

Martin Tamcke, *Orientalische Christen und Europa: Kulturbegennung zwischen Interferenz, Partizipation und Antizipation*, Göttinger Orientforschungen: Syriaca 41 (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2012). Pp. 385; €84.

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The volumes that are published in the series of the Göttinger Orientforschungen: Syriaca often bring together a wide range of authors, in majority from German-speaking scholarship, over a wide range of subjects. In that respect, the series is an important addition to what is published on Eastern and Syriac Christianity. The current volume, under the title “Oriental Christians and Europe,” in a similar way connects a variety of authors, who bring to the table many different perspectives and approaches to the field of Eastern Christian studies, with a strong focus on the Syriac field, though also including discussions of Armenian, Ethiopian and general Eastern Christian subjects. Historically, the essays range from the earliest periods of Christianity in the Middle East to the present. The theme of interaction between Eastern Christians and Europe, while forming the context or even the subject of some but not all of the contributions, unfortunately is explicitly analyzed only briefly in Tamcke’s introduction. No apparent attempt was made to stimulate the authors to discuss also the more general implications of the specific cases of their contributions. Considering its importance, this is a missed opportunity, even if, to achieve such thematic coherence, the number and breadth of the contributions should have been somewhat reduced. Despite this criticism, many of the essays in the volume are important additions to scholarship, contributions that are worth reading and discussing.

In the first part, entitled “Reception,” the articles by Nestor Kavvadas (“Von Antiochien nach Beth Qatraye: Zur Rezeption Theodors von Mopsuestia in der ostsyrischen Mystik”), Martin Heimgartner (“Der ostsyrische Patriarch Timotheos I. (780–823) und der Aristotelismus: Die aristotelische Logik und Dialektik als Verständigungsbasis zwischen den Religionen”), and Ute Pietruschka (“Tradierung und Umformung christlichen und muslimischen Spruchmaterials in arabischen Gnomologien”) discuss themes from the history of Syriac Christianity, including its importance to theological and philosophical thinking in the Abbasid period. Najeeb Awad’s article (“Is Christianity from Arabia? Examining Two Contemporary Arabic Proposals on Christianity in the

Pre-Islamic Period”), closing the section, discusses modern Arab attempts to reinterpret the early history of Christianity as essentially an Arabian history. To my taste the very interesting article puts too much emphasis on trying to debunk the indeed questionable theories of Kamal al-Salibi and Fadhil al-Rabi’i, while the contextualization of such twentieth-century attempts to Arabize Christianity, with different emphases for both authors, could have yielded crucial insights in understanding the position of Christians in the Arab Middle East.

The second part is organized around the theme of “Mission,” with articles that add some interesting pieces to the history of missions among Christians in the Middle East; unfortunately there is rather limited interaction with the wealth of literature in English on missions in general, and Middle Eastern missions in particular. This part includes an article by Karl Pinggéra on interesting connections between and mutual perceptions of German Protestants and “Nestorian” Christians in Kurdistan (“Die Liebesarbeit an den Nestorianern in Kurdistan: Evangelische Wahrnehmungen eines alten Zweiges des orientalischen Christentums zu Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts”). Herman Golz’s article historicizes Franz Werfel’s account of a dispute between Johannes Lepsius and Enver Pasha during the Armenian genocide (“Interferenz zwischen Humanität und Genozid: Der Disput zwischen Johannes Lepsius und Enver Pascha, Konstantinopel, 10. August 1915”). In addition, this part contains a small piece by Gladson Jathanna (“Cross, Crown and Culture: Revisiting the Place of the Orients in Edinburgh 1910”) and an essay by Kai Merten (“Wo lag die erste evangelische Gemeinde einheimischer Christen im asiatischen Teil des Osmanischen Reiches?”).

The next part, entitled “Exploration,” brings together pieces on a wide variety of subjects. It includes a discussion of Luxenberg’s re-reading of the inscription on the Dome of the Rock by Friedrich Erich Dobberahn (“Muḥammad oder Christus? Zur Luxenberg’schen Neudeutung der Kūfī-Inschriften von 72h (= 691/692 n. Chr.) im Felsendom zu Jerusalem”), two pieces by Anton Pritula (“Die Hymnensammlung Wardā und die Homilien Narsais: Wege der syrischen Dichtung im 13. Jahrhundert” and “The Last Hymn of the Praying (Rogation) of the Ninevites”), an essay by Hadi Ghantous (“Christians and the Old Testament in the Middle East”), and an article by Arthur Manukyan (“Das soziale und

religiöse Leben der koptischen Gemeinschaft in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts am Beispiel von Al-Bahnassa (Oxyrhynchos) in Mittelägypten"). Anton Pritula's pieces are especially relevant for those in Syriac studies, with many new observations about topics that despite some recent interest still remain understudied.

The two following parts, "Interaction" and "Coexistence," speak most directly to the theme of the volume. Here the reader finds interesting articles that discuss connections between Armenians and Catholics, and Armenians and Luther. The first is by Meliné Pehlivanian, "Der Druck der armenischen Bibel und die armenisch-römischen Beziehungen vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert," the second by Armenuhi Drost-Abgarjan, "Mesrop Maschtotz und Martin Luther: Zwei Bibelübersetzer im christlichen Orient und in Europa." In the same section, the role of the German Armin T. Wegner vis-a-vis the Armenian genocide is treated in two complementary articles: the first by Martin Tamcke und Sven Grebenstein ("Vor den letzten Spuren eines untergegangenen Volkes: Armin T. Wegners Kriegstagebuch vom 23. September bis 31. Oktober 1916"), and the second by Tigran Sarukhanyan ("Armin T. Wegner's WWI Media Testimonies and the Armenian Genocide"). Two shorter contributions end the section, the first by Lars Klein ("Don't make religion an issue: War reporting from the Middle East"), the second by Martin Tamcke ("Damaskus im Herzen, Deutschland im Blick").

In the part on "Coexistence," Jürgen Klein's article ("Some Patterns and Trends in Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia") provides a useful diachronic overview of the topic, as does Bekim Agai's piece for his topic ("Wie christlich ist Europa? Zur Bedeutung von Religion in Identitäts- und Alteritätsdiskursen muslimischer Reisender aus dem 18., 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert"). Kai Merten's tracing of the Cherkessian story of Shamil in its Christian form ("Schamil: Christianisierung einer tscherkessischen Geschichte") is interesting, but seems to serve preconceived notions on differences between Islam and Christianity more than to foster an understanding of the historical process of transmission and transformation. A piece on Abu Qurrah by Vasile-Octavian Mihoc ("Die Rede von der Körperlichkeit Gottes bei Theodor Abū Qurrah unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner Ikonenabhandlung") and an essay by Martin Tamcke on modern German literature that has Middle Eastern Christian protagonists ("Fortsetzung religiöser

Koexistenzstrukturen auf deutschem Boden? Orientalische Christen in der Literatur muslimischer Migranten in Deutschland”) close this part of the volume.

The volume is concluded by a piece by the former Chaldean Archbishop of Kirkuk, now patriarch, Louis Sako, presented in 2011 when he accepted the price of the Stephanus Stiftung für bedrohte Christen, and Martin Tamcke’s contribution (“Bedrohte Christen im Nahen Osten”), presented at the same occasion. Both essays pay attention to the difficult situation in which Christians in the Middle East found themselves in the early days of the revolutions.