, they deny the cruci-

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7 For a biography of John Damascene, see Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 32 ff., and idem, 'Cultural Interaction during the Ummayad Period. The "Circle" of John of Damascus', *ARAM: Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies* 6 (1994), pp. 35–66.

8 This is a variant of the 'vulgate' tradition of the Nestorian monk Sergius (Baḥīrā). See Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīrā. Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

9 Ed. Kotter, p. 63, 73.

fixion of Christ, and therefore miss the central dogma of soteriology, falsely thinking that Christian worship of the Holy Cross is a form of idolatry.

For their part, Muslims are performing many pagan rites during their pilgrimage and especially at the Ka'ba. This point I am going to explain in more detail in what follows. At the end of chapter 100, John Damascene quotes some passages from several Surahs, namely from Surah 4 (*The Women*), Surah 5 (*The Table*), Surah 2 (*The Cow*) and from an obscure Surah named *The She-Camel of God*, which does not exist in the Qur'ān and probably refers to popular legends developed from the camel of Ṣāliḥ and the Thamūd mentioned in Surah 7 and elsewhere.[10] Since the ending is quite abrupt, chapter 100 may therefore be considered as incomplete.

Of course, it is impossible to discuss all these issues in detail here. Thus, I would like to pick up one example to see how a central point in the Damascene's attitude to Islam was adopted, developed, and modified by later Byzantine authors. As will be seen, there is a clear continuity up to the twelfth century and a surprising break in the fourteenth century.

Just at the beginning of his account on Islam, John Damascene tells us that, in pre-Islamic times, "(the Saracens) had been idolaters and venerated the Morning Star and Aphrodite, whom notably they called *Chabar* in their own language, which means 'great'. So, until the times of Heraclius, they were undoubtedly idolaters."[11]

The pre-Islamic Arabian cult of Venus and the Morning Star, respectively, are well known from ancient sources. Jerome, for example, in his *Vita of Hilarion*, clearly attests it: "they (a certain Celtic people) are venerators of Venus because she is the Morning Star, to whose cult (also) the Saracen people are devoted".[12] Other testimonies, like that of the Greek historian Procopius, suggest that the old pagan goddess al-'Uzzā (mentioned in the Qur'ān 53,19f.) is to be identified with Aphrodite.[13] Isaac of Antioch, a Syrian writer of the fifth century, also mentions al-'Uzzā using the Syrian name *Kaukabta* which means She-Star, i.e. Venus.[14] Jerome, in turn, in his commentary on the prophet Amos, speaks of a star-god, "that in Hebrew is

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10 See the commentary by Khoury in *Schriften zum Islam*, ed. Glei and Khoury, p. 198.

11 Ed. Kotter, p. 60, 7–9.

12 S. Eusebius Hieronymus, *Vita S. Hilarionis Eremitae*, PL 23, 29–54, at col. 41B.

13 Cf. Procopius Caesariensis, *De Bello Persico* 2,28,13: The Saracens sacrifice an enemy to Aphrodite.

14 Cf. Julius Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums, gesammelt und erläutert*, 3rd repr. (Berlin, 1961; 1st edn, 1887), p. 40.

called *Chocab*, i.e. the Morning Star, whom the Saracens are venerating until today".[15] Indeed the Hebrew word כוכב *kōchāb* means 'star', which is *kaukab* in Arabic. In fact, however, it seems that al-'Uzzā had nothing to do with the Morning Star, but was originally a tree-goddess, as is attested by the famous *Kitāb al-aṣnām* ("Book of Idols") of Ibn al-Kalbī (8th–9th cent.), the first description of pre-Islamic polytheism by a Muslim author.[16]

John Damascene, then, undoubtedly repeats nothing but the common view of Christian antiquity. But one important question remains to be answered: John tells us that the Saracens called that goddess *Chabar* (Χαβάρ) in their own language which he translates as 'great'. Commentators have been puzzled by that name, because 'great' in Arabic is *kabīra(tun)* (feminine form) which is not very similar to *Chabar*. Sahas suggested that the name is derived from the elative form *akbar* ('very great'),[17] but neither this form nor the feminine *kubrā*, an epithet of the goddess al-'Uzzā, is similar to *Chabar*.

