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## **Enshrining, Adapting and Contesting the Latin *Apology of al-Kindi*: Readers' Interactions with an Authoritative Polemic against Islam**

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*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Leah Jenkins Giamalva entitled "Enshrining, Adapting and Contesting the Latin *Apology of al-Kindi*: Readers' Interactions with an Authoritative Polemic against Islam." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Thomas Burman, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Maura Lafferty, Jay Rubenstein

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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READERS' INTERACTIONS WITH AN AUTHORITATIVE POLEMIC AGAINST ISLAM

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Leah Jenkins Giamalva  
December 2008

In memory of Louise Markham and Mike Giamalva, my beloved grandparents,  
people of remarkable generosity, determination, and wisdom,  
who encouraged my curiosity and love for books from my birth until their deaths.

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, I have examined the use of the Latin translation of the Arabic *Apology of al-Kindi*, regarded as the most influential source of information about Islam for Latin readers in the Middle Ages, by some of its readers from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. My work is divided into three parts, beginning with an analysis of the writings of the man who commissioned the translation, Peter the Venerable, and Peter of Poitiers, the secretary of the first Peter and a member of the translation team. I argue that, for Peter the Venerable, the Latin translation of the *Apology* was the most important of all the Arabic-to-Latin translations that he sponsored and that it represented the first step in a project that he hoped would culminate in the conversion of Muslims. Second, I discuss the adaptation of the *Apology* by Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais, two historians who used it to create narratives of early Islam, an area in which other Latin texts failed them. The final section of the thesis is devoted to the annotators who clarified the many words and references in the text likely to confuse uninitiated readers and who conveyed their own thoughts on the text's author and his arguments. I found that these reader-writers were deeply invested in representing Islam accurately, a characterization not often associated with medieval Christian scholars' relationships to the non-Christian religions that they studied. Zeal for accuracy led readers to the *Apology* in the first place and motivated them to excavate the textual clues that justified its standing, as well as to sidestep or challenge what they deemed inaccurate.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- A MS Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 1162
- BnF Bibliothèque Nationale Française (Paris)
- C MS Paris, BN, lat. 3393
- D MS Paris, BN, lat. 14503
- E MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6064
- F MS Paris, BN, lat. 3649
- G MS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 335
- H MS Paris, BN, lat. 6225
- K MS Kues, Hospitalbibliothek 108
- M MS Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C-201
- MS manuscript
- O MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College 184
- V MS Vaticanus latinus 4072

## Introduction

The fourteenth-century annotators of the Latin *Apology of al-Kindi* imagined its author as a “Christian [who] had been highly skilled in the Arabic language, because he was a neighbor to them in place of residence”,<sup>1</sup> an “Arab and of nobler birth than all Arabs.”<sup>2</sup> The first statement is certainly true of its anonymous author and the second, if not actually factual, is at least part of his self-presentation. The text, first written in Arabic in Baghdad, purports to be an exchange of letters by two courtiers in the palace of the Amir al-Ma'mun. The context is not implausible, since al-Ma'mun facilitated inter-religious dialogues founded on reason and mutual respect. A Muslim, 'Abd Allah ibn Isma'il al-Hashimi, attempts to convert his Christian friend, 'Abd al-Masih al-Kindi, to Islam, and the Christian issues him a lengthy response in which he defends Christianity and attacks Islam. The apocryphal letters were probably written in the ninth century, but their *terminus ante quem* is in the first decades of the eleventh century on the basis of the earliest citation of the text.<sup>3</sup>

Peter of Toledo translated the *Apology* into Latin as part of the project organized by Peter the Venerable in 1142 to translate important works on Islam from Arabic into Latin, including

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1 “nota istum christianum fuisse peritissimum in lingua arabica, quia ei vicinus fuit in situ habitacionis.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 46.5 Gloss, MS Paris, BnF, lat. 3393 (C); ed. Fernando González Muñoz, *Exposición y reutación del Islam: La versión latina de las epistolas de al-Hasimi y al-Kindi* [A Coruña, Spain, 2005], p. 75). “auctor peritissimus arabum.” (Nicholas of Cusa, *Rescriptum Christiani* 46.5 Gloss, MS Kues, Hospitalbibliothek 108 (K); ed. González Muñoz, p. 75). Subsequent citations of manuscripts in the footnotes designate them by Fernando González Muñoz's abbreviations, and the numbers refer to the textual divisions in his edition. My list of abbreviations gives the full shelf marks of the manuscripts containing the *Apology* and González Muñoz's abbreviations for them.

2 “nota genus et patriam christiani scribentis.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 69.17-20 Gloss, MS Paris, BnF, lat. 6064 (E); ed. González Muñoz, p. 106). “ecce quod iste christianus fuit arabes et inter omnes arbes generosior.” (Ibid. Gloss C). “unde scriptor.” (Ibid. Gloss K).

3 Al-Ma'mun reigned from 813 to 833. The *Apology of al-Kindi* was first cited by al-Biruni (973-1028). See Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, “Deux traductions latines du Coran au Moyen Age,” in *La connaissance de l'Islam dans l'Occident médiéval* (Aldershot, 1994), I. 88.

Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an, and to anthologize them, along with original Latin polemic. The Toledan or Cluniac collection, as modern scholars have designated it, was soon disseminated across Europe. The impact of the *Apology of al-Kindi* on the pictures of Islam prevalent in the high and late Middle Ages outweighed that of any other text, as Norman Daniel stressed in his classic *Islam and the West*. As the quotations above indicate, the *Apology's* origin at the intellectual center of the Muslim world and al-Kindi's knowledge of Arabic led many readers to rightly trust it as accurate.<sup>4</sup>

The *Apology* survives intact in nine manuscripts, is nearly complete in two others, and reached many more readers in the form of the excerpts quoted by Vincent of Beauvais. Vincent, Jacques de Vitry, Matthew Paris, Pedro Pascuale, Riccolodo of Monte Croce, Ramon Lull, and Nicholas of Cusa all read the *Apology* and reproduced parts of it in their own works. Its popularity owed largely to the fact that it circulated with Robert of Ketton's Latin translation of the Qur'an and that its self-contained primer on Islam was more comprehensible to a European audience than was the Qur'an. Its endurance must also be attributed to its uniqueness and adaptability. Whether readers sought explanations of Islamic belief and customs, anecdotes about the prophet Muhammad, an account of the transmission of the Qur'an, arguments for the Trinity, or the Qur'an's testimony to Christ's divinity, they found what they needed in the *Apology*.

In what follows, I will assess the dynamic roles that the readers of the Latin *Apology of al-Kindi* played in the construction of its author's authority and in the diffusion, assessment, and re-contextualization of its ingredients. In the process, I hope to problematize one of the most persistent misconceptions about medieval Christian readers' engagement with authoritative texts

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<sup>4</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960), 229-233.

in general and, in particular, the notion that authors swallowed their predecessors' images of Islam uncritically and reiterated them at random, yielding irrational judgments that defy analysis.<sup>5</sup> Their skepticism and concern for accuracy when reacting to authoritative texts are rarely addressed, especially in discussions of medieval Christians' ideas about other religions.

As the annotations quoted above make clear, readers assessed the *Apology's* coverage of Islam as highly reliable and its author as an expert witness. While many of the *Apology's* nuances were lost on its Latin readers, al-Kindi's promotion of his own authority was not. The words that Latin readers used to describe al-Kindi as a real person, coupled with their constant recourse to him for the tenets and origins of Islam and for the best way to combat it, indicate the confidence that they placed in him. Both signs of al-Kindi's trustworthiness are observable in the relevant sections of Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*, written in the middle of the thirteenth century. Paraphrasing Peter of Toledo's introduction, Vincent introduced the correspondents as "acceptable philosophers, each perfect in his own religion, who were close and well-known to the commander of the faithful, the king of the Muslims."<sup>6</sup> That introduction and the length at which he quotes the *Apology* indicate that he preferred it to his other sources.<sup>7</sup> The annotators of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Apology* routinely reinforce

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5 Daniel expresses his bafflement about medieval authors' methods of judging between worthy and spurious information, though he arrives at some possible solutions to the problem (229-249). For examples of scholarship that insinuates that medieval Christians perpetuated polemical images of Jews and Muslims thoughtlessly, see Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton and Oxford, 2003) and Svetlana Luchitskaja, "The Image of Muhammad in Latin Chronography of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries", *Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 26, Issue 2, June 2000, pp. 115-126.

6 "Qui ambo probati Philosophi & in secta sua perfecti, Emirhilmomini Regis Saracenorum erant familiares ac noti." Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapter 40, in *Vincentis Burgundi Speculum quadruplex, naturale, doctrinale, morale, historiale* (Douai, 1624. Reprint: Graz, 1965), p. 913.

7 Daniel has commented on Vincent's silence on the relative authoritativeness of his sources on the history of Islam, where he inferred Vincent's esteem for the *Apology* from the length of his excerpts from it in proportion to those from other sources (pp. 230-232).

the narrator's credibility: He was scholarly (they stressed that he knew Arabic perfectly), noble, and belonged to the multi-religious intelligentsia at al-Ma'mun's court in Baghdad, the intellectual center of the *dar al-Islam*.

The cultural difference between al-Kindi and his Latin audience led to some uses of the work that the author could not have predicted. In its original context in ninth- or tenth-century Baghdad, the *Apology* was a refutation of Islam intended for readers who already had a strong understanding of that religion. When the author of the *Apology* alluded to or quoted from the Qur'an or Islamic tradition, he expected both Christian and Muslim readers to fill in the context from their own knowledge. But, apart from the translators, most Latin readers outside of al-Andalus had neither a background in Islam nor personal contact with Muslims from whom they might get clarification. The *Apology* often substituted for an education in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition. Daniel judges that western readers' fascination with the wounds suffered by the prophet at the Battle of Uhud, and their readings of Muhammad's early followers as brigands, resulted from consuming the *Apology* on an empty stomach.<sup>8</sup> For many, the letters served as their entrance into Islamic history, thought, and practice. Many readers—among whom were Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais—did not read the *Apology* in a vacuum, but rather their reading of it was conditioned by their knowledge of the pseudo-*vitae* of Muhammad popular throughout the Middle Ages. Kenneth Wolf has demonstrated that the authors of some of these pseudo-*vitae* knew more about Islam than the reader might suspect but, unsurprisingly, their distorted biographies of the prophet contained a considerable amount of inaccuracy.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel, 91-3.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth B. Wolf, "Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain" *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. J. V. Tolan (New York and London, 1996), pp. 93-100, citing *Istoria de Mahomet* and Eulogius; Tolan,

*Apology's* relationship to the pseudo-*vitae* of Muhammad is ambivalent. It corrected some of the misconceptions about Muhammad's life while it created others. Yet, as we shall see, some authors recorded the fantastical *vitae* alongside the *Apology's* more truthful one, even though they are quite incompatible.

As they read, they isolated parts of the text and incorporated them into works covering a wide range of interests, some of which its author intended (the rational defense of Christian doctrines and historically grounded arguments for rejecting the prophetic claims of both Muhammad and the Qur'an) and others that he never could have anticipated. In the latter category, we see authors and annotators treating the *Apology* as an exemplar of the epistolography of the *dar al-Islam*, as a study guide to the Qur'an, as a source for the history of early Islam, and as a guide to Muslim customs not strictly limited to matters of religion. As a thorough exposition and refutation of Islam written by a Christian at the cultural center of the *dar al-Islam*, the *Apology* was unique and was used in a variety of circumstances to advance knowledge of the history of Islam, Muslims' religious beliefs and culture, and tactics to persuade them to convert to Christianity. Its anonymous author never intended for readers to derive cultural anthropological information about Muslims from the text, since such information was hardly necessary in his environment. When it reached a Latin audience in the twelfth century, however, it fulfilled readers' curiosity in much the same way as the travel literature that proliferated in the high Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> Al-Hashimi's letter contains the most data of this type,

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"Introduction" *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, pp. xiv-xv, citing Embricio of Mainz and Gauthier de Compiègne.

<sup>10</sup> Medieval travel literature proliferated in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, and is represented by works as diverse as the reports of the Franciscans sent by the papacy to the Mongols (John of Plano Carpini, Benedict the Pole, and William of Rubruck), the almost entirely fictitious book of Sir John Mandeville, the writings of Marco

and its attraction for readers is made visible in the high number of glosses concentrated in his survey of a Muslim's religious obligations. Knowledge of Islamic beliefs and practices may have been intrinsically interesting to medieval readers, but it was essential for missionary causes.

But neither the *Apology's* annotators nor the authors of works informed by it adopted all of its contents wholesale. All of the authors who used the text omitted major parts of it from their own work, whether because their interpretation of the internal logic of the *Apology* compelled them to modify or neglect some of its subjects or for the sake of brevity and the constraints of genre. Readers' written reactions prove that they weighed the text critically in order to determine which information to accept and which to forsake. I will relate their reactions to the *Apology* to the larger issue of medieval readers' ambivalent relationships with the texts that they regarded as authoritative. In light of twelfth- to fifteenth-century scholars' interpretations of the evidence presented in the Latin *Apology*, I will argue that the *Apology's* readers valued accuracy more than any other factor, including polemical utility or entertainment. For that reason, even polemically minded readers discarded or undermined parts of the text that they deemed inaccurate. The books written on the basis of the *Apology*, therefore, coupled with its glosses, permit us to see medieval readers interacting with a book against Islam that they rightly regarded as the work of an expert and constraining the arguments made in that text.

In this paper, I will employ three sets of sources that illustrate medieval readers' agency in their relationship to the Latin *Apology*: Peter the Venerable's polemic against Islam, the

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Polo, and pilgrimage guides. Much has been written on medieval travel literature. Some noteworthy examples include Peter Jackson, "Medieval Christendom's encounter with the alien", *Historical Research*, 74, pp. 347-369; George H. T. Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1938); Antti Ruotsala, *Europeans and Mongols in the Middle of the Thirteenth Century: Encountering the Other* (Helsinki, 2001); and Rosemary Tzanaki, *Mandeville's medieval audiences : a study on the reception of the book of Sir John Mandeville (1371-1550)*. Aldershot, Hampshire ; Burlington, Vt. : Ashgate, 2003.

adaptation of the *Apology* for historical writing, and its glosses. The earliest evidence consists of letters written by Peter the Venerable and the translators and Peter's *Liber contra sectam sive haerisim Sarracenorum*, in which the *Apology* already emerges as an authoritative text.

Although some scholars, most notably Dominique Iogna-Pratt, have characterized the production of the Toledan collection (along with Peter's other polemical efforts) as an exercise in identity formation through exclusion, the abbot's own words bespeak his motive to provide Christians with accurate information about Islam as a first step toward converting Muslims. To that end, Peter the Venerable approached the *Apology* as a stylistic and argumentative paradigm for his own book against Islam. The *Liber contra sectam* is unique among Latin polemics against Islam in a few ways, one of which is Peter's elision of the *Apology's* arguments on Muhammad's sinfulness and lack of miracles. I will argue that his silence in this area is an upshot of his interpretation of the *Apology*.

Second, I will investigate the impact of al-Kindi on thirteenth-century historical writing, as exemplified by the works of Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais. The *Apology of al-Kindi* became a valuable source for early Islamic history, a topic of obvious historical importance, which had been unknown in the Latin West since no earlier Latin source related it in such breadth with such accuracy. Its biography of Muhammad and explanation of the rise of Islam engendered those in the histories of Matthew and Vincent, as well as Godfrey of Viterbo and Jacques de Vitry. These works exhibit less concern for accuracy than the other sources that emulate the *Apology* (in fact, the version in Matthew's chronicle interpolates material not founded in the *Apology*). But the simple fact that the narrative sources were more widely read than their argumentative or philosophical counterparts meant that they had a significant impact on the



interests of the text's later readers, who were drawn to the historical parts of the book. The most important effect of the ubiquity of histories concocted from the *Apology* is the interest in the composition and corruption of the Qur'an, which Vincent was the first to emphasize.

The third major section of this paper examines the glosses on the *Apology* in six manuscripts from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. The concern for accuracy led its first annotators to clarify the many words and references in the text likely to confuse uninitiated readers, and later annotators continued to transmit such information, even when the manuscripts from which they worked lacked the original notes. In my discussion of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts, I am concerned with the glosses' evidence that the text was not always read in the ways its author had originally intended. Again, the concern for accuracy led them to establish, by means of biographical detail, that al-Kindi was an authority worthy of respect. They also corrected information that they considered doubtful. The most striking feature that they have in common, even those not of the same filiation, is their willingness to discard some of the book's most potent polemic. After describing the notes in the earliest manuscript, I will turn to a pair of fourteenth-century Avignonese manuscripts that contain the primitive annotations as well as additional ones added by a nearly contemporary annotator, and then to three fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts that lack the earliest glosses. One of these manuscripts belonged to the philosopher and prolific writer Nicholas of Cusa, and this study will end with Nicholas's *Cribratio Alkorani*, the only text based on the *Apology* that can be compared to the author's own annotations in his personal copy.

This is the first study of the procedures of the readers of the *Apology*, the book that Norman Daniel has called "the most influential single source of Christian polemic in the

medieval West.”<sup>11</sup> Like Daniel, John Tolan discussed the *Apology*’s impact in his survey of the images of Islam created in Latin Christendom during the Middle Ages, but neither focused specifically on the ways in which readers weighed and qualified the source. Its marginalia has yet to be considered thoroughly, especially in the context of the other texts based on the Latin *Apology*. I suspect that the image of medieval Christians as credulous and thoughtlessly hostile toward other religions is partly responsible for scholars’ neglect of readers’ relationships to the text and the tactics that they used to appraise it. Daniel wrestled with Christian writers’ seemingly irrational choices to reproduce familiar nonsense about Islam as long as it painted the religion negatively, and Svetlana Luchitskaja has recently argued that conservatism and faith in established authorities allowed an utterly untenable vision of Islamic history to survive despite the availability of more laudable sources in the later Middle Ages.<sup>12</sup> Few scholars openly endorse her view, but it continues to lurk behind many discussions of medieval Christians’ attitudes toward Judaism and Islam. The assumption that readers had a one dimensional view of Islam is only one reason that readers’ agency has been ignored. The other is that analysis of literary works as they were known in the Middle Ages is still a fairly new scholarly pursuit. Christopher Baswell explains that contact with a manuscript exposed one to “not just the efforts of their original scribes, but also those of ensuing generations of reader/writers who inscribe their own difficulties and responses—and those of their masters—between the lines and in the margins.”<sup>13</sup> My research on the *Apology*’s glosses is a continuation of the pursuits of intellectual

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11 Norman Daniel, review of James Kritzeck’s *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (1965), pp. 632-633.

12 Luchitskaja, “The Image of Muhammad in Latin Chronography of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries.”

13 Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1995), 7-8. On this subject, see also Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qur’an in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia, 2007); Anthony Grafton, *Commerce*

historians who have concentrated on the codicological framework (and modification) of individual manuscripts for the insights that they provide about patterns of reading the texts they contained.

