

God (328). (c). Since the talks bore an "official" character for the Council, Eugenius' views were not his private positions, for they were pronounced in name of the Byzantine delegation. (d). However, although they represented the most elaborate position in the East on the *eschata* thus far, he was only answering the questions of the Latins, and not formulating an exhaustive declaration, maybe also in order to safeguard the character of mystery of life after death (328-329).

Chapter Eleven (331-345) discusses the decree *Laetentur caeli* and the failure of the Florentine Union (331-334). The Decree was signed by 117 Latin and 33 Greek prelates, with only Mark Eugenius and Bishop Isaias of Stauroplis, on the Greek side, refusing to sign (331). It included the agreement on the fate of the departed, characterized as immediate (*mox*) for those purified of all stains of sin, as well for those in mortal sin (332-333). At the basis of the Decree on the fate of the departed is Michael VIII Palaeologus' profession of faith (333-334), but whereas in Greek it had "*poenis purgatorii*" both in the emperor's profession in 1274, and in its reproduction in *Laetentur caeli* in 1439, the Italian translation, for example, still uses "*le pene del purgatorio*" (DH 1304, in EDB, Bologna 2009; the German DH, Herder 2009, translates: "durch Reinigungsstrafen gereinigt"). Mark Eugenius' suggestion, which spoke of the deferral of perfect retribution, was ignored (334). The only compromise, not found in the Palaeologus' Profession, is "to see God as He is (*sicut est*)", in order to side-track the Palamite controversy about essence and energies in God (335).

Benedict XVI summarized Florence on retribution thus: "The East does not recognize the purifying and expiatory suffering of souls in the afterlife, but it does acknowledge various levels of beatitude and of suffering in the intermediate state" (*Spe Salvi*, 48).

Rather than offering a new formulation, in terms less juridical but more consonant with the Eastern mentality, the Decree of Union offered a mere juxtaposition, as Giuseppe Alberigo has put it (336). Under these conditions the union was doomed from the start. Anyhow, John VIII had just lost his wife and daughter and was unable to undertake anything to promote union (336-337). Bessarion was named cardinal on 18 December 1439, but was recalled to Rome, thus weakening the Unionist party (337). The new patriarch, Metrophanes II, commemorated the pope's name in the mass of Pentecost, whereas Mark Eugenius on his way to Ephesus (1440) was arrested and held prisoner for two years, whence he dispatched his famous encyclical Letter repeating his position on the fate of the departed, with insistence on the deferral of retribution (337-338). Gregory Mamme, who in 1443 had become patriarch of Constantinople in communion with Rome under the name of Gregory III (339), answered Eugenius paragraph for paragraph, but, unfortunately, he contradicted both the Roman doctrine expressed in *Benedictus Dei* (1336) as well as Eugenius (340). In 1451, with the flight of Mamme, Constantinople remained without a patriarch (342). In 1442, Pope Eugenius IV sent Cesarini to organize a crusade, but the battle of Varna (1444) turned out to be a disaster (342). In 1452, pope Nicholas V sent 200 archers, accompanied by Isidore of Kiev (342). Isidore had the union proclaimed in Hagia Sofia on 12

December 1452. Mark Eugenius' brother, John, wrote a popular treatise against the union (343); apparently, he interpreted the Roman doctrine as saying that nobody can go to heaven without passing through purgatory (344). Months elapsed before Constantinople fell on 29 May 1453. With the first patriarch after the Fall of Constantinople, Gennadius II Scholarios, the union was abandoned. Later on, under Patriarch Symeon I in 1484, the Union of Florence was officially repudiated by all four Eastern patriarchs assembled in Constantinople (345).

In his Conclusion (347-350), the author recalls Benedict XVI's ecumenical proposal, in *Spe salvi*, not to impose the doctrine of purgatory, but to try to work out a compromise on the basis of *Laetentur caeli* (DH 1304-1306), and Mark Eugenius' suggestions, blending all this in the light of the common declarations on the doctrine of sacraments, eschatology and ecclesial communion as emerged in the Joint Commission of Old Catholics and Orthodox (1985-1987). In end effect, Mark Eugenius' suggestion of taking "fire" as an allegory (read: metaphor) remains as a *Nota Bene* for future ecumenical work.