A very interesting explanation is given by Georgios Monachos Hamartolos (9th cent.) in his *Chronicon*:[18]

> Thus, from ancient times they were venerating idols, especially worshipping a god whom the Greeks call Aphrodite, that means pleasure, and the morning star which they say is Aphrodite herself and whom they call in their own discordant language *Koubar*, that means 'great'. [...] The wording of her abominable and deeply impious prayer sounds as follows: Ἀλλά, Ἀλλά, Οὐά, Κουβάρ, Ἀλλά. And that *Alla, Alla* is translated by 'the god, the god', *Oua* is 'greater', and *Koubar, Alla* is 'the great goddess', i.e. the moon or Aphrodite. Thus, the formula is like that: 'the god, the god is greater and the great goddess'.

From that account, we learn that Hamartolos's source, which obviously influenced John Damascene too, analysed the famous *takbīr* ("magnification") *allāhu akbar* by wrongly separating the phonemes into *alla – ua – kbar*, and interpreted the first word as 'god', the second one as 'great', and the third

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15 S. Eusebius Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Amos Prophetam libri tres*, PL 25, 989–1096, at col. 1055B.

16 Cf. Rosa Klinke-Rosenberger, *Das Götzenbuch Kitâb Al-Aṣnâm des Ibn al-Kalbî*, unpublished diss., Zürich, 1942, p. 42, with n. 179.

17 Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, p. 87.

18 Georgius Monachus, *Chronicon*, ed. Carolus de Boor, Vol. II (textum genuinum inde a Vespasiani imperio continens), p. 706.

one as the feminine form *kubrā* (Κουβάρ in Greek). This way, the Greeks found an explanation for the strange and impious belief that the Arabs venerated a great god Allah ('the one god') and a great female goddess (Aphrodite) at the same time.

This speculative approach made by a Greek source to explain Muslim 'idolatry' sounds very sophisticated, but is, from a linguistic point of view, of course completely absurd. Therefore, we have to look for a different explanation of the goddess *Chabar* in John Damascene. Fortunately, there is a more detailed account of pagan rites in chapter 100, too. Speaking of the Muslim's denial and mockery of Christ's crucifixion, the Christian apologist strikes back:

> How is it that you rub yourselves against a stone at your Ka'ba,[19] and express your adoration to the stone by kissing it? And some of them answer that Abraham had intercourse with Hagar on it; others, that he tied his camel around it when he was about to sacrifice Isaac. [...][20] But suppose that it is of Abraham, as you foolishly maintain; are you not ashamed to kiss it for the only reason that Abraham had intercourse with a woman on it, or because he tied his camel to it, and yet you blame us for venerating the cross of Christ? [...] This, then, which they call 'stone', is the head of Aphrodite whom they used to venerate and whom they called *Chabar*, and on which those who look closely can see, even until now, traces of an engraving.[21]

This is obviously a recording of the rites performed at the Ka'ba which the pilgrims surround seven times while trying to touch or to kiss the Black Stone built into the wall in the north-eastern corner, about 5 feet from the ground, not far from the door.[22] The Black Stone (*al-ḥağar al-aswad*) was, as Wellhausen states, the true sanctuary;[23] according to Wellhausen, "the Ka'ba was only an enlargement of that stone...; it therefore was not only an

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19 The Greek form Χαβαθάν used here is obviously the accusative form *ka'batan*, against Eichner, p. 240 n. 1.

20 In the following paragraph, John shows that the last explanation contradicts Scripture.

21 Ed. Kotter, p. 64, 79–94.

22 Cf., e.g., A. J. Wensinck and J. Jomier, 'Ka'ba', *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edn, vol. IV (Leiden: Brill, 1978; ^{3}1997), 317–22.