An examination of the Latin *Apology*'s reception is a rewarding addition to this field of study since, by confronting readers' production of meaning from the *Apology*, both through original works based on it and through the marginalia designed to guide readers through its text, we can observe the principles that guided their reading. In order to assess how the diffusion of the *Apology* affected perceptions of Islam in the medieval west, we must examine readers' agency in (consciously and unconsciously) scrutinizing the text and developing meaning from it. The complexity of readers' interaction with the *Apology* undercuts assumptions often made about reading in the Middle Ages in general and, specifically, about medieval Christians' absorption of information about other religions.

Before I address the content of the Latin *Apology*, I want to say a few words about the most important source, Fernando González Muñoz's edition of the Latin *Apology* (*Exposición y reutación del Islam: La versión latina de las epistolas de al-Hašimi y al-Kindi*), without which this study would have been impossible for me to undertake. He has assembled the glosses of all the extant manuscripts and, guided by the research of Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, has also added considerably to the knowledge of the relationships between the manuscripts of the Toledan or Cluniac collection and has arrived at a tentative stemma for the manuscripts that contained the *Apology*. I have used his edition for all references to the text of the Latin *Apology* and its

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*with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers* (Ann Arbor, 1997); Jay Rubenstein, "Putting History to Use: Three Crusade Chronicles in Context," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 35 (2004): 131-68; Tzanaki, *Mandeville's medieval audiences: a study on the reception of the book of Sir John Mandeville (1371-1550)*.

glosses.

## Chapter I

### The Content of the Latin Apology of al-Kindi

Peter of Toledo's translation of the *Apology of al-Kindi* bears some important similarities to Robert's translation of the Qur'an. Like Robert, he generally represented his source material quite accurately and incorporated Islamic traditions directly into the text where he thought that it would elucidate something difficult. Sometimes Peter's information is mistaken and, in rare cases, he or Peter of Poitiers alters the meaning of the Arabic. Though this study will not deal with the Arabic *Apology*, readers may find it useful to know the major points of divergence between the Arabic and Latin texts. González Muñoz observes that the Latin translators refer to Nestorians—whom the Arabic *Apology* does not depict negatively—as heretics and insert a statement explaining Nestorians' mistaken beliefs about Christ. They also sharpened their source's barbs against Muhammad, the Qur'an, and his companions.<sup>14</sup> I will discuss a specific alteration of a story centering on A'isha at some length. The editor also counts among the translation's errors its definition of *mushrikūn* (those who associate any other being or thing with the one God, committing a sin tantamount to idolatry, "participatores" in the Latin text) as believers in the Trinity.<sup>15</sup> While the definition is an anachronism, since al-Hashimi is referring to the polytheistic Quraysh, knowing that Muslims did in fact consider trinitarianism *shirk* enabled Latin readers to make sense of the charge in their own terms.

A brief summary of the *Apology* will give a sense of the data and arguments that medieval readers found in the text. The first of the two letters in the *Apology* is ascribed to al-Hashimi, a wise and pious Muslim. It is only a quarter the length of the Christian's response and contains no

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14 González Muñoz, LXVIII-LXX.

15 Ibid., LXXI. *Epistula Sarraceni* 7.14-17.

sharp arguments against Christianity comparable to those leveled against Islam in the Christian al-Kindi's letter. The author of the *Apology* adhered to a tradition invented by the first Christians to write dialogue against Islam; he has his Muslim interlocutor know the Christian scriptures and admire monks.<sup>16</sup>

The Muslim states that he has read the Bible, participated in the rituals of Christian monks, and debated with bishops and archbishops. His knowledge and approbation of the Bible grants al-Kindi the right to use Biblical evidence (5-9). Next, the Muslim narrator urges his fellow scholar to partake in the duties of a Muslim—the confession of faith, daily prayer facing south, Ramadan, and the hajj—after his conversion (10-16, 23-27). In his list of religious obligations, he replaces charity, one of the five pillars, with holy war, which points to the Christian author ventriloquizing a Muslim. Al-Hashimi promises that a heaven replete with physical pleasures awaits Muslims and that non-believers will go to hell (17-21). The earthly advantages of conversion to Islam include license to marry multiple wives and to tell lies with impunity (24-26). He asks al-Kindi to renounce the Trinity and Christ's divinity and to realize, in the words of Qur'an 29.8-9, that “God will not release associators, except that he will release those with whom he is pleased” and urges him to write back with his answer (29-30).

Having read the first letter, al-Kindi reproaches his friend for not understanding the evidence for the Trinity in the Old Testament, which reveals clearly that worshipping God in three persons is not idolatry (3-7). He sets out to prove the Trinity by means of both rational and scriptural proofs, and at least five of his proof texts had been used to argue against Judaism by

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<sup>16</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 36-37.

patristic authors.<sup>17</sup> He interprets the Qur'anic denial that God had begotten offspring or been begotten as contradictory to its testimony that Jesus is a word and spirit of God (Qur'an 5:73-74), which he interprets in a Christian sense (10-15). He set a precedent by citing Qur'an 4:171 and 5:73-74, which call him a "word and spirit from God," as proof that the Qur'an should convince Muslims of the Incarnation (15-17). By displaying his knowledge of the Qur'an through frequent quotations, the author of the *Apology* crafts the Christian correspondent as an authority on Islam.

The second phase of al-Kindi's *Apology* refutes Muhammad's prophetic status. Though every part of it is oriented toward that purpose, al-Kindi's narrative of Muhammad's life is largely accurate. The author censoriously recounts Muhammad's military campaigns and orders for the assassinations of his enemies, and argues that the wounds that Muhammad suffered when conquered in battle prove that God did not protect him as he had protected the prophets of the Bible (19-23). Turning to the prophet's marriages, he highlights two outrages, doubly damning since Muhammad uttered blasphemies in order to satisfy his lusts. Muhammad desired the wife of Zayd, his kinsman by adoption, whom he could not legally marry since such a coupling was considered incestuous, and thus invented a revelation in which God permitted him to marry her. The relevant verses of the Qur'an (33:37-38) were of such obvious usefulness for polemicists that various writers had arrived at them independently, among them John of Damascus and Eulogius.<sup>18</sup> Next, al-Kindi recounts a similar story of a false revelation concocted by Muhammad for the sake of A'isha, who was often considered his most beloved wife. According

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17 Christos Sp. Voulgaris, "The Biblical and Patristic Doctrine of the Trinity," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, vol. 37 (Nov.) 3-4, 1992, cites Gen. 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, 18:1-4; Isaiah 6:3, 48:16. The *Apology* also quotes Gen. 2:18, Daniel 4:28, Deut. 6:4, and Psalms 33:6, 66:7-8.

18 Hartmut Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Beirut and Stuttgart, 1995), 44.

to Islamic tradition, A'isha's traveling party accidentally abandoned her and, when she was escorted into town by Safwan b. al-Mu'attal al-Sulami, her detractors accused her of adultery. Ali encouraged Muhammad to repudiate her, but a revelation confirmed A'isha's innocence.<sup>19</sup>

Though, as a whole, the Latin translation of the *Apology* reflects the Arabic quite closely, the Latin translators modified the text here. Where the Arabic *Apology* reports that A'isha was wrongly accused,<sup>20</sup> the translators—perhaps informed by Shi'i hostility toward A'isha—specified that she had committed adultery with Muhammad's consent (24-25).

Al-Kindi defines a prophet as one who pronounces unknown truths about the past, the present, or the near or distant future, and who is proven by miracles. He concludes that Muhammad fails on all counts. Qur'an 17:59 states that God gave Muhammad no signs to prove his prophecy, and al-Kindi ridicules miracles popularly attributed to Muhammad. Legendary miracles cannot support a counter-argument, because they contradict the Qur'an (27-32). Islam won converts through force and intimidation rather than through miracles and prophecy, as attested by the reversion of Muhammad's followers to their earlier religions after his death. In an aside, the narrator reminds his friend of an episode that they witnessed at court that substantiates his view that Muslims treat conversion flippantly (33). Muhammad persuaded fools to join his religion with the promise of a carnal heaven full of food, drink, and beautiful women, and he mustered an army large enough to defeat the Persians by guaranteeing these rewards to soldiers who died in battle (47).

Al-Kindi's next target is the divinity of the Qur'an. Following another venerable Syriac

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19 See Qur'an 24:11-16.

20 González Muñoz, 199 n. 258.



tradition of writing against Islam, he writes that the earliest revelations came from the teachings of Sergius, who re-names himself Nestorius and Gabriel, a heretical monk who taught Muhammad about Christianity.<sup>21</sup> The monk's contributions to the Qur'an, coupled with those of Ali's Jewish supporters Wahb b. Munabbih and 'Abd Allah b. Salam (who altered the Qur'an because they feared that Islam was becoming too much like Christianity) explain its Biblical content. After Muhammad's death, many books called the Qur'an circulated until Uthman commissioned a standard Qur'an woven together from the variants. The writer discovered from "learned and truthful men" and "upright Muslims" that Ali, Abu Bakr, Omar, and Uthman repeatedly modified the Qur'an (38-43). He then assails the Qur'an on literary grounds and rejects the religious practices that al-Hashimi suggests (44-59).

His case against Islam complete, al-Kindi implores his friend to become a Christian and extensively lays out Christian doctrine (60-101). In this context, he defends Jews and Christians against the accusation of *tahrif* (the idea that the other peoples of the book have not been faithful to the messages that they received from God and have corrupted their scriptures). Because they believe in the same scriptures worldwide, it would be impossible for forgeries to saturate every single book of Jewish and Christian scripture. The author cites the Qur'an's positive appraisals of the Law and the Gospel (82, citing Qur'an 10:94-95 and 2:121). An epilogue in which al-Ma'mun examines the letters has been crossed out in the earliest Latin manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 1162). It also survives in two Arabic manuscripts, but is not found in any other Latin manuscript.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps its expunction resulted from comparison with another Arabic exemplar.

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21 Griffith, 38.

22 Ibid., XXI-XXII, L, LXVII.

## Chapter II

### Peter the Venerable's Use of the *Apology*

Peter the Venerable regarded the *Apology of al-Kindi* as an ultimate authority on Islam, and he relied on it even at the expense of the other sources that he had collected for the purpose of educating a Latin readership on Islam. Peter knew and used the *Apology* much more comprehensively than the other materials: the *Fabulae sarracenorum*, *Chronica mendosa*, *Liber generationis*, *Doctrina Mahumet*, and the translation of the Qur'an by Robert of Ketton. For Peter, the *Apology* was more than an education in the basics of Islam. It was also a manual on how to engage Muslims in religious disputation on their own terms. Aided by an outline provided for him by Peter of Poitiers, he derived the structure and much of the content of his *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim saracenorum* from the *Apology*, which he prized largely because it was written in a predominantly Islamic milieu. I hope to show that, paradoxically, Peter's reasons for discarding al-Kindi's challenge to Muhammad's character and for cutting short the refutation of his miracles originated in inferences that Peter had made on the basis of the *Apology*.

### The Letter to Bernard of Clairvaux

The enshrining of the *Apology* as an especially valuable escort into Islamic thought began with the decision that it needed two translators instead of one, an honor not shown to any of the other documents in the Toledan collection. Peter the Venerable explained the translators' method in a letter to Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most formidable Christian thinkers of his time, whom Peter hoped to convince to write against Islam. In the letter, he wrote that Peter of Toledo,

who knew Arabic much better than Latin, first translated the *Apology* into clumsy Latin and that the work of “polishing and setting in order the Latin words, for the most part unpolishedly or disorderedly produced by him [Peter of Toledo]” fell to his own secretary, Peter of Poitiers, “because of the very useful knowledge that will be of unfamiliar matters.”<sup>23</sup> The result of the double translation process is that the Latin text is much more eloquent and readily apprehensible than are many medieval Arabic-to-Latin translations. Placed in the Arsenal manuscript alongside the translations, Peter’s letter to Bernard conveyed to all its later readers that the *Apology*, the most valuable of its contents, merited the extra expense of hiring two translators.

The *Apology of al-Kindi* enjoyed its high status in the Toledan collection because it was perfectly suited for the immediate purpose that Peter the Venerable imagined for his project when he recruited the translators: the education of a Latin Christian audience on Islam. It was easy to read, comprehensive, and accurate. Peter was acutely aware of the lack of accurate information about Islam available in Latin, and saw Christendom as defenseless against Islam without such evidence.<sup>24</sup> He compared his work on only the first stage of the project to David’s collection of materials for the temple that he was unworthy to build and to Solomon accumulating weapons in a time of peace.<sup>25</sup> He and the compilers of the Cluniac collection recognized that readers unfamiliar with Islam needed more than a translation of the Qur'an to orient them into Islam and that the project could only succeed to the extent that it was able to make alien concepts

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23 “Qui verba Latina impolite vel confuse plerumque ab eo prolata poliens et ordinans epistolam immo libellum multis ut credo propter ignotarum rerum notitiam perutilem futurum perfecit.” (Peter the Venerable, *Epistola de translatione sua*, ed. Reinhold Gleis in *Petrus Venerabilis Schriften zum Islam*. Corpus Islamico-Christianum, Series latina, 2 [Altenberge, 1985], p. 22).

24 Ludwig Hagemann, “Die erste lateinische Koranübersetzung—Mittel zur Verständigung zwischen Christen und Muslimen in Mittelalter?“, *Orientalische Kultur und Europäisches Mittelalter*, ed. Albert Zimmerman and Ingrid Craemer-Ruegenberg, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* (Berlin, 1985), pp. 48-50.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

intelligible to Latin readers. They adopted a number of strategies for this purpose, including Robert of Ketton's interpolation of exegesis into the Qur'an, without which it would have been nearly incomprehensible to readers who lacked a background in its interpretation.<sup>26</sup> The Arsenal manuscript's bright colors, chapter headings, and notes are designed to aid scholastic readers, expected to familiarize themselves with a vast array of books, in searching the corpus for whatever interested them.<sup>27</sup>

Its glosses, the subject of the final section of this paper, are probably the most important of these devices. But, despite the quality of its information and the technologies designed to help readers process it, Peter's efforts failed to win the desired response from Bernard. Years later, Peter had still not found anyone "able to be animated for resisting" Islam and he wrote that, because Christians had left the virus of Islam unchecked, it now infected half the world.<sup>28</sup> He sought the aid of Peter of Poitiers to write a disputation against Islam that was worthy of the precedent set by the church fathers who had countered the heresies that had challenged early Christianity. His secretary responded by sending him a set of *capitula* that outlined a model polemic against Islam.

### **Peter of Poitiers' *Capitula***

Peter of Poitiers' skeleton for a future project is the earliest original polemical work clearly and amply shaped by the Latin translation of the *Apology*. The fact that his work on the *Apology* was the source of almost all of the arguments advanced in the *Capitula* speaks to the

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom*, 64.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. All of these devices emerged on a large scale in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

<sup>28</sup> "nullum ad resistendum posse animari." (Peter the Venerable, *Liber contra sectam sive haeresim Sarracenorum*, in Gleijeses, pp. 30-42).

high esteem in which the two monks held that text. The *Capitula* suggests a polemic in four books, the first of which would convince Muslims to listen to Peter's arguments.<sup>29</sup> To overcome a Muslim's objections to listening to a Christian, the writer is to disprove the corruption of the Bible by Jews and Christians and, second, to convince Muslims that they have no right to approve parts of the Bible and to ignore others; they must acknowledge the whole Bible if they are to acknowledge any part of it.<sup>30</sup> The second book, on Muhammad's sinful life, vilifies him in all the expected ways: He is an abductor, a murderer, a traitor, and an adulterer. The Qur'an's verses on his marriage to Zaynab are evoked only to show that he condoned adultery. After sending the *Capitula*, the topic of Muhammad's unrestrained sexuality evidently caused Peter enough embarrassment and anxiety about what his abbot would think to warrant another letter, in which we can see that he read the *Apology* critically. He asserts that he checked whether its image of Muslim men "repulsively abusing wives" rested on good authority. Peter of Poitiers not only found the scandalous verse in the Qur'an, but also questioned his collaborators Peter of Toledo and Robert of Ketton, both of whom confirmed that all Muslims "practiced this without restraint, as though by Muhammad's order."<sup>31</sup> The third and fourth books outlined in the *Capitula* very closely follow the *Apology's* arguments on Muhammad's failures to live up to the standard the text sets for a prophet.

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29 "Praelocutio ad Saracenos admonens et excitans eos ut patienter audiant et rationabiliter intelligant quae sequuntur." (Peter of Poitiers, *Capitula* 1.1, in Gleib p. 232).

30 Peter of Poitiers, *Capitula* 1.7, in Gleib p. 232. Qur'an 2:223.

31 "Capitulam etiam quod est ibi de uxoribus turpiter abutendis non vos ullo modo scandalizet, quia vere ita est in Alkorano, et sicut ego in Hispania pro certo et a Petro Toletano, cuius in transferendo socius eram, et a Roberto Pampilonensi nunc archidiacono audivi, omnes Saraceni hoc licenter quasi ex praecepto Mahumeti faciunt." (Peter of Poitiers, *Epistula* in Gleib, p. 228, ll. 8-14).

### **The Liber contra sectam sive haerisim Saracenorum**

The product of Peter the Venerable's reading of the *Capitula* and the *Apology* was the *Liber contra sectam sive haerisim Saracenorum*, believed to have been written shortly before his death in 1156. The *Contra sectam* confirms that he recognized the distance between himself and the Muslims whom he hoped to convert and that he turned to the *Apology* to equip himself to understand the unfamiliar world of Islamic religious disputation. Following a prologue addressed to a Christian readership, the body of the text is an open letter to Muslims urging their conversion to Christianity, written in the style of the Latin *Apology*. It does not follow the *Capitula* exactly. Whereas Peter of Poitiers had set out four books, Peter the Venerable divided his work into only two. The second book of the *Contra sectam*, however, covers the subjects outlined in the *Capitula*'s third and fourth books.

Within ten years after Peter's death, the copyist of an anthology of the abbot's works, including the *Contra sectam* and his polemics against Jews and heretics, (now manuscript 381 in the Douai Library) believed that it had once contained two more books that had been lost. The question of whether or not the surviving text represents the entire plan imagined by Peter the Venerable has generated controversy among scholars. Perhaps, as the copyist thought, some of the original text has been lost, or else Peter never completed the text.<sup>32</sup> Some scholars who think that parts of the *Contra sectam* are missing have concluded that Robert of Ketton provided proof in the foreword to his translation, when he wrote that Peter had refuted the Qur'an in five books, but that he could not find them.<sup>33</sup> The view is not convincing, since the foreword was written in

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32 Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order and exclusion: Cluny and Christendom face heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150)*, trans. Graham Robert Edwards (Ithaca, 2002), 344-345.

33 Gleib, XXI.

1143, several years before the composition of the *Contra sectam* and since his inability to find any of the work in question does not justify an argument for the disappearance of only two or three of its books.

