

Muslims in Christian medieval writings**المسلمون في الكتابات المسيحية الوسيطة****Ahmed Renima**

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Abstract:

Despite the existence of multiple Eastern Christian churches, the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine) emerged as the most capable and effective force in confronting the rise of Islam. Within this context of open conflict, intellectual dialogue, religious debate, and doctrinal controversy flourished between the two entities. These interactions, studied today by both Eastern and Western scholars, offer contrasting perspectives on reality, human existence, and the possibilities for the future. This further illuminated by the contrasting ways in which Islamic civilization, Eastern, and Western Christian, cultures codified their respective knowledge and beliefs.

Keywords:

Christian Apology, Polemics, Controversy, Dialogue, Christians-Muslims, Middle Ages

الملخص:

على الرغم من وجود كنائس مسيحية شرقية متعددة، إلا أن الإمبراطورية الرومانية الشرقية (البيزنطية) برزت باعتبارها القوة الأكثر قدرة وفاعلية في مواجهة صعود الإسلام. وضمن هذا السياق من الصراع المفتوح، ازدهر الحوار الفكري السجال الديني والجدال المسيحي بين المسلمين والمسيحيين في أوروبا. وقد تطورت تلك المظاهر التاريخية التي يدرسها اليوم الباحثون الشرقيون والغربيون على حد سواء، من وجهات نظر متباينة حول الواقع والوجود الإنساني خلال فترة العصور الوسطى واحتمالات المستقبل. ويزداد هذا الأمر وضوحًا

من خلال الطرق المتباينة التي أطرت فهم قيم الحضارة الإسلامية والحضارة الغربية المسيحية
من خلال المعارف والمعتقدات، ورؤى الإنسان والوجود.

الكلمات المفتاحية :

اللاهوت، الجدل المسيحي، السجال، الحوار، المسيحيون والمسلمون، العصور

الوسطى

Introduction

With the rise of Islam and its rapid political and intellectual spread in many regions of the ancient world, religious and intellectual reactions emerged in areas inhabited by a Christian majority. These reactions ranged from a sense of relief and total acceptance and conversion to the new religion by the majority of the population in the Levant, Egypt, and the Maghreb, to accepting Islamic rule while maintaining Christian beliefs. This group represented what known as the Eastern Christians or the Eastern Churches. Although there were many Eastern Churches, the Eastern Roman Empire was the most capable and efficient representative in confronting the Islamic expansion. The Mediterranean coast from Italy in the west to Anatolia in the east, via the Peloponnese, was the geopolitical and cultural centre of the empire. Its vital extensions stretched from the southeast of Anatolia to the Levant, Egypt, and the Maghreb, which it lost during a century of conflict with the Muslims. As for the rest of Arab Europe, the Germanic peoples, the Visigoths, the Franks, the Vandals, and the Lombards were able to establish forms of political authority in the Iberian Peninsula, Central and Northern Italy, and France, under the patronage of the Papacy in Rome. The Papacy benefited from the absence of central authority and was dedicated to the feudal system. In this atmosphere of open conflict, forms of intellectual dialogue, religious debate, and theological polemics took place between the two parties. We read about them today from the East and the West alike, with visions of the changing reality and the hoped-for horizons of the future through the documentation preserved by Islamic civilization on the one hand and Christian culture in the East and the West on the other.

Perhaps the most important and best work that has dealt with the Muslims dialogue with the Christians is the serious study that the Tunisian researcher Abdelmajid Sharfi, obtained his doctorate with, and then published as a book, in 1983. (Sharfi, 1986) On the other hand, the book of Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West, the making of an image*. (Daniel , 1966). Which is a masterpiece in the field of medieval Christian polemics against Islam.

The study of some forms of Christian polemics that recorded during the European Middle Ages within various dialogical literature in terms of form and content seems very important. The Byzantine Empire remained the Muslims greatest political and military enemy from the seventh century to the middle of the fifteenth century AD. It was also a stubborn religious and cultural enemy.

