

essa era incastonata o anche riguardo al *maqām Ibrāhīm*, non omogenee e nemmeno in piena sintonia tra loro già nelle tradizioni dell'islām classico più accreditato. Il Damasceno, del resto, non faceva altro che attenersi alla pratica islamica nella misura in cui le persone glielie riferivano, forse sotto nomi che solo in seguito conobbero una loro precisa connotazione. La tesi dell'autore è quella di dimostrare, in ultima analisi, che non si debba parlare tanto di "confusione" o di "errore" in Giovanni Damasceno, quanto piuttosto di "confusione" presente nelle stesse tradizioni islamiche e questo anche a proposito dei quattro fiumi del paradiso che nel discorrere di Giovanni sono soltanto tre, come tre sono altresì in Teofane e nella lettera di Leone III. Che senso dare a siffatte discrepanze? Come armonizzare la figura del monaco Bahīrā, che il Damasceno considera "un monaco ariano", con il premonitore dell'investitura profetica di Muḥammad quand'era ancora giovane o poco tempo prima che iniziasse la sua missione di inviato? Come, ancora, giustificare l'asserzione del Damasceno relativa alla circoncisione cui venivano assoggettate anche le bimbe dell'islām, pur non ricorrendo simile notizia in altre fonti a lui anteriori o coeve, come si è sempre ritenuto? Anche per tal materia, Schadler elenca una serie di fonti in grado di fare ancora una volta emergere come in effetti il Damasceno parlasse con cognizione di causa. Solo per enfatizzare questa sua tesi, e non per mero diletterantismo culturale o di inutile saccenteria, il nostro autore chiude il suo libro con una saggia digressione su Teodoro Abū Qurra (750-830), nato un secolo dopo la morte del Damasceno e forse anche lui monaco nel monastero di San Saba, che ebbe indubbia conoscenza delle sue opere, fu, come lui, educato nell'ortodossia sancita dal concilio di Calcedonia e, come lui, ebbe stretti contatti con Gerusalemme ed ebbe, come lui, una circostanziata conoscenza dell'islām. È sulla natura di queste affinità, dove con sufficiente margine o meno spessore, che chiude il suo studio Schadler, dando modo di stagliare sull'orizzonte della ricca letteratura cristiana sull'islām nascente e in fase di affermazione, questi due soli che con vigoria di pensiero e ampiezza di argomentazioni, hanno dato luce e lustro alla storia della teologia orientale.

Bartolomeo PIRONE

Sharp Andrew, *Orthodox Christians and Islam in the Postmodern Age* (History of Christian Muslim Relations, 16), Brill, Leiden-Boston 2012, 258 pp.

A great deal has been written about interreligious dialogue and especially regarding the relations between Christianity and Islam, the encounter between them, the official dialogue promoted in the recent years etc. However, the volume Andrew Sharp is offering us has its own interest and originality. The scholar studies the Orthodox opinion on Islam in the era of postmodernism. This study is important for two reasons: firstly, because it presents the opinion of the Orthodox Church on Islam, and on this topic, there are very few studies; secondly, choosing the period of postmodernism is another reason for the importance of this volume, since during this period the Orthodox Church tried to renew its theology in order to give answers to the different challenges of postmodernism. The study, then, begins with an introduction (pp. 1-9), followed by five chapters (pp. 11-232), a conclusion (pp. 233ff), a list of references (pp. 243-253), and a general index (pp. 255-258).

Already in his introduction, the author declares his aim; this study is an attempt to examine systematically the theological basis for relations between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the actual global situation and to present an analysis of the interactions with each other during the last decades. In the same introduction, Sharp elucidates the term "Orthodox Christians" and clarifies what he means by this term. In this book, the Orthodox Christians are those who have communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. He then determines the chronological period of his study, i.e. the historical context of the texts taken into consideration, which is located between the years 1975 and 2008.

The structure followed in each chapter of this study is identical; starting with a small introduction, which begins always with a quotation from one of the Orthodox scholars examined in this study, followed by the material of the chapter divided into subtitles, and ending with some concluding remarks. The material

of each chapter is analyzed with in systematic way and using a chronological order. Such a method gives the reader a real facility in following the thought of the author.

In fact, this was the main purpose of the first chapter entitled "Historical Background" (pp. 11-47), in which the author offers an historical presentation concerning the Orthodox churches that lived under Islamic rule. Even if Sharp is aware of the fact that the encounter between Orthodoxy and Islam took place centuries before, his presentation begins with the date of the fall of Constantinople, 29 May 1453. In this chapter, then, the author highlights the changes in the life of Christians under the Ottoman Empire: the millet system, the dhimmitude system, the consideration of the Patriarch of Constantinople as Lord and Despot of all Christians inside the Empire, the poverty and weakness of the Church in many fields, especially in education. For the modern period, what interests the author are the relations between the Ottomans and the other European-Christian powers and the role of missionaries in such relations. The most important influence one might point out in such relations is the idea of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The creation of the new nations in the Balkans was accompanied by the creation of the Orthodox national churches with a new ideology regarding church and its relation to the nation. The author also argues the role of Christians Arabs in the creation of the new Arab nations in the Middle East through the so-called Nahḍa (Arab Renaissance).