My view of Peter's purpose in composing the *Contra sectam* is decidedly iconoclastic. As far as I know, despite the fact that Peter's favored image of the Toledan collection is an arsenal assembled for a future war, no one has gone so far as to suggest that Peter intended for his work to eventually reach a Muslim audience. This motive goes against the usual characterization of Peter's polemic, accepted by Iogna-Prat among other scholars, as statements of identity through exclusion and as a means to assuage his own doubts. It is, however, strongly supported by clues within the text.

For one, Peter goes to surprising lengths to prove to his imagined Muslim that religious debate with Christians was acceptable. The argument is not a *topos* typical of Jewish-Christian disputations, nor does it have any apparent utility for a Latin audience that had no objections to inter-religious dialogue, nor. It also seems implausible that, if he were writing solely for a Latin Christian readership, it would occur to Peter that his audience might not know what monks were. Furthermore, as I will discuss, he imitates the style of both al-Hashimi and al-Kindi, which suggests that he was deliberately writing a work that he hoped would look familiar and sound to a Muslim reader. This imitation extends to his use of sources. Whereas Peter had famously paraphrased Horace in his *Summa* in order to depict Islam as a ridiculous hybrid religion, none of his beloved classical allusions appear in the *Contra sectam*. More suitably for a polemic aimed at real Muslims, he replaces them with copious quotations of the Qur'an.

Like al-Hashimi and al-Kindi, Peter opens the letter by invoking God. He writes “in the

name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”, exactly the words that introduce al-Kindi's letter, but curiously omits both correspondents' characterizations of God as merciful.<sup>34</sup> Peter provided the same autobiographical information about himself that appears in the Latin introduction to the two letters: his name, nationality (a Gaul), religion, and occupation (“abbot by office of those who are called monks”).<sup>35</sup> Both al-Hashimi and al-Kindi declare their love and concern for each other at the beginning of their letters.<sup>36</sup> Since Peter cannot pretend to feel a personal love for someone whom he has never met, in place of the friendship of the two individual courtiers, he explains that he was motivated to write by the universal love that naturally binds all members of a species to each other. In response to al-Hashimi's stated goal of patterning his behavior on Muhammad's by conversing peacefully with a non-Muslim, Peter evokes the example of the apostles, whose love for non-believers was integral to their mission.<sup>37</sup> His imagined reader's anonymity makes him unable to address him personally, as do al-Hashimi and al-Kindi continually in the two letters, but he does make a point to address his imagined recipient throughout the work, usually calling him “O Hagarene” and praising him for his wisdom.<sup>38</sup>

As his secretary planned, Peter sets out to prove that the Bible is permissible as evidence in a debate between a Christian and a Muslim. Where the author of the *Apology* had justified his use of Biblical evidence by having his imaginary Muslim correspondent agree to the Bible's

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34 Peter the Venerable, *Contra sectam* 1.23, in Glei, p. 62. *Epistula Sarraceni* 1.1, 2.2. *Rescriptum Christiani* 1.1.

35 “abbas officio eorum qui monachi dicuntur.”

36 *Epistula Sarraceni* 2-3, *Rescriptum Christiani* 2.6-8.

37 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 1.24, in Glei p. 62. *Epistula Sarraceni* 2-3.

38 Peter's references to his reader as a “Hagarene” are admittedly difficult to explain if, as I posit, he seriously hoped that the *Contra sectam* would eventually reach a Muslim audience. Peter had explained in his *Summa totius haeresis* that the term was more apt than “Saracen”, since Muslims were descended from Hagar through Ishmael, not from Sarah through Isaac. I cannot tell whether he expect the reader to self-identify as a Hagarene, but the respectful tone of the polemic makes it seem unlikely that he expected it to be taken as an insult.



value, Peter must find grounds that will oblige all Muslims to accept it. The concern for adopting proper argument and the proper use of sources acknowledged by his opponents had also characterized Peter's polemic against Petrobrusians and Jews. Dominique Iogna-Prat has noted that he had prepared to write his treatise *Adversus Iudeos* by obtaining excerpts of the Talmud<sup>39</sup> and that, against the Petrobrusians, whom he imagined as sharing his classical Latin literary culture, he inserted a number of classical quotations and allusions, in addition to grounding his arguments in the reasoning fashionable among scholastics.<sup>40</sup> It is telling that Peter invokes no classical allusions in the *Contra sectam*. Their absence suggests that he actually hoped that his letter would be read by Muslims, whom he could not reasonably expect to be familiar with the Latin classics. The evidence sifted in the *Contra sectam* instead originates from the Bible and the Qur'an. Against both the Petrobrusians and the Jews, the Bible was highly esteemed and thus fair game. Attempting to persuade a reader of the truth of Christianity without recourse to the Bible must have struck him as impossible, and thus he needed to find a way to make it permissible.

Following Peter of Poitiers' guidelines, Peter the Venerable sought to compel Muslims to listen to Biblical testimony.<sup>41</sup> He extrapolated from al-Hashimi's example, and from the Biblical content of the Qur'an, that Muslims commended the Bible. Peter's aim of winning a Muslim's attention through this argument is perhaps naive but it is not groundless. He anticipates the objection and articulates it himself, speaking in the voice of the Muslim: God knew that the Bible

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39 Iogna-Prat, 137-138.

40 Ibid., 120-121, 144-145.

41 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam*, 1.56-57 in Gleij p. 106-108.

contained both truth and falsehood and was careful to pass on only its truths to Muhammad.<sup>42</sup> His logic for refuting this objection is the same as al-Kindi's (the Jewish scriptures' ubiquity makes *tahrif* impossible), but he adds to this argument his own observation that the Jewish communities in Europe own an extraordinary number of copies of their holy books.<sup>43</sup> He may have made this observation while conducting his research for *Adversus Iudeos* and generalized that it was true of Jews around the world. Again, the Christian scriptures' ubiquity makes their corruption impossible. Peter assails the idea that the destruction of Bibles by the Romans forced Christians to write all new scripture, noting that Christians outside the empire preserved their scripture.<sup>44</sup>

Peter cuts the second of the four books that his secretary had proposed, the assault on Muhammad's character. A reason for his silence on the prophet's sinful life is suggested by a minor point that Peter made about Islam on the basis of the *Apology* in his earlier polemic against the Jews. He was forced to address the rise of Islam in his *Adversus Iudeos* because it disrupted his conception of the historical evolution of religions. If, as Peter thought, paganism and Judaism prepared humanity before it was sophisticated enough to adopt the full truth of Christianity, then why did Islam arise six hundred years after Christianity, when humanity had reached spiritual maturity? Iogna-Prat has observed that Peter's answer to the dilemma came from his reading of the *Apology*. Peter argued that Islam was not a stage in humanity's spiritual development, but an aberration. Were it a new stage that supplanted Christianity, it would have attracted converts by authority, miracles, and reason. But Peter considered violence, and the

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42 Ibid. 1.58, in Glei p. 110.

43 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 1.74-76, in Glei p. 130-132.

44 Peter the Venerable, *Liber Contra Sectam sive haeresim Sarracenorum*, in Glei p. 134-142.

promise of sensual delights in this life and the next, to be the causes of Islam's success. Al-Kindi had asserted that these two methods were responsible for the conversions of the neighboring tribes within Muhammad's lifetime.<sup>45</sup> It is not difficult to see this characterization of Islam as a result of Peter's bigotry, as Iogna-Prat does, but the reader must remember that he received this information from a source that he had every reason to esteem as reputable. Since Peter read in the *Apology* that unrestrained sensuality and violence caused Islam's success, he may have reasoned that the impugning Muhammad for those same vices would not be an effective way to convince Muslims of the prophet's falseness.

The second book of the *Contra sectam* covers his failures to produce either prophecies or miracles, the topics that Peter of Poitiers had proposed for the third and fourth book of the polemic that he envisioned. Peter's grounds for rejecting Muhammad's claim of prophecy and the apocryphal literature that ascribed miracles to him are the same as those of al-Kindi. A prophet must disclose unknown truths about the past or present, or the near or distant future, each of which Peter illustrated with copious Biblical examples.<sup>46</sup> He learned from the *Apology* that the entire Qur'an contained no prophecies in any of these categories.<sup>47</sup> Peter further establishes his case against Muhammad's ability to predict the future by repeating the contrast established in the *Apology* between Muhammad, who incurred injuries in battle, with the prophets Elijah and Daniel, whom God protected from their enemies. Peter the Venerable expands the comparison, and emphasizes that Muhammad clearly did not have the knowledge of his enemies' plan that

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45 Iogna-Prat, 298-299. *Epistula Sarraceni* 15, 17, 24. *Rescriptum Christiani* 33, 39, 47.

46 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 2.96-124, in Gleij pp. 158-190. For the definition of prophecy, see p. 160; *Rescriptum Christiani* 27.1-8. See also James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1964), 188.

47 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 2.102, ed. Gleij, p. 164. *Rescriptum Christiani* 28.

God granted Elijah (prophecy pertaining to the present).<sup>48</sup>

Kritzeck notes that the weaknesses of the *Contra sectam* betray Peter the Venerable's ignorance of much of the Toledan collection. Though the *Fabulae Sarracenorum*, the *Liber generationis Mahumeth*, the *Doctrina Muhammad*, and the *Apology* all mention prophecies or miracles attributed to Muhammad, Peter only addresses the one prophecy provided for him by Peter of Poitiers, Muhammad's naming of the twelve caliphs that would succeed him.<sup>49</sup> He refutes it on the basis of the *Apology's* citation of the Qur'an's statement that anything written about Muhammad should be compared with the Qur'an and, if it contradicts the Qur'an, it cannot be true. Kritzeck's point that Peter was largely unaware of the contents of these supplementary texts is well founded, but Peter had no reason to address the other miracles since, in his view, they had already been proven false. It had been established that the Qur'an explicitly stated that God did not grant miracles to Muhammad, and that anything about Muhammad contradictory to itself was untrue. Peter the Venerable absorbed and expanded al-Kindi's method of engaging the Qur'an in order to repudiate Muhammad's prophetic status.

Some of Peter's references to the Qur'an's contents in the *Contra sectam* seem to serve no purpose except to showcase his knowledge of the Qur'an. He had learned from the *Apology* that acquaintance with the Qur'an was highly valued cultural capital among Muslims, and so he enumerates many parallels between the Bible and the Qur'an.<sup>50</sup> In his challenge that the reader search the Qur'an from beginning to end for prophecies, Peter seized another opportunity to gain standing in his readers' eyes by demonstrating his knowledge of the Qur'an. He names the second

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48 Ibid. 2.118-119, ed. Gleii, p. 184-186. *Rescriptum Christiani* 23.

49 Kritzeck, 198. Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 2.120, ed. Gleii, p. 186.

50 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 1.55, ed. Gleii, p. 106.

and third suras (which he calls the first and second, following Robert's numbering system) and numbers their lines, and tells them to continue reading it until sura one hundred twenty-three (the last in Robert's reckoning).<sup>51</sup> Conspicuously, he only names the suras at the beginning and end of the Qur'an and never proves himself familiar with the middle part of the book.

Even Peter the Venerable appears, in fact, to have been daunted by the Qur'an and to have trusted the *Apology* to guide him through the confusing text. When he quoted the Qur'an in the *Liber contra sectam*, he consulted the *Apology* rather than Robert of Ketton's translation.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Peter claims not to have been able to find anything about the corruption of the Bible in the Latin translation of the Qur'an (he admits that he cannot read Arabic), in the *Liber generationis Mahumeth*, or in the *Doctrina Muhammad*, the latter two of which he realized had much less clout.<sup>53</sup> Kritzeck points to Peter's oversight to show that he did not read all of the Toledan collection's contents with equal attention, since he could have found relevant references in Robert's translation of the Qur'an.<sup>54</sup> The *Capitula* does not cite the Qur'an on *tahrif* at all and the *Apology's* defense of the integrity of the Bible quotes only Qur'anic verses that seem to refute the charge, which are both indicated in the margin in the Arsenal manuscript.<sup>55</sup> Since al-Kindi quoted no Qur'anic verses that supported the idea that Jews and Christians had corrupted their scriptures, Peter seems to have concluded, the accusation must not have been made in the Qur'an.

The fact that Peter modeled the *Liber Contra Sectam* on the *Apology* and trusted it for the

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51 Ibid. 2.102, ed. Glei, p. 164.

52 González Muñoz, LXXXIII.

53 Peter the Venerable, *Contra Sectam* 1.61, ed. Glei, pp. 112-114.

54 Kritzeck, 175-177.

55 *Rescriptum Christiani* 82.53-56 quotes Qur'an 10:94-95, in which doubters of Muhammad's message are told to check with the people who had previously received the law, and 82.56-58 quotes Qur'an 2:121, a warning that whoever does not believe the law and the Gospel will be damned. Each glossed *Alcoran*.

contents and meaning of the Qur'an is salient because it is easy to misread the prologue with its extensive list of heresies in Christian history to mean that Peter contended with Islam only obscurely, on Christian terms. This is the view of Dominique Iogna-Prat and Gavin Langmuir. But Peter's interest in the *Apology* attests to his concern to understand Islam accurately. The *Apology* was the only work that the abbot knew in which a Christian and, perhaps more importantly, a Muslim promoted his own religion for a reader of a different confession than his own. From it he identified rules conducive to arguments with Muslims and attempted to write in an epistolary format familiar to learned Muslims and to employ evidence that they would accept. In Peter's view, the purpose of the translation seems to have been as much to provide protocol for how Muslims thought and argued as it was to furnish specific arguments. He realized that expertise in the Qur'an was essential when arguing against Islam, and he absorbed and expanded al-Kindi's method of engaging the Qur'an in order to repudiate Muhammad's prophetic status. His engagement of the Qur'an in his writing was always organized and mediated by the *Apology*, as shown by his quotations of it in the *Apology's* translation and his reliance on its interpretations of verses. The *Apology's* later readers were less willing to take its claims as absolute truth. The *Contra Sectam* was never widely read (it survives in only two manuscripts), but it is an important witness to what the Latin *Apology's* first readers regarded as its major contributions to polemic against Islam. Like Peter, subsequent readers consistently emphasized Muhammad's career, but the specific information in the *Apology* that they chose to highlight and rework coincides less with that in Peter's forgotten treatise than in the widely read histories that used the *Apology* as a source for the history of Islam.

### Chapter III

#### The *Apology* as a Source for the History of Islam

##### Introduction

Like Peter the Venerable, the two thirteenth-century historians Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais fitted parts of the *Apology* into their own writing in the absence of other well-founded sources. But, where Peter's writings make clear that he read the text in near isolation, the uses of it by Matthew and Vincent suggest that they read it inter-textually. The historians have in common with Peter an interest in the life of Muhammad but, unlike the abbot of Cluny, they maintained the *Apology's* emphasis on the prophet's sinful deeds, probably because his wars and marital scandals corresponded more closely with the usual contents of Latin historical writing than did any other part of the polemic. Matthew and Vincent also include non-narrative passages on Muslims' religious practices that were not addressed by Peter, and Vincent continued his history after Muhammad's death, when the Qur'an becomes its central character.

It seems inevitable that the *Apology* would become fodder for historical sketches of Islam's origins, since no other Latin source covered the early years of the religion so broadly and accurately. But Matthew and Vincent also made use of narratives of the anti-hagiographical type discussed in the introduction. Vincent's choice of words to describe his inclusion of the *Apology* ("it is pleasing to graft on a few things") is appropriate, because he and Paris each created a hybridized history made up of conflicting elements and did not attempt to smooth over the contradictions between their sources. But the authority of the *Apology* still shows in Vincent's history, where its greater influence comes across in Vincent's citation and in his choice to copy

from it at length, as opposed to his quick synopses of other, un-cited works. On the basis of Daniel's assessment of which works on Islam were the most widely read in Europe during the late Middle Ages, it is clear that narrative sources appealed to readers more than their more argumentative or philosophical counterparts, which accounts for their influence on later readers' reactions to the *Apology*. The clearest indication of the histories' impact is the ensuing concern with the composition and corruption of the Qur'an.

Each of the two authors whom I have singled out for special attention viewed the chapters on the origins of Islam in his work as a discursus from his main narrative, an aside that did not affect the course of the larger story that he was telling. In his *Chronica Majora*, Matthew wrote that he considered his data on the life of Muhammad and the beliefs of Muslims a useful digression from his own narrative.<sup>56</sup>

In the historical volume of his *Speculum Major*, Matthew's contemporary Vincent of Beauvais interrupted his narrative on Byzantine history in order to devote twenty-nine chapters to the origins of Islam. He too implied that he had strayed from his purpose by lingering on the subject, and closed this section with the words, "Now let us return to the narrative."<sup>57</sup> They cover largely the same parts of the fictive correspondence, and both reverse the order of the letters, so that material ascribed to al-Hashimi appears after that drawn from al-Kindi.

### **Matthew Paris' *Chronica majora***

The most dramatic difference between the versions transmitted by Matthew and Vincent is their proximity to the *Apology*. Vincent quoted the text directly and places both its

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56 Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, Vol. III, ed. Henry Richards Luard (London: Longman, 1876), 344.

57 "Nunc ad historiam redeamus." (Vincent of Beauvais, Liber 23, Capitulum 62, p. 922).



composition and its translation into Latin in historical context, but Matthew demonstrates no awareness of its reputed origin as a pair of letters, nor does he retain its references to the identities and relationship of its pseudonymous authors. Matthew knew the *Apology* only through a lost work that he identifies as a document sent to Gregory IX by Dominicans stationed in the east.<sup>58</sup> This document has not survived on its own, and so we cannot be certain which adaptations were the work of the Dominicans and which were original to Matthew. Henry Richards Luard, who edited the edition of the *Chronica Majora* published in 1876, noted the work's parallels with its equivalents in Jacques de Vitry and Vincent of Beauvais, and remarked that they must have stemmed from a common source, mentioning the book translated by Peter of Toledo as a likely candidate.<sup>59</sup> Daniel argues that the “scriptum Gregorio” to which Paris refers shares its informant with Jacques de Vitry (who, like the Dominicans, was writing in predominately Muslim territory) and Godfrey of Viterbo, all of whose content on Muhammad is similar. The lost writing must have been a partial version or an adaptation of the *Apology*.<sup>60</sup> James Powell has argued convincingly that both of Matthew's sections on the history of Islam come from the same collection of Dominican sources as his minimal information about Bulgarian heretics and his account of Frederick II's blasphemy.<sup>61</sup>

It is possible that the Dominicans found an Arabic *Apology* and sent freshly translated excerpts of it to the pope, which could explain why Matthew Paris repeatedly, and usually accurately, paraphrased it but has virtually no precise verbal correlations to the Latin *Apology*.

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58 Matthew Paris, 343-344.