23 Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, p. 74: "das eigentliche Heiligtum".

idol's house, but an idol in itself, an extended holy stone."[24] So I would suggest that the name of the idol *Chabar*, which is misunderstood as 'the great', is nothing but 'what they call stone', i.e. *ḥağar*.[25]

The origin of the Black Stone is unclear. Whether it was indeed the head of an idol, as John Damascene suggests, cannot be proved. According to the *ḥadīth* tradition, the stone came down from paradise, whiter than milk, and then turned black because of the sins Adam's children committed (Tirmidhī).[26] Another *ḥadīth* from the Tirmidhī collection goes as follows: "The prophet said about the stone: By God, God will awake it on the day of judgement with two eyes for seeing and with a tongue for speaking. It will testify for everyone who touched it in the right way."[27] Perhaps this is an echo of the stone being an idol with human features. Be that as it may, in any case the rites performed during the pilgrimage and especially at the Ka'ba were a concession to the former polytheistic inhabitants of Mecca made by Muhammad for reasons of acceptance in his homeland. When conquering Mecca in 630, Muhammad of course made sure that all idols were destroyed, but he was wise enough to maintain the central cult at the Ka'ba, only declaring now Allah the lord of the sanctuary. At least from outside, however, the pilgrimage rites looked just like what they actually were: relics from idolatry. In his letter to Caliph 'Umar II, Emperor Leo III states that the Muslims used to adore "a deaf stone, at a place where we know something has been left from idolatry. [...] You followed the pagan rites at that stone in Mecca, in the corner of the house of idolatry itself, to which the pagans of antiquity served and sacrificed."[28] The problematic nature of the stone worship is even confirmed by the Islamic tradition itself, as can be seen from a famous *ḥadīth* of 'Umar I, the second Caliph (634–44), which says: "He came to the Black Stone, kissed it and said: I know you are (only) a stone which can bring neither benefit nor harm. If I had not seen the pro-

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[24] Ibid.: "Die Ka'ba war nur eine Erweiterung dieses Steines ...; sie war also nicht bloss Behausung eines Idols, sondern selber Idol, ein vergrösserter heiliger Stein."

[25] Cf. also Eichner, p. 238 n. 1: "Ich glaube aber, daß die nächstliegende Auffassung die ist, daß mit all diesen Termini die Ka'ba, der schwarze Stein, gemeint ist." Eichner, however, seems to suggest that *Chabar* is a transliteration of *ka'ba*, not of *ḥağar*.

[26] Cf. *Der Ḥadīth, Urkunde der islamischen Tradition*, ed. and transl. Adel Theodor Khoury, 6 vols (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2008), II, p. 240, no. 2254.

[27] Ibid., no. 2255.

[28] Leo Imperator Augustus (cognomento Philosophus), *Epistola ad Omarum Sarracenorum Regem*, PG 107, 315–24, at col. 320D.

phet kissing you, I myself would not have kissed you."[29] This *ḥadīth*, preserved in five of the six great collections, is also quoted in the Christian apology of al-Kindī (9th cent.), which was translated into Latin in the twelfth century,[30] but is completely unknown to the Greek tradition.

At this point, we should remember that the critique of the stone ritual was a reaction to Muslim objection that the Christians venerated the True Cross as an idol. The Christian apologist Abū Rā'iṭah (c. 775–835), for example, defends the adoration of the cross as follows: "Now the cross is for us a *qiblah* and a glorious [thing], deserving of exaltation and honor and devotion, and who takes up [this] *qiblah*, apart from all other things, is saved. We, the Christian community, worship our Lord and our God, and do not worship another god from among creatures."[31] Obviously, the author draws a parallel between Christian veneration of the cross and Muslim veneration of the Ka'ba (referred to by the term *qiblah*, the direction of prayer towards the sacred house). In Abū Rā'iṭah's view, neither is an act of idolatry.