There follows at the end an Appendix (350-371), the Abbreviations (373-386), the Bibliography (387-450), the Author Index (451-460) and the Table of Contents (461-465).

The author's attempt to revive the debate on the fire of purgatory in a more ecumenical key, supported by a sustained historical effort not to go beyond the texts, here brings its fruits ready for the time when the situation will be ripe. Analogous excellent studies on other controverted issues in the Catholic — Orthodox dialogue would greatly abet the current efforts to heal the wounds, purify the memories and turn over a new leaf in our mutual Catholic-Orthodox relations.

E. G. Farrugia, S.J.

PENN, Michael Philip, *Envisioning Islam. Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2015, pp. 249.

In this book, Michael Penn offers a supplementary commentary and study of his previously published anthology of early Syriac texts on Islam entitled "When Christians First Met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam" (Oakland, CA 2015). His study begins with an introduction (pp. 1-13), followed by four chapters (15-186), a conclusion (183-186), notes (187-250), a bibliography (251-277), a rich index (279-292) and acknowledgments (293-294).

The author aims to highlight the importance of the view of Islam that Syriac texts offer us, a view that is quite different from the one presented by Greek and Latin sources, sources which inform the opinions of many modern scholars and historians (2). In fact, this comparison between the image provided by Syriac sources on the one hand, and Greek and Latin on the other, is repeated in the conclusion of each chapter the author considers. Additionally, in the general conclusion, he begins with the position on the "clash of civilizations" challenged by Samuel Huntington and the rapid diffusion of this theory following the attacks of

September 11, 2001, arguing that such a theory might be changed if scholars were better versed in Syriac Christian texts written during the first three centuries of Islamic rule in the Middle East (183-184). Building upon the author's remarks at the end of his general conclusion (186), it is certain that there is a need to examine, employing with the same methods he uses in his book, additional sources from the same period in still other languages. Through such research, our image of that period and especially our understanding of Islam could be better clarified and thus, in my opinion, some "hyperbolic conclusions" which Penn affirms in his analysis of these Syriac texts might be eliminated.

The book is presented in a logical manner which facilitates its reading. Some details regarding the examined texts are repeated very often, which can make the reading ponderous at times. It would be advisable for the author to avoid such repetition. In the first chapter (15-52), entitled "When Good Things Happened to Other People: Syriac Memories of Islamic Conquests", Penn examines in chronological order the memories captured in these early Syriac texts of the Islamic conquest and shows how the historical circumstances, desires and idiosyncrasies of Syriac communities influenced these acts of remembering. In fact, as the author affirms, the first accounts of the history of the Islamic conquest of the Middle East were written not by the victors, but by defeated Christians (16). According to Penn, these memories are collective (18), and their main goal is to highlight that "good things happened to other people" (17). This conclusion should change the opinion among modern scholars, which are based upon later sources and not the earliest accounts of the Islamic conquests. In fact, contrary to their position, i.e. Christians saw Muslims as liberators and collaborated with them against Byzantines and Persians, the earliest accounts of the conquest show that, for Syriac Christians, Muslims were simply God's punishment for the sins committed by Christians. The author supports his opinion with references to other scholars, who especially, after studying the earliest Coptic and Syriac texts of the first centuries of Islamic conquest of Egypt and Syria, also arrived at the same opinion (note 9 pp. 190-191). While such support shows that Penn is not original in his conclusion, his reading of the Syriac texts differs from these other scholars.

The author correctly notes that the second *fitnah* in Islam, which occurred during the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik, the 5th Caliph of the Umayyad dynasty, was a turning point in Christian-Muslim relations. In fact, after this *fitnah* islamization began, the poll tax was elevated and Christians, in response, started to pay attention to the antagonism of these new conquerors. This *fitnah*, in addition, was noteworthy as well in that during it Christians began to develop a clearer and broader image of Muslims. During the Umayyad dynasty, the Church of St John the Baptist in Damascus was transformed into a mosque and 'Abd al-Malik built the mosque of the Rock in Jerusalem. In this period, Christians began to see Muslims in different light, exactly as a distinct religion, and therefore apologetic and polemical works started to appear.