59 Luard, *Chronica Majora*, xiii, 344n.

60 Daniel, 11-12. González Muñoz (p. LXXXV) tentatively accepts that all three derive from the same Dominican source.

61 James Powell, “Matthew Paris, the Lives of Muhammad, and the Dominicans” in *Dei Gesta per Francos: Crusade Studies in Honour of Jean Richard*, ed. Michel Balard et al. (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 68-69.

But the theory can probably be ruled out. Paris's anomalous spellings of Arabic names do not render them phonetically. Rather, they clearly derive from misreadings of the spellings in manuscripts of the Latin *Apology*. Matthew's text substitutes letters that resemble those of the originals in shape, suggesting errors in his, or a previous scribe's, reading. Hence, "Zameb", the spelling present in most manuscripts of the *Apology*, becomes "Zemah", and "Ebubecr" transforms into "Abuzer".<sup>62</sup> The Arabic names in the *Chronica Majora* are almost identical to those in the *Apology*, as are the historical facts of Muhammad's life.

Despite the many close parallels to the *Apology*, I have found only one instance in which Matthew reproduces it word for word. In the earlier autograph manuscript, he writes that Muhammad was raised "in the bosom of his uncle, 'Abd Manaf by name", a phrase identical to that in the *Apology* other than the added word "nomine".<sup>63</sup> But he revised the statement in his second autograph manuscript, making 'Abd Manaf into Muhammad's father rather than his uncle, an error that also occurs in four manuscripts of the *Apology*.<sup>64</sup> Matthew's correction makes less sense than the earlier statement, since the same passage calls Muhammad an orphan. Perhaps a direct encounter with the Latin *Apology*, or with its excerpts in the *Speculum historiale*, motivated the change though one might expect to see more alterations in the second manuscript if this were so.

The most probable source for the chapters on Islam is a (now lost) preaching aid used by Dominicans, based largely on the Latin *Apology*. The Dominicans must have supplemented it

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62 Matthew Paris, 348. In MS Paris, Bibliothèque d' Arsenal 1162, her name is spelled "Zaineb". It appears as "Zames" in MS Paris, BnF, lat. 3649.

63 "in sinu patru sui, nomine Abdimanef" (Paris, p. 345). See *Rescriptum Christiani* 19.1-2.

64 Matthew Paris., 345 n. The manuscripts that give "patris" for "patru" are Oxford, Corpus Christi College 184; Paris, BnF, lat. 14503; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 335; and Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C-201.

with additional material on Islamic doctrine and reshaped into a more concise manual on Islam and the arguments directly relevant to its propositions. Either Matthew or his source omitted the rational arguments against Muslims' concept of God and understanding of the Bible. Gregory IX had sent Dominican missionaries to convert both eastern Christians and Muslims, and this context explains why the version in the *Chronica Majora* contains a more thorough account of Islamic Christology than does the *Apology*. Regardless of the exact origin of Matthew's source material, his citation of the Dominican text reveals an important and otherwise undocumented stage in the *Apology*'s history: its use in some form by Dominicans working in the east.

The Dominican intermediaries were probably responsible for the text's structure; it begins with a *vita* of Muhammad, which conforms to the sequence of events in the *Apology*, and then outlines Islamic beliefs and practices, some of which may attest to the influence of al-Hashimi's letter: the salvation of all Muslims on judgment day through Muhammad's intercession,<sup>65</sup> as well as Matthew's information on the Ramadan fast,<sup>66</sup> prayer facing south,<sup>67</sup> and Muslims' polygamy.<sup>68</sup> At the dividing point between these two parts, the narrative and the descriptive, the *Chronica Majora* aptly paraphrases Ovid: "We are a crowd disposed toward vice."<sup>69</sup> Luard observed that, elsewhere in the text, a quotation from Ovid is the only signal of the break between the end of the work of Matthew's predecessor and the beginning of his original work,<sup>70</sup> so the line of poetry inserted here might also indicate a break.

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65 Matthew Paris, 353. *Epistula Sarraceni* 22.7-14.

66 Ibid., 355. *Epistula Sarraceni* 13.

67 Ibid., 355. *Epistula Sarraceni* 12.5.

68 Ibid., 351. *Epistula Sarraceni* 24.1-4.

69 "Et nos in vitium prona caterva sumus." (Matthew Paris, p. 352). Ovid, *Fasti* IV. 312: "Nos in vitium credula turba sumus."

70 Luard, *Chronica Majora*, xii.

The guide to Islam in the *Chronica Majora* shows that the intermediaries strove for accuracy, even if Matthew himself did not. It contains accurate information that cannot have been deduced from the *Apology* alone, most significantly in its explanation of Muslims' beliefs about Jesus. In the *Apology*, the reader does find that al-Hashimi professed his belief in the ascension<sup>71</sup> and stated that Jesus, the son of Mary, was not God as Christians thought.<sup>72</sup> Al-Kindi's letter made much of the Qur'an's designation of Jesus as the word and spirit of God<sup>73</sup> and answered objections to the crucifixion (not in direct response to al-Hashimi's letter).<sup>74</sup> These statements, placed far apart from each other, sufficed for an audience in Baghdad that already understood Jesus's place within Islam. But a reader without direct knowledge of Islam would have found it a challenge to piece them together into a coherent picture. Nowhere did the *Apology* give a clear and comprehensive statement of Islamic Christology, as does Matthew.<sup>75</sup> The *Chronica Majora* weaves all of the relevant information in the *Apology* into one passage and adds that Muslims believe that God miraculously created Jesus in a virgin's womb, as he had miraculously created Adam (Qur'an 3:59)<sup>76</sup> and that Jesus will return to rule the earth in the future.<sup>77</sup>

The more extensive treatment of Islamic Christology, appended to a partial version of the *Apology*, reflects a concern to prevent readers from misunderstanding the *Apology*'s interpretation of the Qur'anic verses on Jesus. This concern was legitimate; even the brilliant

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71 *Epistula Sarraceni* 5.16-17.

72 *Ibid.*, 29.10-20.

73 *Rescriptum Christiani* 17.

74 *Ibid.*, 62.

75 Paris, 353.

76 The idea comes from Qur'an 3:59, cited in *Rescriptum Christiani* 85.13. "Ipse est enim verbum Dei et Dominus filiorum Adam."

77 Paris, 353. Powell, 66.

Ramon Lull did not consistently distinguish Muslims' interpretations of Qur'an 3:59 and 4:171-172 from the Christianizing interpretations promoted in the *Apology*. On al-Kindi's authority, Lull misread the latter Qur'anic proof text as stating that Jesus was a "Spirit of God" in a partitive sense and claimed that the Qur'an obliged Muslims to believe in the Incarnation.<sup>78</sup> If the Dominicans were to avoid the error of expecting Muslims to read the Qur'an in the same way that they (prompted by the *Apology*) did, they needed to articulate a clear statement of Islamic Christology.

On this note, the "writing sent to the lord Pope about the pseudo-Prophet Muhammad" ends.<sup>79</sup>

Matthew supplements his Dominican source with "another [text] about the same", written by an unnamed preacher against Islam. It shows no clear evidence of the *Apology's* influence, except perhaps the simile that Muslims practice polygamy "like horses and mules having no understanding", a phrase that echoes the *Apology's* indication that only someone who indulges carnal desire "like a horse and mule" warrants honor in Islam.<sup>80</sup> But this text does narrate and hold up for ridicule Muhammad's answers to questions put to him about Noah by certain Jews, a dialog inspired by the *Doctrina Mahumet* from the Toledan collection. The Dominican who provided Matthew with his information on Muhammad and Islam must have had access to the entire Toledan collection. The section on Muhammad ends with a story of the prophet's death

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78 Thomas E. Burman, "The Influence of the Apology of al-Kindi and Contrarietas alfolica on Ramon Lull's Late Religious Polemics, 1305-1313", 198-204, 209.

79 "Explicit scriptum missum ad dominum Papam de pseudo-prophetia Machometh." (Matthew Paris, 355).

80 "Istis etenim tuis inordinatis admonitionibus nemo dignus habetur, nisi qui sue carnis miserie subiacens pronus et preceps ad quelibet libidinis incitamenta, sicut equus et mulus, fertur et rapitur." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 67.12-14). "Unde ut multiplicetur gens Sarracenicam, sicut equi et muli non habentes intellectum, praecepit et instituit Machomet, ut uxores cum concubinis quot possunt sustinere tot habeant." (Matthew Paris, p. 356).

that is irreconcilable with the *Apology*. He cannot have both predicted his own death (and promised resurrection) and have been suddenly killed by pigs. Paris made no attempt to reconcile the second version of Muhammad's death with the first, whose account of the prophet's death is closely modeled after that in the *Apology*, as are all of the matters of historical fact that it records.

Matthew (or his source) did, however, fill its gaps imaginatively. Muhammad works for Khadija to collect payments from travelers, by which highway robbery is possibly insinuated, and he marries her in secret, a claim also made in the other narrative.<sup>81</sup> In his narration of Muhammad's military campaigns, the author asserts along with the *Apology* that his susceptibility to injury and defeat proves the angels' disregard for his protection. But without the Biblical references through which al-Kindi contrasted Muhammad and the warrior-prophets Moses and Joshua, who defeated their enemies through angelic intervention,<sup>82</sup> the argument makes little sense. Matthew creates his own meaning for it by adding that Muhammad claimed to be protected by ten angels.<sup>83</sup> The author of the *Apology* had, in fact, declared that he had not heard anyone claim that angels protected Muhammad in combat.<sup>84</sup> He also inferred that, since the legend that Muhammad refrained from eating the poisoned lamb was false, then he must have eaten the meat, which caused his death eighteen years afterward.<sup>85</sup>

The contrast between the parts of the *Apology* regarded as most important by Matthew and by Peter the Venerable is exactly opposite. Matthew inverted Peter's policy of demonstrating

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81 Paris, 345, 360. "Haec dedit ei asinum ad serviendum ei, ut per eum acciperet mercedem de omnibus quae super deferret ad partes Asiae. Cum eadem tandem femina occulto ipse adhaesit eamque in uxorem duxit."

82 Ibid., 346-348. *Rescriptum Christiani* 20.27-33.

83 Ibid., 346.

84 *Rescriptum Christiani* 20.25-26. "Ego autem nullum ibi ab angelis adiutum esse audivi."

85 Paris, 350. *Rescriptum Christiani* 31.22-29.

his mastery of the Qur'an and its folly while suppressing scurrilous anecdotes about Muhammad's lustfulness. Matthew's account of Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab not only contains invented dialog between Zaynab and Zayd but also removes the Qur'anic verses that had given the story its importance for al-Kindi. Muhammad does pretend to receive word from God legitimizing his marriage but the point is not stressed.<sup>86</sup> In the *Chronica Majora*, Ali accuses Muhammad, not A'isha, of adultery. Muhammad lies in order to absolve himself of the charge, but the text does not contend that he attributed the verdict of his innocence to God.<sup>87</sup> In these re-tellings, the purpose of the stories is not to impugn the Qur'an but to emphasize Muhammad's lechery. The author was so disinterested in the Qur'an that he excised all references to it in the material recycled from the *Apology*. When Matthew explicates arguments that, in the *Apology*, rely on the audience's acknowledgment of the Qur'an's authority for Muslims, he does not indicate appeals to the Qur'an and seems oblivious to its importance in the original argument. This version is silent on the compilation of the Qur'an.

While he agrees with the author of the *Apology* on the historical events of Muhammad's life, his interpretations of those events differ. The clearest case of his reinscription of the text is visible in his alterations that cast Islam in a guise familiar and loathsome to Christians and Muslims alike; it is a new form of paganism. Muhammad's affinity to paganism is evident in the document's adaptation of the story of the creation of the first mosque. The *Apology* depicts Muhammad re-purposing a building in a Jewish community for use as a mosque but, in the *Chronica Majora*'s version, the inhabitants of the town are "in part Jews and in part pagans,

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86 Ibid., 348. While the lack of Matthew's exemplar may forbid us from ruling out the possibility that the Dominicans made these changes, that possibility does not at all accord with what we know about Dominicans' study of the Qur'an in the thirteenth century.

87 Ibid., 348-349.

idolaters, peasants, and unlearned people.” Muhammad sets up neither a church nor a mosque but a temple.<sup>88</sup> In accordance with the *Apology*, Matthew narrates the meeting of the heretical monk (who re-names himself Nestorius, as in the *Apology*) with Muhammad in a town populated by both Jews and idolaters.<sup>89</sup> The *Apology* states that Nestorius's training led Muhammad to reject polytheism and that the pair's preaching so resembled Christianity that it worried the local Jews. Some Jews converted only so that they could alter the course of the new religion and keep it from becoming too Christian.<sup>90</sup> In the *Chronica Majora* however, though Muhammad learns about the Bible, he never renounces his polytheism. He and Nestorius immediately win converts among “uncultured and simple” people, whose previous religious identity is not stated, but these stereotypes are generally applied to pagans rather than to Jews, as the earlier reference to unlearned idolaters communicates.<sup>91</sup> The affiliation of Islam with paganism continues into the exposition of Muslims’ belief and ritual. It begins, “Muslims believe that one God is the creator of all things” but, in the first manuscript, he added the word *multi* between the lines, so that it reads instead “*many* Muslims believe that one God is the creator of all things.”<sup>92</sup> The comment is startling in contrast to the generally accurate knowledge of Islam that follows, and Matthew rethought it before he prepared his second copy of the chronicle, where the word *multi* does not resurface.<sup>93</sup> He also saw paganism in Muslims’ worship on Friday, the day of Venus.<sup>94</sup>

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88 “ubi erant homines in parte Judaei et in parte pagani, ydolatrae, pauperes, et indocti, ubi Machometus cum sociis suis templum, in quo figmenta sua populis simplicibus exhiberet.” (Matthew Paris, 346). See *Rescriptum Christiani* 19.38-39.

89 Paris, 352. *Rescriptum Christiani* 38.1-7.

90 *Rescriptum Christiani* 38.8-39.10.

91 “Erant autem rudes homines et inculti ac simplices, et ad seducendum faciles et carnales.” (Paris, 352).

92 “Credunt multi Sarraceni unum Deum esse omium creatorem.” (Paris, 352).

93 Paris, 352 n. 2. See xv for Luard's discussion of the relationship between the Corpus Christi and Cotton manuscript.

94 *Ibid.*, 355.



### Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*

Matthew's apparent ignorance of his informant's origins, and of the relevance of the Qur'an to its arguments, contrasts starkly with the attention that Vincent gives to the reasons that the *Apology* was more authoritative than his other sources and to the Qur'an's centrality in Islam. He heavily excerpted the correspondence of al-Hashimi and al-Kindi in the chapters on the origins of Islam in the *Speculum historiale*, the historical volume of his comprehensive encyclopedia entitled *Speculum Maius*. The *Speculum's* dating is uncertain, and the variations in even the early manuscripts indicate that Vincent compiled it in stages. The most recent source that Vincent presented in his encyclopedia is John of Plano Carpini's *Ystoria Mongolorum*, published in 1248. Jarl Charpentier regarded the fact that he did not excerpt William of Rubruck's work on the Mongols as evidence that he completed the collection before 1256.<sup>95</sup> Many copies of the encyclopedia survive, and it is likely that the excerpts of the *Apology* it preserved were more widely read than the complete text. Some of the *Speculum historiale's* famous readers include Jacobus de Voragine, the anonymous author of the book of Sir John Mandeville, and Theodore Bibliander, all of whom incorporated Vincent's abridgment of the *Apology* into their own works, further enlarging its readership.<sup>96</sup> As its place in the historical volume of his encyclopedia suggests, Vincent looked to the *Apology* for historical facts and for explanations of Muslims' religious practices. He did not copy the chapters of theological argument.

Vincent begins his history of Islam with a source much less accurate than the *Apology*,

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95 Jarl Charpentier, "William of Rubruck and Roger Bacon", *Geografiska Annaler*, Vol. 17, Supplement: Hyllningsskrift Tillagnad Sven Heden (1935), 256n.

96 On Jacobus de Voragine, see González Muñoz, LXXXV. On Mandeville, see Tzanaki, 191. On Bibliander, Bobzin, 218.

which he calls a “little book about Muhammad's deceptions in places overseas”, heavy on false miracles, but he does not linger on it for long before he announces that he will “graft on a few things from a little book of the disputation of a Muslim and a Christian from Arabia to each other on the Muslims' religion and the Christians' faith.”<sup>97</sup> He explains that the text was composed in Arabic at the Amir's court before being translated into Latin by Peter of Toledo at the order of Peter the Venerable during the wars of Alfonso VII of Castile-León against Muslims in Spain (aware that glosses were often lost in transmission, Vincent customarily embedded his citations in the text).<sup>98</sup> By introducing and contextualizing the *Apology* for the reader and by quoting it closely and extensively, he set it apart from his other sources and, doubtless, intended for its instruction on Islam to make a stronger impression on the reader than the brief and fantastic documents that preceded it.

Even so, the inclusion of the other sources can shift the meaning of the *Apology*. In the complete text of the Latin *Apology*, where the author writes that Muhammad married Khadija “with the cause that you know intervening”, that “cause” or perhaps that “argument” is not entirely clear, though we are probably meant to assume that Muhammad was motivated by his own poverty and her wealth.<sup>99</sup> But Vincent has already told an alternative story of Muhammad's courtship of Khadija, from what Daniel calls the *Corazon* text, in which the widow rules over a territory called Corozania and is tricked into marrying Muhammad by his pretense that he is the

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97 “Fertur autem esse libellus in partibus transmarinis de Machometi falaciis.” “hic enim pauca libet inserere de libello disputationis cuiusdam Saraceni, & cuiusdam Christiani de Arabi super lege Saracenorum & fide Christianorum inter se.” (Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapter 40, p. 913).

98 On Vincent's in-text citation, see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, “*Statim invenire*: Scholars, Preachers, and New Attitudes to the Page” in Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1982), 209.

99 “donec duxit eam uxorem, interveniente causa quam tu scis” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 19.10-11, Vincent, Book 23, chapter 41, p. 913).

Messiah whom the Jews await.<sup>100</sup> Read in this context, the “intervening cause” could be Khadija's gullibility rather than Muhammad's greed. Most of Vincent's active changes to the *Apology* are superficial, but his omissions of crucial details, probably made for brevity's sake, occasionally alter the meaning of the text. In one case, he reduces the assassinations of Muhammad's two Jewish adversaries in the *Apology* to one and, more importantly, cuts Muhammad's commands to his named agents to do the deed, so that the *Speculum Historiale* gives the impression that Muhammad murdered the man with his own hands.<sup>101</sup> The annotator of the seventeenth-century Douai edition of the *Speculum* wrote in the margin beside it that Muhammad was a murderer.<sup>102</sup>

Vincent's choices of what to exclude also leave the reader with quite a different impression than the full text of the *Apology*. He ignored the philosophical arguments on the nature of God and proof of the Trinity that open al-Kindi's letter. Brevity and relevance seem to have dictated his decisions to cut some of the *Apology*'s many comparisons of Islam to the Judeo-Christian tradition and to other religions. The contrast between Muhammad allowing his followers license and the prophets of the Old Testament, who ordered people to refrain from sensuality,<sup>103</sup> is absent, as is the naming of Muhammad alongside Zoroaster and other false prophets who won converts by deception.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, the *Apology*'s presentation of Muhammad's failure to meet Biblical standards for prophecy almost disappears, though Vincent preserves the refutation of the legends of Muhammad's miracles. The *Apology*'s Biblical and

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100 Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapter 39, p. 912-913.