Presenting the atmosphere of Turkish nationalism, the author explains the dramatic consequences occurring in the life of non-Muslims who were part of the Ottoman Empire and who, with the creation of the Republic of Turkey, were forced to leave their homes and never return. Such an event remains a tragedy in the memory of the Christians of region. Furthermore, the declaration of the creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the basis of the marriage between religion and politics, had negative consequences for the Christians of the region. The period after World War II could correctly be considered a change in the relations between Christians and Muslims of the Middle East and the Balkan, who for centuries lived in relative peaceful coexistence. The chapter concludes with a historical presentation of some events in postmodern age that effected the relations between Christians and Muslims in the region. In that age, in fact, the renewal in the Orthodox theology took place and texts and declarations on Islam and on relations with Muslims began to be an essential issue for Orthodox theologians in order to resolve the 'bad' and 'violent' relations between the two religions caused by the events of the preceding decades.

The second chapter (pp. 49-79), entitled "Orthodox Theological Perspectives on the Religions" is to be considered a theological analysis Sharp makes regarding the theological bases concerning how Orthodoxy should see other religions. To realize his goal, the author analyzes some Orthodox doctrines and the opinions of Orthodox scholars of postmodernism such as Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and Metropolitan Georges Khodr. This chapter gives the reader a clear idea of the sources Orthodox scholars use when they argue such subjects: the Holy Scripture and the patristic tradition.

The analysis begins, then, by highlighting the reading and use of the Scripture by these scholars to demonstrate the openness of Christianity towards people of other religions and respect for their faiths. The consideration of all people as image and likeness of God and that God's revelation cannot be limited to one religion or tradition are the main theological principles of these scholars' reading. Along the same lines, they tried to read and interpret some writing of the Church's Fathers, especially Justin Martyr and his doctrine on the 'seminal reason'. The use of pagan and non-Christian traditions and doctrines by some Fathers, such as Origen and Clement of Alexandria, their dialogue with these religions and traditions and their having seen in them a kind of divine revelation is the key, affirms Sharp, to understand the references made by Orthodox scholars in postmodernism to these Fathers and to their doctrine regarding dialogue between Orthodoxy and other religions.

This doctrine is the principle applied by the same scholars when they treat of the argument concerning dialogue with Islam. In this point the author analyses some statements of Orthodox Hierarchs and scholars: he refers firstly to the opinion of Georges Khodr, who sees the Quran's message of 'submission to God' as relevant for Christians as much for Muslims, so that therefore Christians should study the Quran, particularly those who have cultural and historic connections with Muslims. The opinion of Anastasios Yannoulatos is also important for dialogue since he affirms that in our days Christians and

Muslims should collaborate together to read the signs of times and to resolve the problems this new age creates for people. Other scholars, analyzed by our author, such as Stephan Headly and Theodore Pulcini, highlight the role of mysticism as a bridge between Christianity and Islam.

By this chapter, then, Sharp has succeeded in presenting how modern Orthodox scholars see the importance of dialogue with Islam and how they encourage Christians to have a real dialogue with Muslims in order to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of them and their religion. One might, however, expect a reference to the Arab-Christian heritage and its contribution for centuries to dialogue with Islam, but it seems that modern Orthodox theologians and scholars ignore this important tradition, and do not therefore quote or mention any text or author of this heritage, as they do with the early patristic tradition. In fact, the Arab-Christian heritage could be also a basis for promoting contemporary dialogue with Islam and has much to contribute to it.

The third chapter (pp. 81-126) entitled "Dialogue and Declarations" presents and analyzes the official statements by Orthodox leaders expressed on various occasions in recent years. It is clear that this chapter has also a theological nature, and therefore, one might wonder why the author dedicated a separate chapter for the official statements and declarations in which the principles of dialogue are also clear, and especially when the main two Orthodox figures examined in the second chapter have their place in this one. For sure, Sharp has his reasons; possibly the historical circumstances of these statements – such as the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, the civil war in Lebanon, the creation on the state of Israel, the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and so on – which were expressed in ecumenical encounters and in pan-orthodox meetings.

What is interesting in this chapter is the way the author presents the views of the Orthodox leaders. In order to give the reader a complete and clear comprehension of the thought of each leader, he gives an essential presentation of his biography, highlighting his personal encounters and relationship with Islam and Muslims. It is feasible that such a method encourages the reader, who may not have a personal relationship or meeting with Islam and Muslims, not to be afraid of such an encounter and not to be surprised by some seemingly 'provocative' statements concerning Islam. One statement that could be a good example of this is found in the views of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria Parthenios, who affirmed that the God of Christians is not different from the God of Muslims, and who recognized Muhammad as an apostle.