If one, in turn, approaches this question from a Byzantine point of view, it is clear that it was of an explosive nature. For a Byzantine Christian, there was no issue of greater importance in the eighth century than what was later called the iconoclast crisis. John Damascene himself arose to the status of a most prominent defender of the images with his famous three orations he wrote against Emperor Leo III on *eikonodoulia*.[32] So we can draw the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that even in his polemics against Islam John kept thinking in anti-iconoclastic (that is: entirely Greek) categories when he insists that Islam, the monotheistic, completely imageless religion *par excellence*, bears traces of idolatry. The Black Stone has become, so to speak, a Byzantine icon.

Moving on, we will now turn to later writers and their use of the Damascene's treatment of the above-mentioned topics, i.e. the worship of the Black Stone and Aphrodite *Chabar*, respectively. There is, unfortunately, no

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29 Khoury, *Ḥadīth*, II, p. 240, no. 2256.

30 Cf. Fernando González Muñoz, *Exposición y refutación del Islam. La versión latina de las epístolas de al-Hāšimī y al-Kindī* (A Coruña: Universidade da Coruña, 2005), Ch. 55, 38–42, p. 84.

31 Edited by Sandra Toenies Keating, *Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period. The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'iṭah*, The History of Christian-Muslim Relations 4 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 133–35.

32 On the role of John Damascene in the iconoclastic crisis, see Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, p. 3 ff.

reference to pagan rites in Theodore Abū Qurra (about 750 to 820/25), due to the purely apologetic nature of his disputations with Muslim theologians.[33] Probably from the same time, i.e. about 800, dates a very interesting text entitled ʾΑναθεματισμὸς τῶν Σαρακηνῶν, a formula of renouncing Islam by converts to Christianity.[34] This 'exorcism' is clearly modelled on John Damascene's chapter 100, as the following paragraph reveals:

> I renounce that house of prayer at Mecca, in which centre they say stands a big stone having an engraving of Aphrodite. That stone is worshipped because Abraham had intercourse with Hagar on it, or because he tied his camel to it when he was about to sacrifice Isaac.[35]

And somewhat later: "I renounce the worshippers of the Morning Star, i.e. Lucifer and Aphrodite, whom they call *Chabar* in the Arabian language, which means 'great'."[36] This is obviously a direct quotation from John Damascene, with the slight variation that the stone is not placed in the corner, but said to stand in the middle of the Ka'ba, maybe a confusion with the former statue of Hubal, a human figured idol made of red carneol that, according to Ibn al-Kalbī, stood inside the Ka'ba.[37]

Another important author to be mentioned here is Niketas Byzantios 'the philosopher', writing under Emperor Michael III (r. 842–67). In his great anti-Islamic work called ʾΑνατροπή ("Confutation of the Qur'ān"), he alludes several times to Muhammad's worship of Aphrodite. "He adores *Chubar*, a very old idol, in the desert of Yathrib and in Mecca, which is, as

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33 For Abū Qurra's writings against Islam, see the edition in Glei and Khoury, pp. 85 ff., and the English translation by John C. Lamoreaux, *Theodore Abū Qurrah*, Library of the Christian East, 1 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2005). Recently, also a Dutch translation, facing Glei's Greek text, together with an introduction and some useful notes, has been published: Johannes Damascenus & Theodorus Abū Qurra, *De eerste christelijke polemiek met de islam*, transl. Michiel Op de Coul and Marcel Poorthuis (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2011). An interesting comparison of the theological doctrines shared by John Damascene and Theodore Abū Qurra is offered by Smilen Markov, 'Theodore 'Abū Qurra als Nachfolger des Johannes von Damaskus', in *Knotenpunkt Byzanz*, ed. by Speer and Steinkrüger, pp. 111–22.

34 Edited by Edouard Montet, 'Un rituel d'abjuration des Musulmans dans l'église Grecque', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 53 (1906), 145–63.