101 Ibid., Book 23, chapter 43, p. 914. *Rescriptum Christiani* 21.1-8.

102 *Rescriptum Christiani*, Gloss: “Machomet impius fuit homicida & perpetrator omnium scelerum.”

103 Ibid. 67.34-38.

104 Ibid. 60.1-15.

doctrinal claims have no bearing on his stated subject, the origins of Islam. Comparing the *Apology* to Vincent's synopsis of it, the deficiencies in the latter make it clear that Vincent did not intend for his adaptation to be used in inter-religious disputations or for converting Muslims to Christianity. Of course, this is not to say that negative assessments of Islam disappear and, though Vincent never overtly presents Christianity as a foil to Islam, it would not be difficult for readers to make their own comparisons.

Early Islamic history was too important for a universal history to ignore, so Vincent filled the lacuna with what sources he could. Emile Mâle, who used the divisions of the *Speculum Quadruplex* to frame his study of Gothic art, envisioned Vincent as a continuer of the historical thought of Augustine and Orosius, writing an essentially Christian history. Mâle assessed Vincent's attitude toward pagan history in the *Speculum Historiale* "as deserving of study only with reference to the other; it has merely value as a synchronism. . . Such subjects are really incidental."<sup>105</sup> Vincent's eagerness to return to Byzantine history, which he has interrupted with the chapters on Islam, perhaps implies that Mâle's judgment on pagan history in the *Speculum* is also true of Islamic history. By deleting the points of comparison and opposition between Christianity and Islam that were of such importance to the author of the *Apology*, Vincent manages to create a story of Islam that is as remote from his readers as was the world of pagan antiquity. The *Speculum historiale*'s dedication to Louis IX and the date of its composition (either while Louis was away on the seventh crusade or shortly after his return) suggest a possible purpose for the material on early Islam. Vincent retains at their full length the *Apology*'s accounts of Muhammad's military failures due to the lack of God's favor, and he also argues that Muslim

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105 Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: 1958), 25.

armies defeated Persia only because of the promise of martyrdom and not because God willed it.<sup>106</sup> That knowledge must have been encouraging to a crusader king.

His minimization of the speakers' voices contributes to the effect of remoteness. He does not identify which of the interlocutors is speaking first, and the passages in al-Kindi's voice make no references to the narrator's Christianity. Vincent deletes most of al-Kindi's many asides in which he praises the recipient and wishes his salvation, which Peter the Venerable had profusely imitated in the *Contra sectam*. However, he signals his shift from al-Kindi's to al-Hashimi's persona by inserting the phrase "therefore, you invite me to your sect in vain, saying. . ." <sup>107</sup> Vincent did not want the reader to forget entirely that these were letters. His introduction (based on the one written by Peter of Toledo) publicizes the *Apology's* origin as an exchange between a Christian and a Muslim at the court of the Amir al-Ma'mun, and he pointedly preserves the text's cues to the courtly context in which it was purported to have been written. Speaking in the voice of the al-Kindi, he twice refers to al-Ma'mun as "my lord."<sup>108</sup> Although he eliminates most of the first- and second-person phrases that signal the composition's stated origins, which might have interrupted the flow of his encyclopedia, he retains a few instances in which the author uses second person singular verbs. As in the case of the reference to Muhammad's marriage to Khadija, the second-person asides usually tell the reader that "you know" or "you have said to me" what he is reporting.<sup>109</sup>

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106 Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapters 42 and 45, pp. 913-915.

107 Ibid., Book 23, chapter 64, p. 921.

108 "dominus meus Emirhilmomini." (Vincent of Beauvais., Book 23, chapter 48, p. 916. *Rescriptum Christiani* 33.11-12). "misericordiam et benignitatem et clementiam domini mei Amirhilmomini." (Vincent, Book 23, chapter 63, p. 921. *Rescriptum Christiani* 68.9-10).

109 For other examples, see Book 23, chapter 42, p. 913-914, citing *Rescriptum Christiani* 20.21-25 and Vincent, Book 23, chapter 55, p. 918, citing *Rescriptum Christiani* 45.17-18, citing Qur'an 17:88.

Through al-Hashimi's letter, Vincent renders Islamic beliefs and religious observances through the voice of a Muslim, but only after he has ensured that readers know how to respond to them. In the preceding pages, they had read the Christian epistolographer's rapid-fire denunciations of Ramadan, daily prayer, circumcision, the prohibition of eating pork, polygamy and divorce, and holy war.<sup>110</sup> But placing al-Hashimi's case after al-Kindi's also has the effect of placing his statements about Islam outside a controlling Christian framework, as one example makes clear. The reader has not been prepared for the remark, told through al-Hashimi's voice, that people “who make partners for God and attribute companions to him” are destined for hell.<sup>111</sup> It would be helpful for the reader to know that this passage refers to Christians but, as d'Alverny notes, Vincent allows it to stand without explaining or arguing against it.<sup>112</sup>

Vincent reasserts the view that the revelations about Zaynab and A'isha prove that the Qur'an cannot be divine, an argument left out of Matthew Paris's rendition of the same stories. He does not consistently reproduce the *Apology's* attacks on the Qur'an or use of Qur'anic evidence. For instance, Vincent drastically abridges al-Kindi's non-narrative chapters on the Qur'an as a work of literature and as a source of authority<sup>113</sup> and, in his criticism of *jihad*, he does not raise al-Kindi's point that the Qur'an contradicts itself on the question of violence in the name of religion.<sup>114</sup> In contrast to the version in the *Chronica Majora*, Vincent's history of Islam extends beyond Muhammad's death and into the circuitous history of the Qur'an. The conventions of Latin historical writing easily accommodated Muhammad's rise to power, his

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110 Vincent of Beauvais., Book 23, chapters 58-62, pp. 919-920. *Rescriptum Christiani* 50-58.

111 “Infideles vero qui participes faciunt Deo, & pares illi attribuunt, & prophetae Dei non credunt, nec epistolam eius suscipiunt” (Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapter 67, p. 922, citing *Epistula Sarraceni* 19.1-2).

112 d'Alverny, I.97.

113 Vincent of Beauvais, Book 23, chapter 55, p. 918 for Vincent's abridgment of *Rescriptum Christiani* 44-46.

114 Ibid., Book 23, chapter 62, p. 920. *Rescriptum Christiani* 59.1-25.

battles and cruelty but, after Muhammad's death, the *Apology's* central character is a book. Vincent strikes a compromise between the demands of his source and the customs of his genre, whittling down the narrative of the Qur'an's history but including all of the important points.<sup>115</sup> Though he added nothing new to it, Vincent was the first reader of the *Apology* to make the transmission of the Qur'an a focal point of his writing on Islam, and only after he excerpted the narrative for his history did it become a popular subject among the text's more polemically minded readers, beginning with the Dominican Riccoldo of Monte Croce on the cusp of the fourteenth century. Riccoldo argued in his immensely popular *Contra Legem Saracenorum* that the Qur'an was composed over time and thus could not represent the authentic declarations first uttered by Muhammad.<sup>116</sup>

### Conclusions

Historians used the *Apology* out of necessity, because of the dearth of worthwhile Latin sources on early Islam, which they considered too significant a chapter of history to leave blank. In addition to the parts of the *Apology* on historical events, both Matthew and Vincent employed the non-narrative passages in al-Hashimi's letter in which he exhorts al-Kindi to adopt various Muslim practices, not all of which are central to Islam. That al-Hashimi's descriptions of heaven and hell are underrepresented by both authors confirms that their interest in the *Apology's* non-narrative sections coincided with the sort of cultural information that historians were expected to record about distant peoples. Vincent incorporated wholesale the equivalent passages on the

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115 Ibid., Book 23, chapters 52-54, pp. 917-918. *Rescriptum Christiani* 40-43.

116 Ibid., Book 23, chapter 13, p. 119-120.

Mongols written by John of Plano Carpini and Simon of Saint-Quentin.<sup>117</sup> In Matthew's case, the nature of his Dominican source, which expanded on the tenets of Islam, must have encouraged him to dwell on that subject. Since we know that many of the Dominicans settled in the east studied Islam and had access to the Toledan collection, we can reasonably wager that the Dominicans supplied any accurate information in the *Chronica Majora's* account that does not derive from the *Apology*. It makes sense that the historian would transmit the contents of the letter more or less in full, including parts of it not strictly historical, since the historical event that interested him was really the sending of the document to the Pope, as seen in its placement in the thirteenth century instead of the seventh.

It is also interesting that neither Matthew nor Vincent attempted to weave his contradictory sources into a coherent narrative. Their inactivity seems to indicate an admission that they were unqualified to make such judgments in their representations of a history that was foreign to them. Its foreignness comes across quite clearly through the absence of an overtly Christian perspective. Though both historians mirror the *Apology's* negative depiction of Islam, they do so without its comparisons to Biblical history and with scarcely any reference to the interactions between Christians and Muslims. As a result, Vincent's narrative in particular lacks the intimacy and urgency of Peter's *Contra Sectam*. In the process of fitting the *Apology* into historical writing, their reiterations of the book enhanced its prestige and they created a framework through which later readers read the full text of the Latin *Apology*. Many readers knew the *Apology* through adaptations such as those in the *Chronica Majora* and the *Speculum Historiale* before they ever saw the full text as it appears in the Toledan collection and,

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117 Vincent of Beauvais, Book 32.



in the case of Matthew's readers, their introduction to the *Apology* was a text at least two degrees removed from it that shows the marks of already being twice adapted to address the needs of Dominicans in the east and of an English historian. The frames created by historians led readers toward the *Apology's* (rhetorically useful) historical facts. The focus on the codification of the Qur'an shown in Vincent's encyclopedia, in contrast to Paris's complete disinterest in the Qur'an, persisted among its fourteenth- and fifteenth-century annotators. Glosses maintaining that the Qur'an did not deserve to be venerated as divinely inspired because of its sordid history of additions, amputations, and distortions are manifold in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Apology*, as we shall see in the next section.

## Chapter IV

### The Glosses on the *Apology*

#### Introduction

The glosses in all but one surviving manuscript of the *Apology* share their distribution pattern with most medieval manuscripts; in all manuscripts but one, they are most dense in the beginning of the text and most sparse at the end. But, in this case, the concentration of the glosses at the beginning is determined by the structure of the text. In al-Hashimi's exposition of Muslims' beliefs and responsibilities, the reader encounters a number of terms that are either transliterated from Arabic or else translated into a Latin word that cannot fully capture the nuances of the original. Annotators had to flesh out the background information needed to understand the *Apology*'s off-handed allusions to unfamiliar lines of thought, such as the reference to Christians as *mushrikūn*, "associators" or "participators", because trinitarianism was seen as polytheistic, or that Muslims call tithing "increase" (*augmentum*) in expectation of the greater reward that they will receive in heaven. Hence, the introduction required copious notes. The original glosses in the Arsenal manuscript (whose authors are unknown) go through al-Hashimi's letter in great detail and largely break off in al-Kindi's rebuttal, where they are less needed. Seven of the ten extant manuscripts of the *Apology* made afterwards, dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, repeat the earliest notes verbatim. Even in the three manuscripts from which the oldest glosses have disappeared, we find that their annotators attempted to solve the same problems, though they were considerably less qualified than the Arabicists behind the initial glosses.

The Latin *Apology*'s statement that the Qur'an was “so often augmented, so often diminished, so often renewed, so often varied, so often transformed, so often torn to pieces”<sup>118</sup> applies equally to that text's own afterlife. Manuscripts of the Toledan collection were riddled with omissions, substitutions, and rearrangements. An apt, if limited, analogy can be made between copying a book in the Middle Ages and re-releasing an album today. Scribes carefully edited the material as they wrote, usually trying to remain faithful to the artist's original vision, appending material that they thought was relevant or novel and occasionally, as we shall see, pointing out the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the original work. In a number of manuscripts, the *Apology* was replaced by other texts. It was literally “torn to pieces” in the redactions of Matthew Paris and Vincent of Beauvais and was truncated by Nicholas of Cusa in the codex of the Toledan collection written in his own hand. At other times, it endured metaphorical violence; the annotators did not hide their skepticism about arguments that they found weak.

### **The Glosses of Arsenal 1162**

As noted above, the glosses in the first manuscript of the Toledan collection, Arsenal 1162, are very useful devices that allow the reader to make sense of the text. In places where Arabic words are either transliterated or translated literally, the notes give their idiomatic meanings in Latin, often adopting a Christian vocabulary to do so. The annotations in Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an, the only ones in the manuscript that have been intensively studied, contain both polemic and learned remarks on Islamic belief and practice in the same

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118 “Nulla fide vel reverentia digna sit hec scriptura que totiens aucta, totiens minuta, totiens innovata, totiens variata, totiens mutata, totiens dilacerata probatur.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 43.10-11).

hand, often even in the same note.<sup>119</sup> The original notes on the Latin *Apology*, however lean decidedly toward philology rather than polemic. Some of them simply repeat the text in order to aid readers in finding their place in the manuscript. They are almost invariably neutral—though not always correct—statements of fact. These notes explain the title of Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful) and the name al-Hashimi and define the Latin transliterations of Arabic words, including surah, mosque, Quraysh, and Ramadan.<sup>120</sup> They state that Christians' belief in the Trinity has earned them the epithet “participators” among Muslims, because they are said to make partners for God.<sup>121</sup> As d'Alverny has observed, they resemble the notes that one would find in a modern critical edition and are clearly a product of the concern for disseminating accurate information about Islam.

There is no scholarly consensus on which contributors furnished which glosses. James Kritzeck thought that Peter of Toledo annotated both the Latin Qur'an and the *Apology* because of their profusion of notes in comparison to the manuscript's other contents and because he accepts Muñoz Sendino's premise that Peter of Toledo was the mastermind of the entire project.<sup>122</sup> González Muñoz suspects that Peter of Toledo and Peter of Poitiers annotated the

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119 Ibid., 73.

120 On Amir al-Mu'minin and al-Hashimi, *Epistula Sarraceni* 1.2 Gloss MS Oxford, Corpus Christi College 184 (O); Paris, BnF, lat. 6064 (E); Paris, BnF, lat. 3649 (F); Paris, BnF 14503 (D); Vaticanus latinus 4072 (V); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 335 (G). This gloss was probably original to Arsenal 1162, but the beginning of the text is broken off in that manuscript. On the Quraysh, *Epistula Sarraceni* 7.14 Gloss AOEFVG and *Rescriptum Christiani* 19.16 Gloss C, K. On Ramadan, *Epistula Sarraceni* 13.1 Gloss AOEFDV. On mosques, *Rescriptum Christiani* 19.41 Gloss AOEFDV.

121 *Epistula Sarraceni* 7.14 Gloss AOEFV, 15.2 Gloss AOEF.

122 Kritzeck, 57-58. Muñoz Sendino's premise is based on his deduction that Peter the Venerable would have designated the task to someone knowledgeable about Islamic literature, as he himself was not (certainly true), and on Peter the Venerable's statement that he caused “it to be translated by a man skilled in either language, the master Peter the Toledan” (“Feci autem eam transferri a perito utriusque linguae viro, magistro Petro Toletano”). Peter the Venerable, *Epistola de translatione sua*, in Gleij, p. 22. It is unclear whether he meant the whole collection or the *Apology* alone.

*Apology of al-Kindi* together. The annotations informing readers of the meanings of Arabic names intimate that their annotator knew Arabic, and other marginal notes reveal his knowledge of either *hadith* or Qur'an commentaries. González Muñoz thinks that Peter of Toledo was at work in the former cases and that Peter of Poitiers was the source of the notes that imply detailed knowledge of church history.<sup>123</sup>

Whoever annotated the *Apology of al-Kindi* had a strong grounding in the Qur'an that was not limited to acquaintance with Robert's translation. The annotator points out its Qur'anic quotations correctly and often. The word "Alcoran" appears in the margin next to Qur'anic quotations fifteen times in the *Epistula Sarraceni* alone,<sup>124</sup> and it recurs regularly in al-Kindi's letter. Since the translators made no attempt to regularize the *Apology's* many Qur'anic quotations with Robert's translation, we can be sure that the annotator knew the untranslated Qur'an. Later, we shall see how perplexing the discrepancies in the translations were to a fourteenth-century annotator who almost certainly knew the Qur'an only through Robert's translation. The citations were not documented in the margins of any of the other manuscripts, including those that were otherwise faithful to the prototypical notes.

The primary quality that sets the first set of glosses on the *Apology* apart from all subsequent glosses is the expertise that they demonstrate in Arabic, the Qur'an, and other sources esteemed by Muslims. Though none of the later annotators could compete with the Arabic-to-Latin translators in terms of their conversance with the primary sources, they nonetheless attempted to convey the same sort of information, even when they lacked the original glosses to

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<sup>123</sup> González Muñoz, LXXV-LXXVI.

<sup>124</sup> *Epistula Sarraceni* 7.19-22, 11.16, 11.29, 13.10-29, 17.1-16, 17.45-61, 17-18, 19-20, 20.41-9, 21.8-9, 22.8-11, 23.5-9, 24-26, 30.4-11, 30.10-11.

inform them. But, as authoritative and useful as the original glosses were, some later readers found them deficient, as attested in the additions made to the Arsenal manuscript and to other manuscripts that retained the first notes.

Readers of Arsenal 1162 from the twelfth to the seventeenth century left marks of their study of the *Apology* not only in the damage that mars its first pages but also in additional glosses. González Muñoz distinguishes the manuscript's archetypal glosses from the later additions in his edition but does not date the later notes. Not knowing when the glosses were written is problematic but at least they give an idea of the areas in which later readers found the primitive marginalia lacking. Though few of the later notes in the Arsenal manuscript are openly antagonistic, most of them point toward polemically useful passages that were overlooked by the first annotators, probably because they were too straightforward to require explanation, such as the number of wives permissible in Islam.<sup>125</sup> One reader appended to the description of nightly fast-breaking during Ramadan the outright criticism that there was “great deceitfulness in the fast.”<sup>126</sup> The first annotators of the Arsenal manuscript, although very thorough and knowledgeable, were silent on the transmission of the Qur'an and added nothing on the alleged mutations of the Bible. One later reader remedied its silence on *tahrif*, commenting that “Muslims say that we have corrupted our scriptures” and that Christian scripture contains no novelties.<sup>127</sup>

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125 *Epistula Sarraceni* 24.1 Gloss A1, 24.3 Gloss A1.

126 “Magna in ieiunio lu[b]ricitas.” (*Epistula Sarraceni* 13.22 Gloss A1).

