

Redefining Christian Identity.
Christian Cultural Strategies since the Rise of Islam.
Groningen, The Netherlands, 7–11 April 1999

JAN J. VAN GINKEL, UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

- [1] The symposium “Redefining Christian Identity” was jointly organised by scholars from the Universities of Leiden and Groningen as part of the research project “Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam,” funded by The Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). At the symposium the participants focused on the various ways in which the Christians of the Middle East defined and re-defined their identity from the early Islamic period until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The topic was presented and discussed as part of one of the following four sub-themes: (I) Christian Apologetics vis-à-vis Islam; (II) Christian Perception of History; (III) Common Elements in Christian and Islamic Literature and Art; (IV) Language, Literature and Identity.

- [2] In the course of the scholarly sessions, the following papers were presented: S.H. Griffith, “Answering the Call of the Minaret: Christian Apologetics in the World of Islam” (I); Barbara Roggema, “Making sense of a vision. The Christian legend of Sergius-Bahira and messianic movements in early Islam” (I); David Thomas, “Explanations of the Incarnation in early “Abbasid Islam” (I); Gerrit Reinink, “East Syrian Historiography in Response to the Rise of Islam: the Case of John bar Penkaye’s *Ktâbâ d-rêš mellê*” (II); Jan J. van Ginkel, “History and Community. Jacob of Edessa and the West Syrian Identity” (II); Michael G. Morony, “History and Identity in the Syrian Churches” (II); Amir Harrak, ““Ah! The Assyrian is the rod of my hand!”: Syriac View of History after the Advent of Islam” (II); Robert W. Thomson, “Christian Perception of History—The Armenian Perspective” (II); Luk Van Rompay “Dair al-Suryan: A Christian Center in the Early Islamic Period. Short report on the recent discoveries;” John Watt, “The Strategy of the Baghdad Philosophers: The Aristotelian Tradition as a Common Motif in Christian and Islamic Thought” (III); Theo M. van Lint, “Sayat Nova (1712–1795) and the Persian Poetical Tradition: the Fruits of a Millennium of Nutrition” (III); Seta B. Dadoyan, “The Nasiri Futuwwa Literature and the Brotherhood Poetry of Hovhannes and Costantin of Yerzenka—Texts and

Contexts” (III); S.P. Cowe, “Islamic influence on Armenian verse” (III); James Russell, “The Doxological Poem of St. Nerses the Graceful” (III); Alessandro Mengozzi, “Readings in Early Neo-Syriac Literature: the Poem ‘On Revealed Truth’ by Joseph of Telkepe (17th century)” (IV); H.L. Murre-van den Berg, “The Church of the East in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: World Church or Ethnic Community?” (IV); H. Teule, “Barhebraeus’ Syriac Translation of b. Sina’s *Kitab al-isharat watanbihat*” (IV); F.A. Pennacchietti, “The Christian and Islamic legend of the skull restored to life” (IV); J.J.S. Weitenberg, “The Armenian Language as a Witness to the Encounter with the Islamic East” (IV); Lawrence I. Conrad, “Homer in Syriac” (IV).

[3] The papers read at this Symposium (together with some additional papers) will be published soon. Any new information regarding the papers will be published on

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~vginkel/>