It assumed that the task of theological polemical thought would remain the exclusive domain of the intellectual and religious elites, as they are the only ones

qualified and authorized to preserve the methodological and cognitive frameworks available within official religious circles. Unfortunately, however, the function of polemics disseminated to the popular masses, and the sacred creedal issues of others transformed into oral literature, fairy tales, and myths that became the fuel for anti-Islamic polemics throughout Europe (Barthélemy, 1857–1866), in a situation almost similar to what happens in our own time. The biased media machine that manufactures events today is the same that formed the religious apparatus of the state in the Empire and the Roman Church in the West, to transfer the conflict from the specialized scholarly circles to the fanatical popular circles. This raises the danger of transforming the major issues between Islam and the West from issues specific to specialized academic circles to popular media issues. (Geisser, 2003).

The truth is that the positions of the theologians belonging to the Eastern churches were not identical in their treatment of the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Different visions aroused debate and division between the Greek Church Fathers and the Eastern Fathers, most of whom were Monophysites. (Encyclopedia of Religions, 2002).

The Monophysitism, the word originally means "one nature" in Greek. Eutyches in Constantinople spread this doctrine in the middle of the fifth century AD. It states that divinity and humanity united in one nature that constitutes Christ. This doctrine condemned by the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) and remains followed by some Eastern churches to this day. Among these groups were The Copts in Egypt and Ethiopia, The Jacobite Church in Syria and Iraq. The Nestorian Assyrians. The Nestorians are a sect of Christians who follow Nestorius, a monk and priest in Antioch (c. 451-380 AD) who became Patriarch of Constantinople. He taught that there are two natures in Christ and denied Mary the title of Mother of God. The Council of Ephesus (431 AD) condemned him. The Nestorians settled in Mosul and Armenia and spread Christianity to Iran, India, and China. Some of them joined the Catholic Church in the 16th century. After the First World War (1914 AD), they persecuted. The Nestorians were more accepting Islam than other Greek Byzantine theologians (Encyclopedia of Religions, 2002), Articles on Monophysitism, Nestorianism, Copts...).

The positions of the Eastern Christian sects were more defensive and apologetic than polemical. Likely, the positions expressing the Monophysite and Nestorian theological views in favour of accepting coexistence with Islam over choosing a position of conflict are due, in particular, to the political situation that these sects enjoyed under the rule of the Islamic caliphate.

The Arab conquests and Islamic rule were preferable to Eastern Roman Empire hegemony. Reading the historical works of historians such as Michael the

Syrian (Patriarch of Antioch 1166-1199 AD) or Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-Ibri "Bar-Hebraeus" (1226-1206 AD) confirms this position.

In addition, their Semitic and Arab origins in particular, and their good understanding of the true teachings of Islam like equality, toleration and respect..., made them prefer political authority and the Islamic value system over the creed of desires and worldly material interests that their Eastern Roman Empire co-religionists claimed.

In this context, the study and analysis of positions through the writings of some Byzantine theologians, for example, cannot give a clear picture of the forms of documentation that took the forms of dialogue between the Eastern churches as a whole and the Muslims. However, they were certainly a primary source for the system of polemical thought against Islam that characterized the Latin Middle Ages and the subsequent aggressive positions of the leaders of the religious Reformation, the pioneers of the humanist movement, and even the thinkers of the Enlightenment in the modern era.

1. The formation of Christian polemics in the East

The Christian polemic against Islam began with John of Damascus (c. 675-749 AD). He was a member of the famous Umayyad family of Sergius ibn Mansur, and he served as head of the financial department under the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya. He was also the representative of the Christians to the caliph. Later, he retired to the Monastery of St. Sabas in al-Quds.

John of Damascus was a defender of the worship and veneration of icons. He wrote a trilogy called "The Fountain of Wisdom" in which he defended the beliefs of Orthodox Christianity. He was also the first to lay the foundations of Christian theology. He was a poet whose hymns still sung in some churches today. In 1890, the church declared him a "Doctor of the Ecumenical Church." (Encyclopedia of Religions, 2002).