127 “dicunt sarraceni nos scripturas corrupisse.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 82.4 Gloss A1). “nihil a nobis immutatem in ea que ab ipsis accepimus.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 97.11).

### **The Glosses in Later Manuscripts with the Original Notes from Arsenal 1162**

The new glosses found in other manuscripts reveal a fascination with its historical arguments not found in Arsenal 1162. The glosses in the Arsenal manuscript had made no references to Muhammad's military campaigns and, though the other manuscripts leave the chapters strictly devoted to that subject unglossed, except for one "nota" to a remark on the inhuman brutality that spurred the expeditions, they do refer to the prophet's wars elsewhere in the manuscripts.<sup>128</sup> Even more glosses highlight the narrative of the Qur'an's corruption. Glosses in five manuscripts report, each in its own words, that many people made many Qur'ans.<sup>129</sup> Even when their glosses do not deviate much from the text or add their own expertise to it, they are still significant in that they direct their readers' gaze toward the marked passages and let them know which arguments previous readers found most compelling. Where the reader of the Arsenal manuscript (and of other manuscripts that duplicated the original glosses) saw only blank space in the margins, the later manuscripts' readers saw, in a flurry of glosses, the marks of their predecessors' fascination with the sections on the damage done to the Qur'an.

### **MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6064**

The original glosses from the Arsenal manuscript survive in MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6064. This manuscript is larger than Arsenal 1162, measuring 365 x 270

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<sup>128</sup> *Rescriptum Christiani* 20-21 have no glosses in any manuscript other than MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 6064 (E), where the annotator has marked the sentence "Certe quod de brutis animalibus ipsa humani cordis naturalis affectio fieri detestatur, adeo ut pullos avium in nido repertos nullatenus occidere pro lege teneat, iste de hominibus faciebat" (21.13-15 Gloss E1).

But notes about Muhammad's wars can be seen in 29.4 Gloss E1, 31.48-50 Gloss C, 47.12 E1F, 60.21-23 Gloss C, 63.3 Gloss C.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 45.25-29 Gloss E1, F: "nota hic quod multi compilaverunt multos Alcoranos tempore Mahumet." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 45.25-29 Gloss E1 F). "nota, plures diversos Alchoranos fecerunt." (Ibid. Gloss C). Gloss M: "alii scripserunt Alchoranum, sed non sunt famam consecuti quia ventri concesserunt." (Ibid. Gloss M). "nota plures scripsisse Alchoranos." (Ibid. Gloss K).

millimeters, and was copied in the first half of the fourteenth century, probably in Avignon. It contains all of the texts in the Arsenal manuscript, as well as Robert's prologue and preface to his translation, both of which he addressed to Peter the Venerable. Though Robert's prefatory statements are not present in the earliest manuscript, they appear in most copies of the Toledan collection. This Avignonese manuscript also contains the *Liber scale Machometis*, a Latin translation of an Arabic tale about Muhammad's night journey.

A fourteenth-century reader added new notes to the original glosses in this manuscript.<sup>130</sup> This annotator was well-read, as one can see in his criticism of Muslims' leniency inserted beside an ambiguous phrase in al-Hashimi's invitation to join Islam. The text probably means that Muslims “believe in all the things that descended upon him from God in *welcoming* the law” but, using the more common meaning for the gerund *excipiendo*, it reads something like “in *making exceptions* to the law.”<sup>131</sup> The latter meaning stimulated the annotator to refer to something that he had learned about Islam from Averroes’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. The annotator interpreted Averroes’s observations on *epikeia*, the virtue of making exceptions to the law in cases where the law would cause harm, to mean that Muslims misunderstood *epikeia* and that their law “caused many evil things” as a result.<sup>132</sup> His invocation of a learned Muslim’s charge against the practices of his co-religionists shows that the annotator adeptly manipulated texts to further his arguments. This annotator was also secure enough in his own knowledge to assert a view contrary to that of the *Apology*’s author when it conflicted with what he considered

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130 González Muñoz, C-CI.

131 “testificati sunt quod Mahumet propheta est ipsius et nuntius, et crediderunt omnibus que super eum descenderunt a Deo in excipiendo legem” (*Epistula Sarraceni* 16.5).

132 “nota quod ista lex ex defectu epikeie male intellect fecit multa mala sarracenis, ut dicit Averrois in comment suo versus finem V ethicorum capitulo de epikeie.” (*Epistula Sarraceni* 16.5 Gloss E1F). González Muñoz, LXXVII.



factual information. As we shall see, his correction cheapens one of al-Kindi's most compelling arguments.

But this annotator's interaction with the text more often enhances than degrades the text's efficacy. Though equipped with the authoritative early marginalia, he read the *Apology* in a way its pseudonymous author had never intended: He eked a biography of the Christian author al-Kindi out of the anonymous work. In his analysis of the reading habits of the fifteenth-century jurist Guillaume Budé, Anthony Grafton theorizes that Budé interpreted the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through the lens of the apocryphal biographies written by Dio and Pseudo-Plutarch that accompanied it in Renaissance manuscripts. "Barnacled with substantial ancient parasites," Homer's works had a symbiotic relationship with them.<sup>133</sup> Readers' demands to know more about their authors than their texts conveyed did not originate in the Renaissance, nor did commentators' willingness to supply them.

The annotator observes that the Christian writer was nobly born, the descendant of the most prestigious Arab nation.<sup>134</sup> The imaginary Muslim author's expression of admiration for the piety of his Christian friend who, he writes, surpasses all of the other members of al-Ma'mun's household in good works, led the annotator to designate al-Kindi as a former Muslim.<sup>135</sup> The annotator does not explain the logic that led to that conclusion, but he must have found it inconceivable that a Muslim could praise a man's practice of a religion other than his own. The author of the *Liber Denudationis*, which has several arguments in common with the

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133 Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 161-164.

134 "nota genus et patriam christiani scribentis." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 69.17-20 Gloss E1). "ecce quod iste christianus fuit arabs et inter omnes arabes generosior." (Ibid. Gloss C). "unde scriptor." (Ibid. Gloss K).

135 "Et quia omnes domesticos tuos meritis antecellis, ut maneat sicut permanere in tua fide consuevisti, in memetipso dixi." (*Epistula Sarraceni* 4.11-13). "Unde ex hoc nota quod christianus iste cui libellus dirigitur per prius fuerat sarracenus." (*Epistula Sarraceni* 4.11-13 Gloss E1F1).

*Apology*, purported to be a convert from Islam, but that text is highly unlikely to have mediated the annotator's reading, since it survives in only one late Spanish manuscript and is only cited by Riccoldo of Monte Croce.<sup>136</sup> If the annotator's acquaintance with Muslim philosophers and scientists extended beyond Averroes, the name al-Kindi may have conjured another great Muslim philosopher, al-Kindi, whom the annotator assumed to be the same person as the text's Christian narrator.

Other glosses in Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 6064 incorporate the annotator's awareness of anti-Jewish polemic, in particular the condemnation of the Talmud. The first note about Jews appears in the context of al-Ma'mun's suppression of the accusations against a courtier who, according to his detractors, is pretending to be a Muslim (his religion is not specified). The Amir quotes a “proverb about a Jew” that downplays the stigma of apostasy: “A Jew is not a Jew unless he is first made a Muslim. Scarcely anyone loves his religion unless he first accepted another.” Even though it is irrelevant to al-Kindi's main point, the annotator has marked it “note the proverb of the Jews.”<sup>137</sup> This note would seem innocuous were it not coupled to the other, more aggressive glosses about Jews.

In the most innovative of the anti-Jewish arguments that he constructs from the text, the annotator abandons an otherwise compelling case made by the author rather than allow what he sees as faulty information about Jews to slip through unnoticed. Instead of upholding the text's argument that *tahrif* is impossible since Jews and Christians recognize the same scriptures, the gloss compromises it, maintaining that although “perhaps this was true in those times”, Jews

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136 Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne, 1994), 37-38.

137 “sicut de iudeo proverbium dicit: iudeus nisi postquam efficitur sarracenus iudeus non est.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 33.17-18). “nota proverbium iudeorum.” (Ibid. Gloss E1F).

have appended “many useless things” to the Bible since then.<sup>138</sup> Even in checking the imperfections of the *Apology*, the annotator was cautious not to malign al-Kindi's authority; hence, he absolved the author of the blunder by positing that the Jews' additions to scripture occurred after al-Kindi's time. The annotator must have been influenced by the disputations held by Christians in the previous century, in which the Talmud was judged blasphemous and ordered to be burned. But his caveat reveals more than his animosity toward Jews. It adheres to a general trend of defanging the arguments of the *Apology* in light of what is believed to be more accurate information.

#### **MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3649**

The *Apology* is the only work from the Toledan collection within manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3649, a fourteenth-century manuscript that belonged to a Celestine monastery in Avignon. Another pair of polemical letters, attributed to the Rabbis Samuel and Isaac, comprises the rest of the book. The text of the *Apology* in this manuscript descends directly from 6064, and its scribe copied most of the annotations in the exemplar, both the Arsenal glosses and the additions evaluated above.<sup>139</sup> He replicates all of the glosses that construct the author's identity. Perhaps to increase its symmetry with the second set of letters, whose interlocutors are a Jew and a formerly Jewish convert to Christianity, the annotator recounts that al-Kindi converted to Christianity from Islam.<sup>140</sup> His usual reproduction of his exemplar's notes makes his rare departures from them all the more striking. Although the annotator of 3649 copies the imperative to “note the proverb of the Jews” recited by al-

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138 “hoc erat verum forte istis temporibus, postea vero perfidy iudei restante nullo delira multa falsificaverunt in Biblia quod et sentit auctor in fine huius marginis.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 82.11 Gloss E1).

139 González Muñoz, CII.

140 *Epistula Sarraceni* 4.11-13 Gloss E1F.

Ma'mun,<sup>141</sup> the caveat that Jews actually have corrupted their scriptures disappears. It is highly unlikely that this is simply a scribal error. The inclusion of the rabbis' letters in the same volume with the *Apology* must have heightened the scribe's consciousness of the anti-Jewish polemic in the *Apology*. Furthermore, the annotator of 3649 had little reason to doubt the factuality of the earlier annotator's comment that "many useless things" have entered the Jews' scriptures and must have been acquainted with the accusations against the Talmud. It is entirely probable that this annotator, who had followed his precursor's lead in carefully building up the author's authority, did not wish to intercede by communicating al-Kindi's ignorance, and thus abasing his authority.

The most arresting feature of these two manuscripts is the level of the annotators' investigation of the *Apology*. The annotator of BnF, lat. 6064 tracked down whatever clues he could find about its author and even ventured that he was a convert, which he believed al-Hashimi's letter to have implied though neither letter states it explicitly. His reading of the Muslim philosopher Averroes governed his understanding of what he read in the *Apology*, and he informed future readers of his interpretation of the text in light of Averroes. He was not so cowed by the *Apology*'s authority that he could not correct what he considered its errors and, at the same time, criticize Jews at the expense of the polemic against Islam. The annotator of its daughter manuscript welcomed the biographical comments that he found in his predecessor's notes, but chose not to repeat a gloss that contradicted the *Apology*.

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141 "nota proverbium iudeorum." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 33.17-18 Gloss E1F).

### **The Glosses in a Family of Manuscripts without the Original Notes from Arsenal 1162**

The glosses in manuscripts Paris BnF lat. 3393, Kues Hospitalbibliothek 108, and Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana C. 201, identified by González Muñoz as a family, are as innovative as those in BnF lat. 6064. The absence of the original glosses in these manuscripts has led González Muñoz to posit an intermediary manuscript, now lost, from which they descend.<sup>142</sup> The explanations of unfamiliar terms in the letter attributed to al-Hashimi that appeared in the other manuscripts are absent from them. It seems strange that, at some point, one or more copyists disregarded notes whose utility is obvious. But Richard and Mary Rouse observe, on the disappearance of the finding mechanisms in Papias's eleventh-century dictionary (which we only know about from his prologue) that scribes must have found his novel system of navigating through the text too foreign to be useful.<sup>143</sup> Whatever the reason for the absence of early notes in the faulty manuscript they copied, the annotators of this group attempted to retrieve the information that they lacked. They were further removed from the tradition of eastern Christian polemic against Islam and less conscious of Muslims' grounds for rejecting Christianity but, by highlighting factual information rather than argument and by pointing out places where the *Apology's* claims about Islam depart from those made in Islamic sources, they reveal that what Muslims actually believed mattered to the annotators and that they hesitated to accept a Christian authority when it contradicted the ultimate authority on Islam.

### **MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 3393**

The late fourteenth-century MS Paris, BnF, lat. 3393, which contains Robert's translation of the Qur'an, the *Apology*, and the rest of the sources that made up the Toledan collection, is the

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<sup>142</sup> González Muñoz, CIII-CXII, CXXI-CXXIII.

<sup>143</sup> Rouse and Rouse, 203.

earliest surviving manuscript of this family. It would eventually belong to Charles X.<sup>144</sup> It was produced in the late fourteenth century though its geographical provenance is uncertain. Without recourse to the original glosses, an annotator contemporary to the scribe sought to clarify many of the same subjects that the annotators of the Arsenal manuscript had, but did not possess their direct knowledge of the material. The most interesting of his marks show that the annotator flipped through the pages of the codex as he read the *Apology*, interested in verifying al-Kindi with the words of the Qur'an. Twice, he explained that he could not find support for its statements in the Qur'an. He also independently attempted to flesh out the writer's life from the biographical hints that he excavated from the text. Like most of the annotators, he almost invariably referred to the correspondents as "the Muslim" and "the Christian" rather than al-Hashimi and al-Kindi, but this does not imply that he lacked interest in the authors as individuals.

He is the only annotator to fill in biographical detail about the Christian's Muslim correspondent, rendered as a noble and a great leader.<sup>145</sup> The detective work characteristic of this annotator led him to formulate the most comprehensive biography of the *Apology's* anonymous author. Al-Kindi, he tells us, was an expert in Arabic, who lived in the Arabic-speaking dar al-Islam.<sup>146</sup> He also picks up the text's references to al-Kindi's descent from a noble Arab family<sup>147</sup> and to the author's book against the Arians, which proved him a worthy guide in combating

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144 González Muñoz, CIII. *Paris Bibliothèque Nationale Catalogue General des Manuscrits Latins*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1996), 338-9.

145 "scio equidem quod magnum tibi Deus dederit principatum, quem in domo generis tui posuit, unde precor Deum ut illum tibi per multa tempora servet." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 69.6-8). "ecce ista machometista magnus princeps et nobilis fuit." (Ibid. Gloss C).

146 "nota istum christianum fuisse peritissimum in lingua Arabica, quia ei vicinus fuit in situ habitacionis." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 46.5 Gloss C). "Auctor peritissimus arabum." (Ibid. Gloss K).

147 "ecce quod iste christianus fuit arabs et inter omnes arabes generosior." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 69.17-20 Gloss C).

heresy.<sup>148</sup> The interest in historical data that characterizes the later glosses is also present here. The annotator attempted to calculate when the narrator lived in relation to the events that he reported about the standardization of the Qur'an during the times of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthman, and Ali. He concluded that the author probably did not live long after the time of the third or fourth caliph, which would have put him in the seventh century.<sup>149</sup> The notes portray al-Kindi as an ideal escort into Islam and its refutation: He was a high-born and educated Arab who lived in a region where he was surrounded by Muslims, had a track record of disputing heretics, and (in the other strain) might have been an ex-Muslim. His noble birth contrasts with the lowly status of Muhammad, identified as a camel-driver.<sup>150</sup>

Like Vincent, the annotator of Paris 3393 included contradictory interpretations without reconciling them. This is most clear in his response to the text's indication that the abundance of Christian martyrs and complete lack of Muslim martyrs proves the superiority of Christianity. First, he restates the point "that no one in Muhammad's sect has suffered martyrdom."<sup>151</sup> But immediately thereafter he sets up a contrast between Muslim and Christian martyrs. The annotator had read, in an earlier chapter of the *Apology*, an explanation of why God had allowed Muhammad's early followers, if they were impious, to succeed against the Sassanid Empire. Al-Kindi concludes that Persia's wickedness required it to be destroyed and that God chose his agents in this task without respect to their virtue. In this context, he put forward the idea that the

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148 "nota, iste christianus scripsit libellum contra Arrium." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 103.22 Gloss C).

149 "satis videtur quod iste christianus fuit non multum post illos tres vel 4or reges succesores Machometis." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 43.12 Gloss C).

150 "Ita ergo vixit usque quo pervenit ad servitium camelorum Hadige, filie Huleit, cuius factus fuerat mercennarius, et profiscebatur cum camelis in Siriam et in alia loca, donec duxit eam uxorem, interveinente causa quam tu scis." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 19.8-11). "nota quod fuit mercenarius Hadighe et servitor camelorum." (Ibid. Gloss C).

151 "quod nullus in secta Mahumet martirium passus est." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 62.1-2 Gloss C).

warriors were motivated by Muhammad's promise that death in battle would secure them entry into heaven.<sup>152</sup> Thus, the annotator responded that "although, according to the holy scripture there were nearly infinite thousands of martyrs in the city of Rome and in Europe, nevertheless, according to his [al-Kindi's] writing, many appear to have been martyred by the kings of the Persians."<sup>153</sup> The annotator thought that the construal of heroes in the war against Persia as martyrs was worth mentioning without condemning or clarifying.

This annotator's most tantalizing glosses occur in the chapter on Muhammad's marriages. We know from its frequent repetition that other Christians who read the *Apology* considered Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab a powerful indictment of both Muhammad and the Qur'an itself.<sup>154</sup> If the messages of the Qur'an were created to cater to the whims of the messenger, then the book could not be divinely inspired. The annotator must have been aware of the ubiquity and persuasiveness of the story, yet he disarms the *Apology's* argument by alerting the reader to the fact that, "I do not find those words in my Qur'an."<sup>155</sup> Because of these glosses, González Muñoz envisions the annotator as a rare individual, a fourteenth-century Latin reader who knew Arabic and went through the *Apology* with an Arabic Qur'an in hand.<sup>156</sup> But that hypothesis is the less likely of two possible explanations. The annotator had Robert of Ketton's translation of the Qur'an at his fingertips in the same volume. Since the Qur'anic passages in the Latin *Apology* were translated independently of Robert and since the two translations are radically different,<sup>157</sup>

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152 *Rescriptum Christiani* 47.1-40.

153 "licet secundum sacram scripturam in urbe Roma et in Europa fere infinita milia martirum fuerunt, tamen iuxta scripta istius plures a regibus Persarum martirizati videntur." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 63.3).

154 Daniel, 97-98. Tolán, 29, 149-150.

155 "non reperio ista verba in Alchoranico meo." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 24. 11-13 Gloss C).

156 González Muñoz, LXXVI.

157 d'Alverny, I.89.



he could not have found exactly the same Latin anywhere in the two texts. Thus, he could not have recognized the *Apology's* quotation of Qur'an 33:37-38.