A special place is given to the statements of Patriarch Bartholomew because of his position as the Ecumenical Patriarch, which puts him in the public eye more than any other Orthodox leader. In his declarations, Bartholomew underlines the importance of dialogue between Christians and Muslims, always giving examples from the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Ottomans, such as the tolerance of the Sultan Mohammad II towards Orthodox Christians.

The same chapter presents the contribution to the WCC of three Orthodox figures, namely, Georges Khodr, Anastasios Yannoulatos and the Lebanese Dr. Tarek Mitri. The first hierarch contributed to the WCC through a theology of religion based on the Orthodox tradition and its cultural encounter with Islam – theology that could be summarized through his expression: "A person who claims to be religious condemns himself to hell if he does not see, in love, the light of God on the face of one who is different". The second hierarch, through the same Orthodox theology, offered a solution to the discussion regarding the relation between 'dialogue' and 'mission', a solution based on the use of the Greek term *martyria* ('witness') and the affirmation that Christians' mission is to witness their experience with God through Christ and to talk about it to others through dialogue. The contribution of Tarek Mitri was less theological and more social. He tried to underline the importance of the human rights, and the rediscovery of a common 'national bond' and 'cultural foundation' between Muslims and Christians that should improve the relations between them, giving as an example the Lebanese case.

The last section of this third chapter treats of the statements and declarations resulting from the collaboration between the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate based in Chambésy and the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought based in Amman. It seems that the reason behind this argument is to highlight the importance of collaboration between the two religions at an academic level, and how such collaboration helps to find common doctrines and values, such as peace, human rights and social justice, which could be a basis for facing together the problems and challenges of the time.

Unfortunately, Sharp does not apply to his texts and authors a critical reading, something that one might expect in some points of this chapter, such as the positive presentation of Patriarch Bartholomew regarding the tolerance of Islam towards Christians in the Ottoman Empire, or the positive consideration of the Lebanese case by Tarek Mitri, when the facts tell something else.

The fourth chapter of this study (pp. 127-178), entitled “Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Identity”, aims to give the reader a description of how Orthodox Christianity and Islam started to dialogue regarding their identities during the last decades because of some common historical events and circumstances occurring in the region of Middle East and the Balkans, already mentioned and analyzed in the first chapter. While the material given to Orthodoxy is detailed and divided into subtitles such as ‘Changing Views of the Church’, ‘Secularism’, ‘the Rise of Individual and Personal Freedoms’, ‘Technology’, ‘Globalization’, ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Ecclesiology’, the material offered on Islamic thought is less detailed. The author’s presentation would have been better if he had followed a comparative method, i.e. explaining how each point influenced the thought of both religions – for example, the influence of the concept ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’ on the identity of each religion, such as the relation between ‘nation’ and some ‘national churches’ from one side, and ‘nation’ and its identification with ‘Islam’ from the other; or the discussion concerning ‘Church and ecclesiology’ and the one regarding ‘Umma’. In addition, there are very few references to Muslim thinkers in this chapter, causing the reader to wonder if a discussion on such topics really took place among Muslims.

The fifth and last chapter of this study (pp. 179-232) is entitled “Changing Attitudes Following the Events of 9/11?”. Already from the title one understands the purpose of this chapter, in which the author analyzes the opinions of some Orthodox scholars and leaders concerning the dialogue with Islam after 9/11 and its necessity in order to face fundamentalism and violence in the name of religion. A further point that Sharp deals with in this chapter is the opposition to dialogue among Orthodox thinkers and leaders, taking as an example the case of the Church of Greece. Even if we consider such a point important, it is noticeable that the analysis the author makes regarding it is insubstantial. In fact, in order to understand the crisis among Orthodox scholars concerning dialogue with other religions, the fears some of them have, and on what they base their opinions, theologically and politically etc., there is a need for a more detailed analysis with more references and deeper examination.

In conclusion, Sharp offers us an important study on Orthodoxy and its relations with Islam during the last decades, on the historical circumstances that guided the development of the dialogue with Islam and Muslims, and on the main Orthodox thinkers and leaders who promoted such dialogue and played an essential role in it.

Bishara EBEID

Sperber Jutta, *Die anthropologischen Aspekte in den christlich-muslimischen Dialogen des Vatikan*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 2018, 671 pp.

Following her dissertation: *Christians and Muslims, The Dialogue Activities of the World Council of Churches and their Theological Foundation*, published in 2000, Jutta Sperber now offers a similar monumental work about interreligious dialogue in the Catholic Church: *Die anthropologischen Aspekte in den christlich-muslimischen Dialogen des Vatikan*. As the title indicates, her main focus is the anthropological dimension of dialogue, but the book contains also many insights into its theological foundations. An important resource was the anthology published by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on the occasion of its 30<sup>th</sup> jubilee containing all relevant documents on the subject.

A first section presents all official Church documents which deal with the theological foundations of interreligious dialogue, starting with the Second Vatican Council and covering the pontificates of Popes Paul VI and John-Paul II as well as other important contributions of other dicasteries.