35 Ibid., p. 153, 20–7.

36 Ibid., p. 154, 19–23.

37 Klinke-Rosenberger, *Kitâb Al-Aṣnâm*, pp. 43–4.

they say, engraved like a type of Aphrodite."[38] Or, somewhat later: "God said to the Saracens, speaking through his prophet, as they assert: Fall on your knees and venerate *Chubar* as a God, who is an idol and a figure of Aphrodite".[39] Or, already in the first confutation: "As we have heard from a Muslim convert to Christianity, a stone idol sits in the middle of the house (i.e. the Ka'ba). [...] I think that (stone) is the idol of Aphrodite, as they would say themselves".[40] It should be noted that Niketas, as well as the exorcism, places the idol in the middle of the house. The additional information given above that there was another very old idol of *Chubar* in Yathrib, too, suggests that Muhammad established the old Meccan cult also in Yathrib after his *ḥiğra*, which of course is completely absurd. That way, Muhammad's central monotheistic message 'there is no God but the one God' is polemically confused with pre-Islamic idolatry and thus converted into the sheer opposite.

There are few changes in the attitude towards Islam in the next centuries. The work of Niketas remained decisive up to the twelfth century and was, next to the Damascene's, regarded as an authority by later authors. In 1110, for example, the learned monk Euthymios Zigabenos wrote a large compendium on heresies dedicated to Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118). The last chapter of this *Panoplia dogmatica* ("Arsenal of Theological Arms") deals with Islam and extensively quotes John Damascene and Niketas almost word by word. In the passage on the Black Stone which is said to be the head of Aphrodite, Euthymios also incorporated a (somewhat distorted) passage from the exorcism: "This idol named *Bakcha Ismakech*, which the prophet himself called an object of adoration and observance, he ordered to be venerated by these bloody barbarians".[41] The obscure name *Bakcha Ismakech* is a misconception of the exorcism that gives some variant spellings of the name Mecca: "The house of prayer was built by Abraham and Ismael at Bakcha or Mekke or Makche".[42] Obviously, Euthymios's

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38 Niketas von Byzanz, *Schriften zum Islam* I, ed. and transl. Karl Förstel, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 5 (Würzburg: Echter, 2000), p. 136 (*Confutatio* 26, 30–32).

39 Ibid., p. 140 (*Confutatio* 27, 33–35).

40 Ibid., p. 56 (*Confutatio* 1, 318–24).

41 *Schriften zum Islam von Arethas und Euthymios Zigabenos und Fragmente der griechischen Koranübersetzung*. ed. and transl. Karl Förstel, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), p. 54 (*Panoplia* 8,165–69).

42 Montet, 'Un rituel d'abjuration', p. 153, 13–15.

ʾΙσμακέχ is distorted from the exorcism's εἰς [i.e. ἰς] Μάκχε which means 'at Mecca'.

Even less independent, if that is possible at all, is the *Thesaurus orthodoxae fidei* by Niketas Choniates (1150–1215) who stitches together complete passages from John Damascene, Euthymios Zigabenos, and others.[43] Here, the spelling of the Arabic names is even more distorted: Aphrodite is now called *Chamar*, and the Ka'ba has become *Gabathan*, possibly a reminiscence to the cobbled place called *Gabbatha* mentioned in the Gospel of John (19,13). Surprisingly, at the end of his treatise Niketas gives a more adequate outline of the Islamic rites, now comparing them (like Abū Rā'iṭah before, but surely independently) to the veneration of the cross: "Therefore the cross is venerable for us not as a wooden idol, but because it was an instrument for the passion of Christ. So when you are involved in [the pilgrimage to] Mecca, performing the holy rites as you like it, you do not acknowledge any holiness to the stones and walls, but to Him who is venerated in that house".[44] This sounds quite different and may therefore be a later interpolation, probably from the fourteenth century, as we shall see below.

A special case is the otherwise unknown Bartholomew of Edessa who seems to have been a monk from the famous monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai. The date of his lifetime is unclear, modern scholars placing him at the end of the twelfth or the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. In his *Confutation of an Agarene*, which is, to a large extent, a novelistic account of Muhammad's life, Bartholomew seems to rely much more on Islamic folk tradition than on the learned anti-Islamic literature mentioned above. It therefore goes beyond the scope of this article to discuss this author in more detail.[45]

Generally speaking, it seems that Byzantine knowledge of Islam had reached a very low level at the end of the twelfth century, and when the Latin crusaders came in 1204, their fellow Christians seemed to be the enemy and not the Muslims. As was already indicated, there is a clear break in Byzantine attitude to Islamic paganism after the Latin intermezzo. The

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43 Cf. Khoury, *Théologiens*, pp. 249–52.