One important point the author addresses in both the first and especially in the second chapter (53-101), entitled "A Different Type of Difference-Making: Syriac

Narratives of Religious Identity", is the Syriac terms used for Muslims, such as *ṭayyāyē*, Ishmaelites, sons of Hagar, sons of Ishmael, *ḥanpē*. The author examines the origin of these terms (some of them were biblical, other were used for pagans etc.), the meanings attributed to them over time, why some were more or less preferred, and the difficulties in translating some of these terms, such *ṭayyāyē*, into modern languages. The focus of this chapter, in analyzing this terminology in a chronological way, is to show that the authors of the Syriac texts of the 7th and 8th century did not consider Islam as a distinct religion, equal to Christianity and Judaism, i.e. they did not see in Islam all the characteristics they considered essential for a religion. Syriac authors' knowledge of Islam was very limited; they knew some of the Islamic doctrines, yet we do not possess works of theirs that furnish many details on Islam as a religion. Most of the issues that these texts dealt with were of a juridical nature, since Muslims were the new rulers under whom the Christians had to live. One text that could be helpful in this regard that Penn neglected to take into consideration in this chapter is the acts and canons of the synod convoked in 676 by the Catholicos of the Church of the East, Mar Gewargis I. In this text there is the appearance of terms *ṭayyāyē* and *ḥanpē*, probably both used for Muslims, as well as several canons dealing with questions such as taxes and the marriage of Christian women with non-Christians. This latter issue was the reason that the author examined the text in Chapter 4, p. 149. It was, however, important that this text be taken into consideration in this chapter as well.

In addition, one might expect to read in the second chapter about the relation between the term *ḥanpē* used for Muslims in Syriac texts and its use by the Quran as synonymous with monotheism, i.e. the Religion of Abraham (cf. Q 6: 161, 10:105 and 16:123). According to some modern scholars of Islam, in these verses the Quran refers to Islam in a broad sense, that is, as a monotheistic religion, and not in its limited sense, as the religion of the prophet Muḥammad and his followers. Can one hypothesize, then, that the development of the application of the term *ḥanpē* for Muslims by Syriac authors, especially in late texts of the 8th and 9th centuries, reflects a similar development of the comprehension of this term by the same Syriac authors? This means to say that they began to apply the meaning which Muslims used, i.e. as synonymous of Islam. This could explain, for example, the distinction that Nonnus of Nisibis made between old and new *ḥanpē* that the author mentions earlier in his study (95). Such a hypothesis requires more research based on a comparison of texts; something I was expecting to find in Penn's book.

One of the most interesting aspects of this second chapter is the analysis of Catholicos Timothy I and his image of Islam (79-83). Penn demonstrates how at the time of this Catholicos, i.e. late 8th beginning 9th century, the Christian audience already had a basic image of Islam, something that we cannot find in earlier texts. Christians started to use Islamic doctrines in their texts in order to explain Christian doctrines and dogmas, for example, the use of the Islamic doctrine of the divine attributes, *ṣifāt ilāhiyyah*, in order to explain the Christian dogma of the Trinity. In addition, through a comparison between the apology of Timothy

to *al-Mahdī*, the 3rd Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, and Timothy's Letter 40, Penn succeeds in showing how the same author could express different tones regarding Muslims, depending on the author's circumstances. In his apology to the Caliph Timothy finds Christianity and Islam to be united against Jews, while in his Letter 40 he characterizes Muslims as "new Jews".

In Chapters 3 and 4 the author changes his chronological method of analyzing the texts and follows another method that we might call "reading between the lines". In the third chapter (102-141), entitled "Using Muslims to Think With: Narratives of Islamic Rulers", Penn tries to read what hidden insights Christian narrations on an Islamic ruler could reveal. Using the authors' own words (105), the aim of this chapter is to show how these Syriac texts used Muslim rulers to think with and how these same texts reveal the way the transition to Muslim rule affected Christian thought. To understand how the "reading between the lines" helped our author to achieve his goal, I shall present just one point of this chapter, which was the most interesting for me. Under the subtitle "thinking with Muḥammad" (105-115), Penn presents the titles given to the prophet of Islam in the Syriac texts, such as the *ṭayyāyē's* guide, the lawgiver, king and other political titles which were given to Byzantine and Sassanian rulers. Titles, such as prophet or God's messenger, if not rejected, were used under such a condition to highlight that they were not attributions used by Christians. According to the author, Syriac texts, even when they were very polemical, were less hostile to Islam and the prophet than Greek and Latin texts were. The reason for this attitude is to be found in the context in which these texts were written and their authors' desires to reflect, through such texts, on Islam and Muḥammad. In opposition to other authors (such as Greek, Latin, and possible later Syriac), these early Syriac authors intended to promote peaceful coexistence with Muslims rather than conflict, and for this reason, in fact, hostility would not have been at all helpful to them.