John of Damascus was one of the greatest theologians of the Eastern Church. He was the first to lay the foundations for the long history of Christian polemical thought against Islam in the Islamic East. He did this while living very close to the center of the Islamic caliphate in Damascus.

Strangely, John of Damascus was able to record so much false and distorted information about Islam without attracting attention. This is in contrast to what happened with the Martyrs of Cordoba movement in the ninth century AD (Renima, 2004, p. 108). Probably, John of Damascus chose to write in Greek, because he knew that most Muslim scholars of his time did not understand Greek and Hellenic

culture in general. He also knew that language, if used skilfully, it would be more convenient to transmit messages from the heart of the caliphate to the other side, namely the official church establishment in Constantinople. This was even if the content of the messages was biased and unrelated to the truth.

John of Damascus's monasticism in Jerusalem also helped him to complete important parts of his work on theology in general and on Islamic issues in particular. He left his followers two documents in which he attempted to refute the new religion that had imposed its authority on the world he lived in. He devoted the last chapter of his book *The Book of Heresies* "De Haeresibus Liber" to Islam. In it, he studied everything he had heard about the Christian heresies that the church claimed existed. He also wrote another work in the form of a dialogue entitled "Dialexis Sarrakénoukai Christianou" "Dialogue between a Muslim and a Christian". This work dedicated to defending two theological issues that were among the most controversial with Muslims: the Trinity and the Incarnation.

John of Damascus often tried to compare the forms of biblical writing, i.e. the texts of the Old and New Testaments, with the stories in the Qur'an. He especially focused on what known as the prophecies of the Old Testament, as well as what related to Jesus Christ and his mother, the Virgin Mary. (Damascus). The stories of the Qur'an impressed many experts in the Holy Scriptures. They often amazed by the accuracy and clarity of the narration of past events; therefore, John of Damascus considered that Islam could only be a heresy similar to Arianism. Arianism is a doctrine attributed to Arius, one of the greatest scholars of Alexandria who originally came from Libya and lived in Egypt. He advocated for Unitarianism, saying, "The Old One is God and the Christ is created". (Encyclopedia of Religions, 2002, p. Arius).

This position had a great influence later on and became the basis for the critical idea that repeated by most of Arab Christians polemicist against Islam for several centuries. The leaders of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century AD made it a real uproar and the essence of the idea that Muhammad's (peace be upon him) creed is nothing but a distortion and falsification of the true Christian doctrine.

As a result of John of Damascus's position that Islam is nothing but a new heresy similar to the many heresies that Christianity has known since its inception, it cannot have any special importance from a religious or intellectual point of view. Many people in the West and the East still believe that Islam founded or appeared with the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him). (Segesvary, 1978, p. 43) .

The truth is that the Prophet sent only to complete the religion and to correct the deviations that had plagued the values of human monotheism for a long time.

The Qur'an revealed only to correct and activate what had come on the tongues of the previous prophets. It also revealed the nature of tyranny and greed that had afflicted most of the peoples of the world.

Saint Pedro Pascual claimed that John of Damascus showed great polemical abilities, especially when it came to the problem of solving the issue of the eternal existence of the Word and the Spirit of God. He considered the issue of "God is the creator of evil" to be a deterministic issue according to the beliefs of the Muslims themselves. (San Pedro, 1908). He could not point out that this position does not represent the Determinists, a group that the majority of Muslims have rejected in principle. John of Damascus's position on this issue is a selective and eclectic position and a clear distortion, as he considers the extreme theological opinions to be a consensus among the majority of Muslims. This is something for which he can be blamed.

He also tried to argue with the Muslims according to the principles and pillars of the teachings of the holy scriptures and based on religious texts, as if the Muslims accepted the correctness and the truth of those scriptures. Perhaps this mistake was more common, as Christians did not accept the idea of Muslims' belief in the heavenly books in their correctly revealed versions in the Muslim perspective). At the same time, they rejected the current books themselves on the pretext that they had been distorted. He also had objections to the interpretations that were used to prove the Trinity. (Daniel , 1966, pp. 3-4).