Next, the familiar slander of the prophet's marriage to Zaynab is joined to another tale of Muhammad inventing a revelation in order to silence protests about his marriages. The *Apology* recounts Ali's accusations against A'isha and Muhammad's hasty defense of his wife's honor, again falsely claiming to have received an inspired message on the subject, and points out the animosity between the families of A'isha and Ali because of his insult to her.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the Arabic *Apology*, the Latin translation goes so far as to claim that A'isha actually committed adultery with Safwan ibn al-Mu'attal and had Muhammad's knowledge and consent.<sup>159</sup> But, where the text incriminates the Qur'an, citing it as saying "the woman is innocent, and this was divinely revealed to him," the annotator again leaves a marginal note on his failure to find these words in his Qur'an.<sup>160</sup>

These words do not in fact appear in the Qur'an, and the surah interpreted to maintain A'isha's innocence is oblique to anyone not saturated in Islamic tradition.<sup>161</sup> Since it begins by outlining the consequences of adultery, even one not familiar with the writings on A'isha might reasonably guess that the "slander" condemned in the following verses is a charge of adultery. But the Qur'an speaks against people who "concocted that slander" against a defendant who is not identified by name, as Muhammad's wife, or even as a woman.<sup>162</sup> The difficulty of noticing the Qur'anic precedent explains why, unlike the revelation concerning Zaynab, this part of

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158 *Rescriptum Christiani* 24.19-32.

159 Ibid. 24.20-22. Daniel, 101.

160 "Postmodum vero dicit in Alchoran mulierem illam esse innocentem, et hoc sibi divinitus revelatum."  
(*Rescriptum Christiani* 24.31-32). "non reperio hec verba in Alchorano meo." (Ibid. Gloss C).

161 Qur'an 24 is not used in the text.

162 Qur'an 24:11-18.

Muhammad's life did not spur a corpus of attacks. In both instances, the *Apology* combines two of Christian polemicists' favorite charges against Muhammad: If held to Christian standards of chastity, he sinned boldly and, worse, he falsified revelations out of self-interest.

The annotator's interest in Muhammad's marriages, the subject of both passages he did not find, is apparent. Other aspects of the prophet's life, especially his social status, intrigued him as well but are not checked against the Qur'an. Though the Qur'an does not state that Muhammad tended camels for pay in his youth or that Ali surpassed him in nobility, the annotator acknowledges them without further comment.<sup>163</sup> Of all the details of Muhammad's life, the only ones that he attempted to track down were the accusations that he falsified revelations to defend his marriages. Surely, the popularity of the condemnation that Muhammad inserted verses into the Qur'an for his own convenience spurred the annotator to read this section closely. The crux of the matter is that these verses are purportedly found in the Qur'an and, if true, would damn the Qur'an beyond hope of redemption. The annotator calls into question only the presence in the Qur'an of the statements allegedly uttered by Muhammad, and does not express doubt that the events (Muhammad's marriage to another man's wife and his protection of the adulterous A'isha from her accusers) occurred as the *Apology* presents them. In fact, he repeats the statement that A'isha's and Ali's families bore long-held resentment to each other immediately before he notes that he does not find the revelation about A'isha in the Qur'an.<sup>164</sup>

The annotator of BnF 3393 not only looked up the verses about Muhammad's wives but also was concerned about portraying the Qur'an's contents accurately. Although the glosses in the earliest manuscript often mark Qur'anic passages as such, references to the Qur'an—outside of

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163 *Rescriptum Christiani* 19.9 Gloss C, 39.13 Gloss C.

164 *Ibid.* 24.30 Gloss C.

the chapter on its transmission—are very rare in the later manuscripts. It is difficult to draw conclusions about this annotator's intentions and attitude toward the text from the elusive phrase “I do not find these [or those] words in my Qur'an.” We cannot know what the annotator hoped to find when searching his copy for the relevant verses, nor can we know for certain whether he failed to recognize the versions of these incidents in the Qur'an or whether he objected to what he perceived as the author's distortions of those passages. Perhaps he was demonstrating the same sense of triumph over the Qur'an through his knowledge of it that Peter the Venerable seems to have had on behalf of his translators. While the insinuation of intimacy with the Qur'an does make him sound more authoritative, it is telling that he says only that he himself cannot find the verses and does not deny outright that they could be found by someone else. Other medieval annotators were not so demure in their remarks on misquotations: The Franciscan annotator of Andrew of St. Victor's Biblical commentary, for example, wrote “falsum est” when the author misquoted 1 Samuel 2:1.<sup>165</sup>

His choice of words might stem from the knowledge that his reach exceeded his grasp—perhaps he was neither skillful enough in searching his Qur'an nor acquainted with the Islamic tradition necessary to understand the story of Zayd and Zaynab or to recognize the trial of A'isha in surah twenty-four—or testify to his belief in the slipperiness of the Qur'an. By specifying *my* Qur'an, he alludes to the belief that contradictory Qur'ans were in circulation, a perspective made plausible by the *Apology's* narrative of the compilation and alleged corruption of the Qur'an, which the annotations in all of the later manuscripts (and not those in Arsenal 1162) emphasize.

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165 Frans Van Liere, “Andrew of St. Victor, Jerome, and the Jews: Biblical Scholarship in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance”, *Scripture and Pluralism: Reading the Bible in Religiously Plural Worlds*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan and Thomas E. Burman (Leiden, 2005), 70.

Thus, the annotator may mean that, although the copy available does not contain the passage, someone else's might since, as he notes, other prophets in Muhammad's time "made many dissimilar Qur'ans."<sup>166</sup> Even the fact that he turned to the Qur'an, which he wrote was full of "remarkable corrections and changes"<sup>167</sup> to check al-Kindi's accuracy affirms that, whatever his specific goals in studying the *Apology*, he deemed it necessary to acknowledge Islam's holy text as the standard of what Muslims should believe and to present Islam in such a way that Muslims would be able to recognize it. Strawmen would not do for his purposes.

The annotator of this fourteenth-century manuscript had read the extensive history of the Qur'an given in the *Apology* and yet consulted his own Qur'an when in doubt about the *Apology*'s contents. As stated before, the collection that he copied underwent the same sorts of revisions that the *Apology* attributes to the Qur'an though, of course, no one considered the contents of the volume to have been revealed by God. Still, its copyists and readers knew from their own work that books were mutable, continuously re-shaped by human hands, so that no two should be expected to be exactly alike. Their use of the materials in the collection attests to their faith that change did not automatically render the assembled texts useless. Though aware of the charge of its corruption, he recognized the Qur'an as the ultimate source of authority on Islam. These general observations do not solve the problem of why the annotator chose to check only these two stories against his Qur'an and to squander their potential as propaganda for the next reader by reporting the results. Perhaps the annotator emphasizes the absences that he discovers in the Qur'an with the intent of redeeming the original text of the Qur'an itself. The insinuation that a

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166 "nota, plures diversos Alchoranos fecerunt." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 45.25-29 Gloss C).

167 "ecce mirabiles correctiones et mutaciones libri Alchoran et legis saracenorum." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 42.1 Gloss C).

medieval annotator might believe that the Qur'an's ur-text had spiritual value may strike the reader as dubious but, in what follows on Nicholas of Cusa, we shall see that Nicholas openly voiced his belief, informed by the *Apology*, that one could remove the Jewish and Nestorian accretions to produce a prototypical Qur'an that attested to the “universal faith” presented in the Gospels.<sup>168</sup> If the anonymous annotator of BnF lat. 3393 had written a book comparable to Nicholas's *Cribratio*, discerning what he meant would be much easier.

But we have only his glosses, and a modern reader is no better equipped to distinguish the reasons for these annotations, which privilege the Qur'an over the *Apology* as a source of information on Islam, than were medieval readers. But that ambivalence is telling; the notes leave the text open to multiple interpretations while guarding the reader against factual error. When Robert Graves wrote that “the scholar is a quarry-man, not a builder, and all that is required of him is that he should quarry cleanly,” he intended to denigrate research as dull work only necessary to give fodder to poets.<sup>169</sup> But the annotator under consideration might have seen the same statement as a fitting (and not unflattering) description of the task before him. He worked to clear away the misconceptions that the *Apology* might have engendered and to provide readers with the raw materials to form their own judgments on the text and on Islam. Unfortunately, the manuscript believed to be copied from BnF 3393 (MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana) does not give us a clear sense of its annotator's reaction to the notes about not being able to find the Qur'anic verses. He evades the question by leaving only blank space beside the passages that his predecessor had marked.

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168 González Muñoz, XC. See also my discussion of Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani* later in this paper.

169 Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: a historical grammar of poetic myth* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 224.

### MS Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C-201

We have already seen that the most contentious gloss in BnF 6064, which asserted that Jews were in fact guilty of *tahrif*, was not copied into its daughter text. In the fifteenth-century manuscript Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana C-201, we again find an annotator unwilling to reproduce glosses in which his predecessor discarded the *Apology's* arguments. Its annotator did not copy the remarks on not being able to find the passages of the Qur'an on Muhammad's marital scandals, nor did he add anything new to the stories of Zaynab and A'isha. Likewise, the interpretation of the word "martyr" so that it might include the war dead does not recur in the Ambrosiana manuscript. Silence at the points where their annotators undermine the text is significant if puzzling. By neither acknowledging the arguments against the text's claims nor disproving them, he leaves the reader without insight into possible problems with the *Apology*.

The Milan annotator's silence on Muhammad's false revelations about his wives is not typical of his work; he seems to have been especially interested in marriage and sexuality, a sub-field of his larger interest in Islamic culture and society. His marks on al-Hashimi's introductions to Islamic customs are more copious than any of the other manuscripts except Arsenal 1162. He made note of several references to marriage and wives in the text, including the *houris* whom the text calls wives.<sup>170</sup> This annotator was not alone in turning to the *Apology* for information on Muslims' marriages. In the early thirteenth century, William of Auvergne had mined al-Kindi and the Latin translation of the Qur'an for his comparison of current Christian monogamy with Old Testament and Islamic polygamy.<sup>171</sup> The Milan annotator's silence on the revelations invented to

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170 *Epistula Sarraceni* 13.27, 17.19, 18.3-4, 24.1, 24.3, *Rescriptum Christiani* 12.13-14, 25.1.

171 Peter Biller, *The Measure of Multitude: Population in Medieval Thought* (New York, Oxford University Press,

sanction the prophet's marriages is conspicuous. Although he suppresses suspicion about the authenticity of the Qur'an's words on Zaynab and A'isha, he too quibbles with the text on the subject of Muhammad's wives, albeit in a clarification of a relatively inconsequential detail rather than a correction. When the *Apology* counts seventeen women as the prophet's wives, the Milan manuscript distinguishes between his fifteen wives and his two slaves (Muhammad is traditionally held to have married twelve or thirteen women, though he was not married to all of them at the same time).<sup>172</sup> The annotator easily could have extracted polemical content from the quantity of Muhammad's wives, but he exercises remarkable restraint. The distinction between "free-born wives" and slaves makes the prophet look neither better nor worse in Christian eyes, but shows that the annotator was concerned to accurately reflect Islamic thought on the matter and perhaps also to prove his own expertise.

### **Nicholas of Cusa's Glosses and his *Cribratio Alkorani***

The last manuscript in the family, Kues, Hospitalbibliothek 108, belonged to the philosopher and prolific writer Nicholas of Cusa. For his personal copy of the Toledan collection, Nicholas transcribed all of the documents in his exemplar but he cut the beginnings of all of them except for the two components written by Peter the Venerable: the *Summa totius haeresis* and his letter to Bernard of Clairvaux. In most cases, Nicholas lopped off only the first sentence or two, in which the author gave his name and explained his project. In the case of the *Apology*, however, he omitted the imaginary Muslim's letter altogether. Though the manuscript probably derives from the same non-extant source as that from which Paris, lat. 3393 was copied,

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2001), 62.

172 "habuit XV uxores ingenuas et duas ancillas." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 25.1 Gloss M).

Nicholas's notes have very little verbatim overlap with the extant related manuscripts<sup>173</sup> but often make similar remarks in the same places as the others. James Biechler has noted that the frequency of Nicholas's annotations varied widely from one text to the next, even within one volume,<sup>174</sup> and his codex of the Toledan collection is no exception. He transcribed the original remarks in the margins of Robert of Ketton's translation in his own hand, and added to it a profusion of new notes.<sup>175</sup> His copy of the *Apology*, however, does not retain its original glosses, which is one of the factors that led González Muñoz to postulate that his text shared a common source, now lost, with manuscript Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, latin 3393.<sup>176</sup> In one respect, his glosses are strikingly like those that we have surveyed in the other manuscripts of the same family. Nicholas too draws attention to the expertise of its author, whom he extols as the “most skilled of the Arabs.”<sup>177</sup> He wrote the brief explanation “whence the writer” to mark the author's point about the nobility of his lineage and, along with the others in the family, he marked the author's claim to have written another book against Arianism.<sup>178</sup>

But he left its margins almost entirely void of either explicit invective or explanation. Since the manuscript was a personal copy, Nicholas only needed to make sense of the text for himself and not for future readers. Much of his note-taking must have taken place in his head instead of on the paper and, as a result, the reasons why he marked specific passages with a “nota” are not comprehensible by themselves. González Muñoz understandably holds that

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173 The exceptions are *Rescriptum Christiani* 10.6 Gloss A1, E1, C, M, K: “Unum tribus modis dicitur.” 74.1 Gloss A1, K: “de cultura crucis.”

174 James E. Biechler, “Three Manuscripts on Islam from the Library of Nicholas of Cusa”, *Manuscripta* (St. Louis, Mo. 1983), vol. 27, no. 2, p. 99.

175 González Muñoz, LXXVI. Burman, *Reading the Qur'an in Latin Christendom*, 180.

176 González Muñoz, CXXI.

177 “auctor peritissimus arabum”. (*Rescriptum Christiani* 46.5 Gloss K).

178 “unde scriptor”. (*Rescriptum Christiani* 69.17-20 Gloss K). “nota scriptorem alium librum contra Arrium scripsisse.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 103.22 Gloss K).



Nicholas did not leave particularly interesting observations in its margins<sup>179</sup>, but his notes have the advantage of being the only ones (perhaps aside from the originals) that can be compared to their author's re-workings of material from the *Apology* in his own writing. In his *Cribratio Alkorani*, a book in which he “sifts” the Qur’an, separating those of its contents that affirm Christianity from those that contradict it, Nicholas draws on several of the themes explored in the *Apology*, most prominently the Qur'an's authorship, the oneness of the Trinity, and the physicality of Muslim descriptions of God and heaven.

Nicholas's understanding of the texts in the Toledan collection is often strikingly unorthodox: For example, he approvingly adopts the vocabulary ascribed to Muhammad in his dialogue with the four Jews in the *Doctrina Machometi*.<sup>180</sup> His unorthodox ideas about Islam are also visible in another anthology that belonged to him, British Library MS Additional 19952, in which his notes on a work attributed to William of Tripoli argue against its author, making a case that the Qur'an's contradictions to Christianity were equivocations necessary for Muhammad to hold an audience's attention.<sup>181</sup> Nicholas's criticisms of William of Tripoli are very much in keeping with the *Cribratio*'s statement that Muhammad had to present his preaching in the guise of new prophecy because of his associates' hostility to Christianity. Although Nicholas does not correct the *Apology* in its marginalia, as he does with William of Tripoli, he contests some facets of it in his original work.

Nicholas of Cusa is unique in omitting al-Hashimi's letter from his copy of the *Apology*. Its absence attests to Nicholas's conviction that the first letter merely introduced al-Kindi's

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179 González Muñoz, LXXVIII.

180 James E. Biechler, “Nicholas of Cusa and Muhammad: A Fifteenth-Century Encounter” in *Downside Review* 101 (1983), n. 342, 50-59.

181 Biechler, “Nicholas of Cusa and Muhammad”, 56.

response and was less relevant to his purposes than the other documents in the Toledan collection. Furthermore, the omission signals quite a departure from the views of earlier annotators, who made many more marginal notes proportionally in the first letter than in the second. Whereas, two hundred years before, Vincent of Beauvais had recycled only the *Apology's* history of early Islam and al-Hashimi's descriptions of Muslims' religious practices, Nicholas of Cusa cut the opening letter of the *Apology* and dwelled instead on al-Kindi's philosophical exertions. Though he reversed the encyclopedist's choice of what to excerpt, both scholars pruned the text of material that they considered extraneous to their purposes. Nicholas's deletion of the introductory letter fits with his *Cribratio Alkorani*, which does not systematically outline the central tenets and practices of Islam, for which the Muslim's letter would have been most enlightening. Rather, Nicholas arranged his chapter in an order determined by his arguments, and he informs the reader about Islam gradually throughout the work, wherever it suits his aims. The *shahada* (profession of faith), for example, does not appear until the last of the three books.<sup>182</sup> The *Cribratio* attests both that he used the *Rescriptum Christiani* to form his arguments and that his attention to some passages in the *Apology* led him to conclusions that departed from the intentions of its author in novel ways.

Under the influence of the author of the *Apology*, as well as Thomas Aquinas and Ramon Lull, Nicholas of Cusa espoused his method of judging religions by "reason."<sup>183</sup> Thus, it is not coincidental that he and Lull adopted the same arguments from the *Apology* to the same ends. In the middle third of the *Cribratio*, Nicholas sets out to prove Christian beliefs, and especially the

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182 Nicholas of Cusa. *Cribratio Alkorani*, ed. Ludwig Hagemann. Vol. VIII of *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: F. Meiner Verlag, 1986). Book 3, chapter 3, pp. 136-138.

183 Bobzin, 63-64.

Trinity, by means of philosophical arguments. Immersed in scholastic literature, he borrows both terminology and arguments from Aquinas in the chapters on the nature of God.<sup>184</sup> He also recalls the *Apology's* evidence for the Trinity and oneness of God and of Jesus's place in the Godhead. In his copy of the *Apology*, he noted in the margin “that God is one in substance, not in number, but is called triune in number” and “the triune God comprises all species of number.”<sup>185</sup> He also marked al-Kindi's employment of the substantive and accidental characteristics of God to determine that he must be both triune and one.<sup>186</sup> Nicholas discusses the same attributes as al-Kindi (God is living, wise, and powerful) in order to introduce his chapters on the nature of God.<sup>187</sup>

He follows the example of both al-Kindi and the patristics by reading the references to God in the plural in both the Old Testament and the Qur'an as proof of the Trinity, although only one of the specific verses that he cites (Genesis 1:26) appears in the *Apology*. Unlike Peter the Venerable, he does not explicitly theorize that Muslims should accept the truth of the Bible. Nicholas knew his Qur'an well enough not only to uphold the logic of the *Apology* but also to independently corroborate it by providing his own examples of God speaking in the plural in the Qur'an's verses on the creation of the world and humans.<sup>188</sup> He spent ten chapters explaining why Muslims should recognize the Trinity, in which he adopted the *Apology's* argument that God's three essential traits—wisdom, life, and power—prove that his substance is triune, and he

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184 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 2, chapter 2, pp. 75-7, chapter 5, p. 81, chapter 7, p. 84, et cetera.