44 Nicetas Choniates, *Ex libro XX Thesauri Orthodoxae Fidei: De superstitione Agarenorum. Ordo qui observatur super iis qui a Saracenis ad nostram Christianorum puram veramque fidem se convertunt*, PG 140, 105–22 and 123–36 (at col. 121A).

45 See Bartholomaios von Edessa, *Confutatio Agareni*, ed. and transl. Klaus-Peter Todt, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 2 (Würzburg: Echter, 1988).

great works of John Damascene and Niketas Byzantios had dominated the scene until the end of the twelfth century, at times through weaker modern versions of these authors. In the thirteenth century, there is a gap. We do not know whether it was caused by the fact that things had come to a point of stagnation, repetition, and even satiety, or by a mere lack of sources. It seems likely, however, that people had made themselves comfortable with this heretical *convivencia*.

Be that as it may, a fresh input was needed, but it was not before the middle of the fourteenth century that a new image of Islam emerged. It seems to be an irony of history that this new attitude was the result of Latin influence (though not of the crusaders, of course). To understand these changes, the Latin tradition needs to be considered. We are, however, not going to discuss Peter the Venerable at this point, the initiator of Islamic studies in Spain, and the famous Toledan Collection because it had no direct influence on the East.[46] Rather, it was a late thirteenth-century Dominican friar who became essential for later Byzantine thought: Ricoldo da Monte di Croce (1243–1320). He spent a long time in Baghdad, where he acquired Arabic and held many discussions with Muslim theologians. Back in Italy, he wrote 17 chapters on the refutation of the Qur'ān (*Contra legem Sarracenorum*) and even intended to make a new Latin translation of the Qur'ān (which was, however, never completed). His excellent knowledge of Islam included Muslim theology (*kalām*) as well as *ḥadīth* literature,[47] and therefore he did not suggest at all that Islam was a form of idolatry. In contrast, he argued as follows:

> When the devil saw that the faith of Christ rose up in the Oriental parts of the world and that idolatry weakened, [...] because even he, the devil himself, could no longer defend a plurality of gods and totally deny the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ that had already spread all over the world, he planned to deceive the world by inventing a fictitious law that was just

[46] See my Petrus Venerabilis, *Schriften zum Islam*, ed. and transl. Reinhold Glei, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Latina 1 (Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1985).

[47] Cf. Thomas E. Burman, 'How an Italian Friar Read His Arabic Qur'an', *Dante Studies* 125 (2007), pp. 93–109. In this article, Burman discusses Ricoldo's marginal notes in his manuscript of the Qur'ān (Paris, BnF, Cod. Arab. 384) that show Ricoldo's extraordinary knowlegde of Arabic and of the Qur'ān as well.

> in the middle between the new and the old one. To follow that purpose, he took possession of a satanic man, called Muhammad, etc.[48]

Here Ricoldo clearly states that idolatry did not play any role in the new religion, but that Islam was rather a compromise between Judaism and Christianity, a third-party religion, so to speak.

With Ricoldo, then, the topic of Islamic idolatry was abandoned, at least in Western thought on Islam. But these new ideas also found their way to the eastern Romans. Around the middle of the fourteenth century, Demetrios Kydones, a high official and counsellor of Emperor John Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–54), who converted to Catholicism,[49] translated Ricoldo's treatise into Greek.[50] This was the starting point of a new era in the Byzantine discussion with Islam. John Damascene's and Niketas's works became largely obsolete and were replaced by the modern, more authentic views of Kydones and Ricoldo, respectively. The most important works were written by Kantakouzenos himself after his abdication, when he spent his life as a monk called Joasaph for almost thirty years, and by another emperor, Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391–1425). Kantakouzenos wrote four apologies of Christianity and four polemical treatises against Islam, using Kydones's work extensively.[51] Manuel, on the other hand, gives a detailed report of 26 dialogues which he pretends to have held with a learned 'Persian', i.e. Turkish, Muterizes (a professor of Islamic theology, from Arabic *mudarris*), who was in Ankara during a campaign at the end of 1391.[52] Among Manuel's sources are of course the writings of his grandfather Kantakouzenos, along with Ricoldo/Kydones, but it seems that Manuel was rather independent from his predecessors. This could lead to the assumption