The story of the monk Bahira also appeared in the writings of John of Damascus, and he promoted the idea that everything that the (Quran) brought of teachings and stories, especially the history of the nations preceding it, is directly related to the scriptures, and is a result of the teachings of the monk Bahira to the Prophet Muhammad. And there is no place for the conceptual understanding of revelation and prophecy in his opinion at all. He did not try to indicate how long it took Muhammad to be a disciple who was well-versed in the biblical teachings and the events and personalities of the deep past in detail and accuracy that the narratives of the scriptures did not surpass. This story spread in the circles of the Eastern Roman Church, and then throughout the Latin West until late, until it became a myth according to some orientalists. Most of the scholars of Christian literature on the Christian debate against Islam have solidified this myth in the biography of the Arian monk Sergius, the teacher of Muhammad. (Segesvary, 1978, p. 43) who was called Bahira. He was considered Nestorian and became one of the most popular figures in the Byzantine and Western myths fabricated around the Prophet. As Armand Abel, who devoted most of his scholarly life to studying the writings and thoughts of John of Damascus, claimed in one of his research papers on the debate literature of John of Damascus, that he had a great influence on the

origins of Islamic theology, namely Islamic scholastic theology? He summarized his positions towards Islam in this paragraph, arguing about the implicit references to the divinity of Christ in the Quran, and the violent attacks on the morals of Muhammad, peace be upon him. He also referred to the persistence of forms of idolatry in the rituals of Muslims, referring to the worship of the Kaaba (the Latin writers believed that the Arabs revered Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and sexuality, in the form of a celestial goddess, called al-Uzza, associated with the planet Venus. The Muslims preserved this veneration after the prophetic mission, according to the direction and circumambulation and veneration of the Kaaba, which housed al-Uzza inside it during the days of ignorance. This was mentioned in the writings of Saint Jerome (1935): while John of Damascus was on a journey to the desert of Kadesh and arrived in al-Quds, he happened to be present and witness a day that coincided with a great annual festival where many people from the Saracens (Arabs) gathered in the temple of Venus. They worship her because of Lucifer, to whose cult the Saracen nation is dedicated.

This idea has been attributed to John of Damascus, but it has been distorted and falsified from the original text found in the last chapter of the Book of Heresies. (Abel, 1935, p. 3). John of Damascus has received great attention in modern and contemporary Western studies, especially after the church declared him worthy of the title of "Doctor of Ecumenism", i.e., a father of the great church fathers and a reliable source of its references. (Graf, 1964-1966) .

The idea that has been attributed to John of Damascus has been distorted and falsified from the original text found in the last chapter of his book "On Heresies". John of Damascus has received considerable attention in modern and contemporary Western studies, especially after the Church declared him worthy of the title "Doctor of Ecumenism, meaning a Father of the Church and among its references." (Abel, *The Damascene Polemic and Its Influence on the Origins of Muslim Theology*, pp. 61-85).

During the tenth century CE, Yahya ibn Adi, the famous Christian Jacobite physician and logician known as Abu Zakariya Yahya ibn Adi al-Baghdadi (d. 395 AH), wrote several works, including "A Letter Refuting the Arguments Presented by the Leader in Support of the Saying of Those Who Say that Actions are the Creation of God and the Acquisition of the Slave." Yahya ibn Adi was a contemporary of Ibn al-Nadim, who mentioned him in his book "The Fihrist". (Ibn an-Nadim, 1998, p. 324). He was one of the most famous Christian Arab debaters and was a philosopher and logician. He lived in Baghdad and surpassed John of Damascus in his systematic and coherent philosophical works. He influenced the Spanish theologian Ramon Lull (1232-1316 CE), a pioneer of missionary work in the Islamic West, in terms of the logical structure of his arguments. (Renima,

Raymond Lulle (1232-1316), *An Experience of Dialogue under the Spanish Inquisition*, 2008)

Yahya went far in his efforts to establish a system of fruitful debate or dialogue with Muslims. He avoided using scriptural arguments, because he was well aware that he was facing people who believed that the scriptures had been corrupted, and therefore only evidence that appeals to natural reason should be used. (Daniel , 1966, p. 4). It seems that Yahya ibn Adi's approach was a result of his belonging to the Eastern Christian churches, which are known for their coexistent stances with Muslims. Additionally, his upbringing in Islamic cultural circles and his influence by the intellectual environment and the style of debates prevalent in the Islamic world at that time played a role.