The next example of this "reading between the lines" method I would like to present comes from the fourth and last chapter of the book. It is entitled "Blurring Boundaries: The Continuum Between Early Christianity and Early Islam" (142-182). The aim of the author in this chapter is to present Christian-Muslim relations in daily life through an examination of relevant details offered by these texts. He also refers to archeological findings such as the Church and Mosque in Rusafa (Syria) to support his claim. Although in the examined texts we do not find explicit accounts of sharing the same space for praying, (though Rusafa's archeological findings strongly support such sharing), in reading between the lines of prohibitory statements forbidding common prayer, we can conclude that the action of praying together was practiced by the people. Dealing, however, with such stories regarding Muslims who attended Christian liturgy, Penn did not take into consideration the possibility that these Muslims could have been ex-Arab Christians who converted to Islam. While other claims he makes are correct, this possibility is worthy of examination.

Another example of "reading between the lines" is the canons that forbid mixed marriage. Texts such as the letters of Jacob of Edessa to Addai, which deal with

women who were married to Muslims but remained Christian and were allowed to receive the Eucharist, reveal that exceptions to these canons existed.

In this chapter, Penn also analyzes accounts of Muslim leaders regarding their experiences of miracles occurring through Christian monks and spiritual figures. He tries to understand what such accounts, rooted between reality and fantasy, try to convey to their audiences.

In addition, Penn demonstrates that the view of rapid islamization following the second *fitnah* is incorrect. Under the fourth chapter's subtitle "Conversion Accounts" (167-179), the author presents and analyzes some stories of Christians who converted to Islam and shows that in the first three centuries the number of Christian converts to Islam did not threaten the survival of Syriac Christianity. In addition, several other texts reveal that Christians who converted to Islam and then again to Christianity, were not at risk to be killed according to the later Islamic law on apostasy (170-172). Finally, contrary to those scholars who see accounts of Muslims who converted to Christianity as fictitious, Penn argues that these texts include realistic narrations which support the existence of crypto-Christians among Muslims.

In conclusion, this book is original and draws the interest of the reader. It offers still another view regarding the early centuries of Islamic conquest of the Middle East. Through the application of this method in similar research on Coptic and Early Arabic-Christian texts, and especially through the comparison of Syriac texts and Arabo-Syriac texts from the same period, applying to them Penn's method, our image of early Islam will be clarified and our knowledge of this period deepened.

Bishara Ebeid

PETRÀ, Basilio, *Christos Yannaras*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2015, pp. 182.

A perusal of Christos Yannaras' bibliography (161-179), showing various editions of a given work with changes in contents and title (161-162), relays an idea of what it entails to write an introduction to his thought. For this task B. Petrà is, of course, eminently qualified. Mastering both Modern Greek and Italian, and long-time teacher at the Pontifical Oriental Institute besides being in contact with Y. himself, he has translated several of the works of the famous Greek author and written lengthy studies on his thought (170).

Throughout his career Y. has proved to be a maverick. A great part of Orthodox literature of the last century opposed the idea that Christianity had been influenced by Hellenization, considering the two concepts to be irreconcilable. Y. claims, on the contrary, that Orthodox theology interpreted in the light of Heidegger's personalism employs categories which, though in themselves hark back to Greek thought, are yet capable of avoiding the nihilistic drift in contemporary philosophy, without at the same time abandoning the apophaticism of the Orthodox tradition. Y.'s scope is to inject new life into the "old Continent" Europe's way of thinking (19).

Here Y.'s biography sheds some light on his development. After his school-leav-

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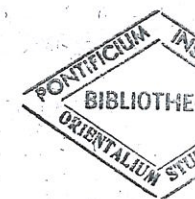
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