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48 Jean-Marie Mérigoux, 'L'ouvrage d'un Frère Prêcheur Florentin en Orient à la fin du XIIIe siècle. Le «Contra legem Sarracenorum» de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce', *Memorie Domenicane* NS 17 (1986), pp. 1–144, at pp. 117–18 = Ch. 13, 11–21.

49 On Kydones, see Frances Kianka, 'Demetrios Kydones and Italy', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), pp. 99–110.

50 The Greek text, along with a Latin re-translation by Bartholomaeus Picenus, is edited in PG 154, 1035–1170.

51 Johannes Kantakouzenos, *Christentum und Islam. Apologetische und polemische Schriften*, ed. and transl. Karl Förstel, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 6 (Altenberge: Oros, 2005).

52 Manuel II Palaiologos, *Dialoge mit einem „Perser"*, ed. Erich Trapp, Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 2 (Wien: Böhlau, 1966); Manuel II Palaiologos, *Dialoge mit einem Muslim*, ed. and transl. Karl Förstel, 3 vols, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 4/1–3 (Würzburg: Echter, 1993–96).

that his dialogues with the Muterizes are authentic, at least in the essential parts, but Förstel convincingly argues that the setting of the dialogues and the personality of the Muterizes seem quite fictitious.[53] At the end of the fourteenth century, then, disputations on the veneration of the Holy Cross or the Black Stone were outdated and did not play a role any longer. Finally, after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, anti-Islamic literature became an almost exclusively Latin domain,[54] beyond our scope here.

To sum up, we can say that polemics against Islamic idolatry had a long-term history in Byzantine thought, being adopted, enriched and distorted, at least up to the end of the twelfth century. Since the early times of Islam, the doctrine of the prophet Muhammad was not regarded as a new religion, but as a Christian heresy, the last one, for the time being, in a large number of errors that could be dealt with in a familiar way. It was only during the last one hundred years of the Byzantine Empire that a somewhat different picture of Islam emerged, no longer being seen as an old heretical amalgam of Christian, Jewish and especially pagan elements, but as a mighty world power going to annex the reign of the infidels in the name of the one God. And that was the end of all *convivencia*.[55]

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53 Manuel, *Dialoge*, ed. Förstel, I, pp. XXVIII–XXXI. In our times, Manuel's dialogues have become famous when Pope Benedict XVI quoted a passage from them during his speech in Regensburg in 2006. See Benedikt XVI, *Glaube und Vernunft. Die Regensburger Vorlesung*, full text, commented by Gesine Schwan, Adel Theodor Khoury and Karl Kardinal Lehmann (Freiburg: Herder, 2006), esp. pp. 15–16, with n. 3.

54 An exception is the treatise *De veritate Christianae fidei*, written by George of Trebizond just after the fall of Constantinople and sent to Sultan Mehmet in July 1453; cf. Georges de Trébizonde, *De la vérité de la foi des chrétiens*, ed. and transl. Adel Th. Khoury, Corpus Islamo-Christianum, Series Graeca 1 (Altenberge: CIS-Verlag, 1987). On the Latin tradition, see now my article: 'Die lateinische Islamliteratur nach 1453 – eine Renaissance des Mittelalters?', *Wolfenbütteler Renaissance-Mitteilungen* 33 (2011), 1/2, [2013], pp. 55–75.

55 My warmest thanks go to the convenor Dr Barbara Crostini who discovered that wonderful Abū Qurra manuscript, to Trinity College Dublin for hosting the conference, and to Dr Eva von Contzen for correcting my English.