Outside of Islamic authority, Eastern Roman Empire attitudes towards Islam were unable to dispense with the sources of Eastern Christianity that were under Islamic rule in the matter of dialogue and debate against Muslims, especially those written in the Greek language, despite the differences in positions between the two parties. The Eastern Roman Empire represented the political authority of a powerful empire that the Muslims could not easily displace its political existence as happened with its historical rival, the Great Persian State. Despite the nature of the relationship between the two parties, which was mostly characterized by military conflict and political rivalry, the act of cultural and scientific exchange, debate, and discussion was also among the options available to both parties. (Nicetas, pp. 669,877).

The Byzantine philosopher Nicetas (842 AD) wrote two apologetic and propagandistic works during the middle of the ninth century AD, in which he tried to lay new foundations for the Byzantine system of debate against Islam. However, the merit of these two works is that they:

- Do not fundamentally agree with what John of Damascus had written.
- Nicetas represented a different trend from that of John's school, pushing the debate to the point where it lost all its meaning and persuasive power even for Christians themselves.
- While John of Damascus remained within the scope of religious argumentation, Nicetas did not go beyond employing some aspects of Koranic teachings and some information about Muslim customs, which he obtained from Christian sources in Arabic and Greek.
- He tried to direct criticism of Islamic teachings using the concepts of Christian biblical doctrine and morality, adding some explanations and

directing them all to a central figure, namely Muhammad, whom he described as a mere pretender to prophethood and having no connection to true prophecy. (Segesvary, 1978, pp. 43-44).

The Byzantine debate with Nicetas was characterized by emotional and political reaction more than by logical philosophical construction, due to the military conflict between Islam and Byzantium on the one hand and the lack of information and knowledge about Islam on the other hand. He also devoted the largest part of his work to attacking the Quran, but he did not try to understand it before rejecting it altogether.

The works of Nicetas were collected in the Corpus Christianorum Islamicum (CISC), which includes sources in his original language translated into German. The CISC is divided into three sections: the Arabic-Christian section with the Greek section edited by Reinhold Gleib, and the Latin section edited by Ludwig Hagemann, (Niketas, 2000, pp. 11-18)

2. Catholic Roman Church and Islam

In the Latin West, Christian consciousness, both in thought and behaviour was linked for a considerable time to the Crusades, which always refers to the meaning of holy war. The name is derived from the Latin word "Crux", which means cross, the instrument on which the death sentence was carried out on Jesus Christ according to the accepted Christian gospels. These gospels assert that the sentence was carried out by the Roman authorities at the instigation of the Jews.

When the Pope announced his explicit call for the Crusades, the warriors rushed to adopt the cross as a symbol and expression of their belief in the idea. They drew the shapes of crosses on all their clothes and the weapons they used. The pieces of cloth cut and surrounding their bodies from the front and back were also among the most prominent symbols of that war. They all swore to fight for Christ and the Church.

The wars waged by the Church against the pagans in the Baltic region and against the Muslims in the Mediterranean were Crusades in this sense, as were the campaigns waged by the Catholic Church against the Cathars in southern France on the pretext of heresy. But historical studies always refer us to the organic link between the massive military campaigns organized by the Roman Church against the Muslims to seize Palestine, on the pretext that it was the land of the first Christians, and the holy city of Jerusalem, which they claim the Muslims have usurped the right of Christians to it, and which is the center of the conflict.

Pope Urban II officially declared the call for the Crusade in 1095 AD, after meeting with many bishops at the Council of Clermont in France. He asked the knights to carry their weapons and head to the East to fight, granting a church pardon to everyone who died during the campaign. The response was immediate and enthusiastic, and the positive echo that the Pope's call had on various segments of European feudal society at the time confirms this. Thus, the West opened the door to a bloody and violent clash with the Muslims, the repercussions of which are still evident despite the passage of nine centuries.