185 “Nota quod Deus est unus in substantia, non in numero, sed trinus in numero dicitur.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 10.43-45 Gloss K). “Deus trinus complectitur omnes species numeri.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 10.50-51 Gloss K).

186 “Nota bene.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 13.13-17 Gloss K).

187 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 2, chapters 2 and 5, pp. 75-77, 81-3.

188 *Rescriptum Christiani* 14, *Cribratio Alkorani*, Book 2, chapter 3, p. 79. Qur'an 77:20, 51:47.

explained the meanings of the traits in the same ways as the author of the *Apology*.<sup>189</sup> He also reiterates the argument that the Qur'an obligates Muslims to accept Jesus's divinity.<sup>190</sup> He clearly perceived the *Apology's* proofs of the Trinity and of other aspects of Christian belief (presented near the beginning of al-Kindi's letter) as its most important contribution.

While his adaptation of al-Kindi's argument for the Trinity is predictable, he sometimes drew conclusions from the *Apology* that its author did not endorse. For example, when the Christian narrator of the *Apology* refuses ritual washing on the basis of Jesus's example when, confronted by Pharisees, he would not wash his hands as tradition demanded, it is clear that he does not consider Islamic ablution virtuous. Nicholas marked the passage "de locione" but, like many of his other marginal notes, this one does not invite the reader into his thought process.<sup>191</sup> It resurfaces in the *Cribratio* among the several examples of praiseworthy statements on chastity that Nicholas saw in the Qur'an. He cites its praise of Mary and the virgin birth (which he had signaled with a "nota" in the *Apology*) and of John the Baptist and Zachariah (the verses about whom are discussed immediately after those about Mary in the *Apology*) and also admires the practice of ritual bathing ("lotio") between sex and prayer.<sup>192</sup>

But Nicholas observed that, in contrast to these virtuous statements, the Qur'an also permitted carnality. He wrote "nota" next to al-Kindi's account of the use of that sensual paradise as a lure that attracted uncultured people to the religion.<sup>193</sup> That logic appealed to him, but not in the way that one might expect. According to the *Cribratio Alkorani*, the Qur'an's

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189 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 2, chapters 2-11, pp. 77-90. *Rescriptum Christiani* 7-14.

190 Ibid., chapter 12, p. 94. *Rescriptum Christiani* 17.

191 *Rescriptum Christiani* 51, citing Matthew 15.

192 Ibid., 84-85, 84.3-7 Gloss K.

193 Ibid., 91.8-10 Gloss K.

concession to human weakness of intellect was not meant to deceive but to communicate spiritual truth to people who had difficulty understanding abstractions. In fact, rather than goading people into evil, the aim of the portrayal of God as having a body was “that rough people, subdued by the Qur'an, might lift up their mind for reflecting on spiritual things.”<sup>194</sup>

When he read in the *Apology* that the sensual heaven of the Qur'an was intended to lure simple people, he construed it as evidence of Islam's ability to conjure religious feeling from people who were not used to thinking philosophically.

His reading of Avicenna in Latin translation may have spurred him toward this idea, since Nicholas cited him as a Muslim who recognized the superiority of intellectual over physical pleasures and who wrote that knowledge of God was a believer's utmost happiness.<sup>195</sup> In the second of the *Cribratio*'s three books, Nicholas contemplates the assertions that Muslims will have sex in heaven, which puzzled him because he found the Qur'an otherwise accurate on matters such as the day of judgment and the afterlife. Moved by a *pia interpretatio* (a merciful or pious interpretation), the phrase by which Nicholas meant his process of distinguishing the truths of the Qur'an from its falsehoods, he realized that people, Christians as well as Muslims, could only understand intangible things through similes.<sup>196</sup> This is one of four times in the *Cribratio Alkorani* when he invokes “merciful interpretation”, which enables him to see truth in Islam where others saw lies. Nicholas's other merciful interpretations led him to the conclusions that the Qur'an does not refute the Trinity, nor does it necessarily forbid the possibility of Christ's

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194 Nicholas of Cusa, Liber 1, Capitulum 20, p. 71. “Haec sic dicta sint, ut rudiores Alkorano subditi elevent mentem ad spiritualia considerando deum spiritum imitari per omnem substantiam quodque substantialia.”

195 Nicholas of Cusa, Liber 2, Capitulum 18, p. 124.

196 Ibid., Liber 2, Capitulum 19, pp. 124-125.

crucifixion and resurrection, though he admits that this is hard to discern from the text.<sup>197</sup>

The *Apology*'s narrative of the composition and corruption of the Qur'an after Muhammad's death clearly made an impact on Nicholas. In his copy of the *Apology*, he wrote that change to the Qur'an "proves that it is without faith" and notes that "many people had written Qur'ans."<sup>198</sup> Although, in the beginning of the *Cribratio*, Nicholas raises the possibility that perhaps an evil god or demon found the pagan Muhammad an easy mark and so impersonated Gabriel,<sup>199</sup> he carries the idea of a literally demonic inspiration of the Qur'an no further and instead insists on its authorship by humans over several generations. He has learned about the process of the Qur'an's modification because "true histories about this are found among the Arabs", by whom he means al-Kindi.<sup>200</sup> He refers to the *Apology*'s implication of Jews in the corruption of the Qur'an three times in the *Cribratio*, and makes the claim—unfounded in the *Apology*—that Jews were responsible for the Qur'an's misinformation on Abraham.<sup>201</sup> The result of their interference was a "changeable, fluctuating, and lying" book, in accordance with al-Kindi's description.<sup>202</sup> While Nicholas's outlook on the Qur'an's history descends from the *Apology*, a radical interpretation of its evidence led him to a very different concept of Islam's origins.

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197 Ibid., Liber 2, Capitulum 1, p. 72; Liber 2, Capitulum 13, p. 99; Liber 2, Capitulum 19, p. 125.

198 "probat Alchoran sine fide esse." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 40.27-9 Gloss K). "nota plures scripsisse Alchoranos." (*Rescriptum Christiani* 45.25-29 Gloss K).

199 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 1, chapter 1, p. 23.

200 "verae historiae de hoc apud Arabes reperiuntur." (Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 1, chapter 1, p. 23).

201 Ibid. Book 3, chapters 12-18 on the Jews' distortion of Abraham's story. Nicholas is unique among the annotators in expounding, in agreement with the text, that "Abraam non fuit sarracenus" (*Rescriptum Christiani* 9.1 Gloss K). Nicholas's assertions that Jews persuaded Ali to change the Qur'an, and that wicked Jews and Christians alike assisted Muhammad's successors in compiling the Qur'an (Book 1, chapter 1), are founded in *Rescriptum Christiani* 39.

202 "mutabilem, varium et mendosum, de quo post hoc subiungetur." (Nicholas of Cusa, Book 3, chapter 3, p. 138).

Just as his note about bathing in the *Apology* does not prepare the reader for his approbation of it in the *Cribratio*, one cannot tell by his remark that the Qur'an's Christology is “self-contradictory”—next to the *Apology*'s reference to the Qur'an's designation of Christ as the word and spirit of God—that Nicholas arrived at a theory to explain those contradictions.<sup>203</sup> He spun the alleged contradictions about Christ's nature into an entire chapter in the *Cribratio Alkorani*,<sup>204</sup> and weighed them over slowly throughout the book, finally revealing his stance on them in full in the eighteenth chapter of the third book. Nicholas's marginalia on the *Apology*'s introduction of Sergius, “note the true history about the origin of Muhammad”, does not explain his understanding of Sergius's instruction and relationship to Muhammad, as articulated in the *Cribratio*.<sup>205</sup> Insinuations of it appear earlier in the *Cribratio*: In his second prologue, Nicholas had repeated Thomas Aquinas's opinion that Muhammad denounced polytheism but never denied the idea of a triune God<sup>206</sup> and, in the second book, laments that Muhammad's people would not have followed him if he “had simply preached the gospel to them and had not given his own law.”<sup>207</sup> Finally, Nicholas underderivatively explains that Muhammad had converted to Christianity, which explains why parts of the Qur'an can be verified by the Bible. That Muhammad “had been a Christian”, but was misinformed by the Nestorian Sergius, explains the positive but confused references to Christ and other Biblical figures in the Qur'an. He attributed the mixture of truth and falsehood found in Islam primarily to Muhammad's ignorance.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, the

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203 “contrarius seipsi.” (*Rescriptum Christiani* 14.15-17 Gloss K).

204 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Book 3, chapter 9, pp. 149-152.

205 “nota historiam veram de ortu Mahmeth”. (*Rescriptum Christiani* 38.2 Gloss K).

206 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani* Alius Prologus, pp.16-17. Hagemann cites the influence of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* I q.v42 a.v2.

207 “Quod si Mahumetus simpliciter ipsis evangelium praedicasset et non dedisset propriam legem, non accessissent ad legem Christianam, quam paene sescentis annis refutarent.” (Nicholas of Cusa, Book 2, chapter 12, p. 95).

208 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani*, Book 3, chapter 11, pp. 157-158.

*Apology's* history lent support to Nicholas's argument that the Qur'an's objectionable content was less Muhammad's work than that of his successors.<sup>209</sup>

This venturesome scholar was the conduit through which a number of Europeans interested in Islam in the Renaissance received the texts commissioned by Peter the Venerable. Juan de Segovia, who had the Qur'an translated into Castilian and Latin, a project that has not survived, received Nicholas's volume of the Toledan collection, and they discussed their research on Islam together, and Dennis the Carthusian also encountered the *Apology* through Nicholas's annotated copy.<sup>210</sup> Martin Luther too cited the influence of Nicholas on his knowledge of Islam. Other readers of the Latin *Apology* too continued to shape ideas about Islam in the Renaissance, most notably Vincent of Beauvais, whose *Speculum Historiale* continued to introduce readers to the *Apology* well into the sixteenth century, possibly including Luther.<sup>211</sup> The *Apology* itself gained new readers in 1543, when Theodor Bibliander reproduced it in a massive compendium on Islam although, in some of its printings, Vincent's abridgment of the *Apology* replaced the full text.<sup>212</sup> Later hands visible in the Latin *Apology* in the Arsenal manuscript, and the damage to the beginning of the *Apology* in this manuscript, show that early modern scholars were still reading it in its earliest form.

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209 "Cum Mahumetus XL annorum de idolatria conversus sit per Sergium monachum Christianum et Nestorianum, cuius etiam habitum religiosum acceptasse dicitur et in ea fide mortuus asseritur, quomodo est hoc verum, quod Abrahæ legem tenuerit?" (Nicholas of Cusa, Book 3, chapter 18, p. 179). "Similiter et laudes Christi capitulo IV, quae credi possunt a Mahumeto positae, cum esset Christianus, ut praefertur." (Nicholas of Cusa, Book 3, chapter 18, p. 180). González Muñoz, XC.

210 Bobzin, 67-70.

211 Bobzin., 30-32, 51.

212 González Muñoz, XCII.



## Conclusions

In whatever manuscript readers found the *Apology*, they also found that an annotator had labored to ensure that they understood what they were reading. In some ways, readers' attention shifted over time. Specifically, the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century annotators' interest in historical data and in al-Kindi as a real person, the facts of whose life made him a reliable teacher, had no precedent in its first set of marginalia, found in the Arsenal manuscript. But we have also seen the diversity of modes of producing meaning at particular points of time. Nicholas of Cusa and the annotator of the Milan manuscript, for instance, read and glossed the *Apology* at about the same time but their intentions were diametrically opposite: The former made marginal notes on philosophical arguments and whatever supported his ideas about the birth of Islam, whereas the Milan annotator favored more concrete observations and was not engrossed in al-Kindi's philosophical arguments.

The high value placed on the text required annotators to clarify recondite vocabulary and ideas and, just as importantly, to warn future readers of statements that might lead them astray. Hence, its annotators pointed out the incorrectness of the *Apology's* assertions that it would have been impossible for Jews and Christians to pervert the Bible and that Muhammad invented a revelation in order to marry another man's wife. Authors of original polemic based on the *Apology* likewise identified what they saw as its defects and distanced themselves from them in their own writing beginning with Peter the Venerable, who silently ignored its argument that Muhammad's violence and sensuality disproved his claim to be a prophet. The anonymous Dominican author of the Gregorian Report discounted the idea that the Qur'an obligated Muslims to recognize Jesus's divinity, and Nicholas of Cusa defanged the notion that Islam

encourages corporal pleasures on earth and promises them in heaven. It is intriguing that these very parts of the *Apology* represent some of the most popular *topoi* in medieval and early Renaissance writing against Islam. Its readers made quite bold moves when they supplied evidence against the *Apology's* most persuasive arguments.

In the introduction, I compared the skeptical fourteenth- and fifteenth-century annotators of the *Apology* to another anonymous fourteenth-century reader-writer who loudly brandished his disagreements with authoritative sources, the author of the book of Sir John Mandeville. As Tzanaki observed, the author's admissions that he has not seen every wonder reputed to be found in the east served to build up the credibility of those wonders that he claimed to have seen. Tzanaki noted another instance in which the same author told the reader that he disagreed with the measure of the circumference of the earth at "20,425 miles, according to the ancient sages" and supposed it instead to have been larger. Though a separate authoritative tradition also lay behind his measure of 31,500 miles, the Mandeville author did not credit his source and hence gave the impression that he himself had discovered the measurement from empirical observation and was sufficiently secure in his reasoning to contest the authorities.<sup>213</sup> The annotators too seem to have been creating their own authority by diverging from the views of al-Kindi. Unlike the historians of the thirteenth century, they openly exercised judgment on the *Apology's* claims.

With the exception of Nicholas of Cusa, who explains his method of interpreting the Qur'an mercifully, we cannot know what motivated the annotators' counter-arguments, but examples of similar behaviors in different historical contexts raises some interesting possibilities. When Odo of Tournai had a public debate with a Jew the early twelfth century, he found that he

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213 Tzanaki, 90-91.

had to steel himself with more potent arguments, because his adversaries also included Christians “who had sided with the views of the Jew.”<sup>214</sup> David Berger sees this episode as proof that inter-religious debates were, in part, an end in themselves. They provided “almost a form of intellectual entertainment” in which participants' goals were to display their rhetorical skill rather than to win converts.<sup>215</sup> In this game, arguing for the opposite side (probably more challenging than defending one's own religion) appealed to some players, probably more often than the sources show. Criticism need not reflect a decline in esteem for the text. Perhaps the annotators recognized their place in a tradition of Christian counter-argument to Christian polemic. At any rate, the glosses that contend with the *Apology* provide an opportunity to see this aspect of debate culture in writing.

The controversies between Confucian scholars in eighteenth-century China are far removed from those of medieval Europe, but they too motivated readers to reject parts of texts once beyond reproach. When Yen Jo-Chü gained notoreity by exposing sections of the Old Text *Documents* as later forgeries, he confronted his critics by stating that he valued truth above authority and that scholars needed to determine if the texts regarded as Confucian classics actually were, noting Confucius's own distaste for falsehood.<sup>216</sup> The motives of intellectual enjoyment and of a dutiful attentiveness to accuracy are not exclusive of each other, and probably both functioned among the *Apology*'s various readers.

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214 Odo of Tournai, *A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God*, ed. and trans. Irvn M. Resnick (Philadelphia, 1994), 97.

215 David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3, (June., 1986), 587.

216 Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy To Philology: Social and Intellectual Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*. (Cambridge, 1984), 30-31.

Although we have observed some changes in the *Apology's* reception over time, the diversity of responses that it engendered throughout its history does not allow it to fit comfortably into an overarching narrative. The appeal of the *Apology* lay in its accuracy and its adaptability. Whether readers sought explanations of Islamic belief and customs, shameful anecdotes about the prophet Muhammad, a history of the Qur'an's transmission, arguments for the Trinity, or the Qur'an's testimony to Christ's divinity, they found what they needed in the *Apology*. Zeal for accuracy led them to the highly regarded text in the first place and motivated them to excavate the textual clues that justified its standing, as well as to sidestep or challenge what they deemed inaccurate.

Peter the Venerable would probably have been surprised to see the *Apology's* readers in the later Middle Ages disputing with the text in its margins, though he certainly would have approved their efforts at accuracy. He had esteemed the *Apology* more highly than any of the other works he commissioned; it deserved to be translated into proper, readable Latin and thus warranted the additional expense of employing two translators, an honor that none of the other contents of the Toledan collection received. His reliance on the *Apology* to navigate the Qur'an is evident in the fact that he always quotes excerpts of the Qur'an as they are translated in the *Apology*, never from Robert's translation, and in his belief that the Qur'an said nothing about *tahrif*, since al-Kindi did not quote the verses on it.

The authority bestowed on al-Kindi necessitated that the author of Paris's Dominican source add a disclaimer that clarified Islam's stance on Jesus, lest readers mistake al-Kindi's assessment of Christ in the Qur'an for an Islamic view. The *Apology* was the best available source for the needs of Paris and Vincent, and they reiterated its narratives fairly faithfully, but

they lacked the investment in the text that spurred its annotators. Because narrative sources were much more widely read than argumentative ones, they interceded between the *Apology* and its readers. We have seen that, in the centuries to come, the *Apology*'s readers directed their attention toward the historical portions of the text, where they coated the margins with comments. The fourteenth- and fifteenth-century glosses also illustrate a reversal in the attitude toward the relative value of the *Apology* as a source of information on Islam; the anonymous annotators and Nicholas of Cusa were not so daunted by its authority that they were blind to its departures from its source material, and they relied on Muslim sources to correct the views it presented. Their interventions show that they sacrificed all other ends for accuracy.

The writings inspired by the *Apology*, both in original works and within its own margins, provide evidence for both the depth of its impact and the wide range of reactions it triggered in its readers. Continuous re-use of the text cemented its authority. The most significant findings of this study are the instances in which we can see reader-writers carefully inspecting the *Apology*—against itself, the Qur'an, public and expert opinion, and their own observations—in order to judge the merits of its information. The scholars who left records of their reading very rarely deliberately distort the *Apology*; interestingly, the most pervasive reinterpretation of it occurs in a historical source (the *Chronica Majora*, where Islam is made in the image of polytheism) rather than a polemical one. I hope to have shown that the lack of sophistication that Norman Daniel attributed to authors who did not differentiate between the Christian and Islamic texts in the Toledan collection certainly does not characterize most of the authors discussed

here.<sup>217</sup> These readers' responses show that scholars of Islam were not immune to the current of contemporary skepticism that led to reformed concepts of geography and experimental science,<sup>218</sup> and their readings of the *Apology* sometimes led them to controversial and remarkably individualistic conclusions.

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217 Daniel, 337.

218 George H. T. Kimble, *Geography in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1938).

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