Despite the attempts of some monks to engage in debates and arguments with Muslims using the concepts of Scholastic theology and Aristotelian methods of argumentation and persuasion, in contrast to what Muslim thinkers were doing in some aspects of their intellectual life, the cruelty and bloodshed of the clash cancelled out most opportunities for dialogue and rational and intellectual debate during the period of the Crusades.

These wars fuelled the fire of hostility in Western Europe against Muslims, and what is more dangerous is that the aggressive propaganda culture was not limited to the theologically educated church circles and the educated people with an acceptable level of knowledge, but this type of culture spread to the broad and miserable popular classes.

A type of poetry spread that is reminiscent of what was known as the "Muhammad Myth" in the previous Byzantine period, with many details that were formed in the Eastern Christian culture. Humbert of Romans wrote the book "Vita Mahumeti" (Embricon, v. M., 1962, Cambier, G., 1957, pp 463-479), and Guibert de Nogent also wrote the book "Machomete" (Segesvary, 1978, p 72; Otiade B.C., 1956, pp 287-328; Cambier, G., 1935, pp 531-539).

These two authors were largely expressive of the attitudes of that era towards Islam. They were, along with other works, a product of popular literature and tragic epics, with no scientific historical value, despite the seriousness of the effort made to achieve persuasion in the popular Christian circles. They were only matched by the epic songs (epic songs in the form of literature, mostly poems that spread and became famous in Western Europe after the tenth century AD, characterized by a sharp satirical tone) and hostile, propaganda songs for the Crusades which were the language of the era at that time. This supported the trend of most historical researchers during that period. Pellat, Ch., 1965. & Sénac, P., 1983, pp 74-82. & Munro, D, C, 1931, pp 329-343. & Comfort, W. W., 1940, pp 628-659. & Meredith, J., 1942, p. 203.

However, at the beginning of the twelfth century AD, Western Latin culture acquired a new set of knowledge that seemed more accurate and more complete to its readers. This was represented in the work of Pedro de Alfonsi (1062-1110) entitled "Dialogus". Pedro was a Jew who converted to Christianity in 1106 AD. He began writing this book, in which he defended the Christian faith against his former Jewish brethren and finished it before he died in 1110 AD. He devoted the fifth chapter of this book to talking about Muslims.

The importance of this work is evident in its widespread circulation in Europe where Latin culture was prevalent. It is assumed to have had a great influence on modifying and correcting much of the knowledge and reconsidering some of the information that was transmitted through the works of his predecessors and contemporaries, which was characterized by deficiency, fragmentation, and ambiguity, in addition to distortion and falsification. He had likely read the "Epistle of Abd al-Masih al-Kindi" and quoted from it. The "Epistle" is one of the most important sources in the Christian debate against Islam. It is written in Arabic and has a cognitive value that goes beyond its propaganda function, according to many specialists such as Victor Segesvary, in page 46; Norman Daniel, in pages 13-14 and moreover Theodore Bibliander reformulated it in a truncated form in his book "Recueil". (D'Alverny & Burnett, 1994, pp. 88-89).

It seems that Alfonso believed that Islamic law is permissive by nature, meaning that it is not prohibitive in its origin and that it is based on reason. He also believed that believers can enjoy what earthly life has to offer, and that God then places many moral teachings on them to curb the pursuit of pleasure. This was something new and strange to European Christian culture at the time, which suppressed the body and tormented the soul in the name of faith and piety.

He knew about many of the duties that the Prophet had placed on Muslims, such as the five daily prayers that are preceded by ablution. He also knew well the formula of the Shahada, as well as the knowledge of fasting, Ramadan, and the Hajj and its pillars.

It seems that the Western Latin Christian debate against Islam had completed its components and intersections by the end of the thirteenth century AD. Perhaps the most important thing that happened in this century was the rise of Franciscan and Dominican monks who were missionaries to Muslims and travellers to the lands of Arab culture. This had a great impact on the fate of the Islamic-Christian-Arab conflict.

The first was the doctor "Raymond Lull", the second was Raymond Panikkar, both of whom were Spanish, and the third was an Italian named Ricoldo da Monte Croce.

Missionary campaigns were almost simultaneous with the military crusade movement coming from the Latin West. Although Europe was fully prepared for military action, it did not know any strategy for peaceful action to integrate Muslim peoples into the papal authority system. The Roman Church had only those old polemical works against the Jews and pagans, which were transformed into a massive propaganda effort against Islam and Muslims. It also seems that the church's experience in subjugating the people of the north was not at all suitable for presenting to the newcomers from the south.

The Andalusian environment was the best candidate to carry out this task. Raymond Lull (1232-1316) was born in Mallorca in the Balearic Islands. The circumstances of his family, which was close to King James I of Catalonia, provided him with all the conditions for success after the occupation of the islands and the end of Muslim rule. One of his Muslim prisoners of war taught him Arabic, as well as the fundamentals of philosophy and logical thinking, for nine years. The prisoner was killed as a reward, which made Lull proud of his scientific and intellectual abilities and made him underestimate the difficulty of convincing Muslims to embrace the Trinity and abandon monotheism.

Lull was a great missionary in the Latin West and a stubborn traveller to Muslim lands. He was convinced that Muslims were the people closest to Christianity and the most likely to return to the Christian religion, the religion of the Trinity. This position was based on a doctrinal premise, namely that Muslims believe in and venerate Jesus Christ more than any other sect or religion, and that they coexist more with Christians than Jews, pagans, and other "infidel" peoples. It appeared to him that integrating them into the Church by converting them was easy because God had given them soft and merciful hearts. (Segesvary, 1978, p. 50).

There was also a positive practical factor that encouraged Lull to embark on this experiment, the experiment of converting Muslims. This factor was that once Muslims converted to Christianity, they would integrate and become a powerful force for Christianity, a living and active field from which the Church would benefit, similar to the great missionary operations that took place in Europe to the west and north, where the Church was able to subjugate the Germans, Vikings, Slavs, and others. This was, from a practical point of view, easier than convincing dissenting sects and distant and rejecting infidel peoples.

To turn this project into a practical reality, Lull chose two parallel and complementary methods. The first was to argue and debate using the effective and productive rational arguments that he acquired as a philosopher who learned directly from Muslims and lived with them in Mallorca, Andalusia, and the Maghreb. (Sugranyes de Franch , 1954). The second method was to focus on the

topic of peaceful dialogue with Muslims and to insist on explaining and interpreting a fundamental issue that is almost one in all his writings, namely the issue of the Trinity.

Lull was the first Arab thinker to adopt the concept of rational arguments instead of theological arguments. He thus laid the foundations for a discourse that was followed by the pioneers of the humanist movement during the Renaissance in Europe. The basis of this discourse was that Christian beliefs could be explained and proven to non-Christians by rational arguments without contradicting revelation rejecting it, or departing from what is mentioned in the scriptures. Thus, a flawless argumentative system can be established, the ultimate truth of which is in God. (Tolan, 2003, p. 340).

On the other hand, Ramon Lull took on the task of the intellectual shepherd of the study of oriental languages, which has received increasing attention from modern and contemporary. He was able to convince many decision-makers in the papacy of the project, and at the Council of Vienne in 1312, the establishment of chairs of oriental languages, namely Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, and Syriac or Chaldean, was approved in Western universities, in the University of Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Salamanca, and Rome. He had called for their teaching for missionary reasons for a long time. He also suggested to Peter Dubois (d. 1312), who was one of the most famous publishers close to King Philip the Fair, to send missionary expeditions to Palestine to pave the way for the establishment of colonies in Muslim lands. However, in 1434, this papal decree was reconsidered after the Council of Basel, (Haller, 1891, p. 198), and after that, the enthusiasm for studying and teaching Arabic declined during the Renaissance. (Altaner, 1933).

In addition to this effort, there was an attempt to learn about the customs and morals of the people who were to be converted. Lull believed that through direct contact dialogue, and rational argumentation about the disputed issues based on logic and imbued with the spirit of the teachings and works of Christ, it was possible to convince the people living outside the sphere of authority of the universal church to join and submit to that authority.

However, historical facts often prove the opposite of this desire and ambition. The fearsome Mongols were unable to resist the Muslim creed and values despite their military victories, and they became a new striking force in favour of Islam, not against it. The universal church also did not withstand the Reformation movement and the schisms that developed during the sixteenth century AD. Likewise, the secular non-religious movements did not work for separation as much as they worked to achieve the act of re-forming and adapting church Christianity once again, as happened when some fathers, bishops, and monks became strong and

accepted the conditions of Constantine I to enjoy the political immunity that the Roman Empire guaranteed them at the beginning of the fourth century AD.

Ramon Lull tried to position his argumentative discourse within the framework of rational proof, seeking to follow the line of the school of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD), (Cardini, 2000, p. 128). The philosopher of medieval Christianity par excellence, tried to push his opponents through dialogue to search for the truth by relying on the senses and according to the process of nature in its normal development, and to rely on intellectual abilities and deep contemplation, as he explained in one of his most important works, the book "The Contemplation of God".

However, his written works, at least, prove that he was offering the "infidels" a moment of emotional reassurance more than convincing them with strong rational arguments and evidence. In the autumn of his life, a state of despair and frustration had been engraved in the entire Western Christian world, becoming one of the features of the thirteenth century AD. This failure was a result of the failure of missionary rationalism after the defeat of the military crusade movement. He saw with his own eyes how revenge for paganism turned out not to be in the interest of Christianity, as he expected in many of his sayings, but in the interest of Islam. Moreover, the difference and division that afflicted Europe in the depth of its positions and in determining its goals and objectives, which he made every effort to achieve, increased his despair. (Tolan, 2003, p. 356).

The dominance of the problem of proving the Trinity over most of Lull's polemical and dialogical works. He tried to prove that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation is what preserves the principle of the oneness of God and His other attributes more than the Quranic evidence was able to do. As for the positions in which Lull was unable to prove a matter of Christian belief with rational evidence, he would resort to the old theological arguments and reiterate the emphasis that it alone, namely "the doctrine of the Trinity," is capable of providing evidence to prove the existence and oneness of God and that it is the only doctrine that rises and strives to achieve that mission.

Lull did not show any interest in the evidence and arguments that the Muslims relied on, despite the good presentation he gave in one of his most important works, the book "The Infidel and the Three Knowledgeable Ones" in a dialogue he imagined between a philosophical infidel who does not believe in divine law and three wise men, a Jew, a Christian, and a Muslim. Despite also his living with Muslims for many periods of his life (Renima, Raymond Lulle (1232-1316), *An Experience of Dialogue under the Spanish Inquisition*, 2008, p. 163). The arguments he presented were not in line with the arguments of Muslims, but those

ideas expressed his understanding of the opposing Islamic positions and the rejection of the divinity of Christ.

Despite his unwillingness to reach a presentation of the principles and foundations of the Islamic religion as Peter the Venerable had presented it before, for example, his argumentative system did not go beyond the level of convincing his fellow believers in Christianity, and did not achieve any significant result in convincing Muslims.

3. Conclusion

Christianity was forced to confront Muslims due to the critical situation it was put in. The successful military campaigns on the one hand, and the strength and clarity of the Muslim idea on the other hand, in contrast to the doctrine of the Trinity, which remained largely unacceptable to human nature and rational thought, left Christianity with no choice but to search its heritage. It found works that were never at the level of thought of its opponents, so it closed in on itself and preferred military confrontation on the one hand and religious and cultural dogmatism on the other.

All the attempts at dialogue and debate that appeared during the Middle Ages defended the Christian faith against Islamic positions, framed Western thought and culture, and confined them within models that could not be broken out of or resisted their ideological influences. However, many chapters of them were so exciting and influential that they are worth reading and studying because their effects are still strong today.

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