

PROCHE-ORIENT CHRÉTIEN

Ofer LIVNE-KAFRI

**Is there a Reflection of the Apocalypse of
Pseudo-Methodius in Muslim Tradition?**

Tome 56 2006 Fasc. 1-2

DIALOGUE INTERRELIGIEUX

OFER LIVNE-KAFRI

IS THERE A REFLECTION OF THE APOCALYPSE OF
PSEUDO-METHODIUS IN MUSLIM TRADITION ?

Muslim apocalypse is basically dependent on the eschatological teaching and the legitimacy of the Qur'ān, but many of the materials are to be found in the *ḥadīth*, the Muslim tradition. Interpretation of Muslim apocalyptic *ḥadīth* frequently requires a search into the parallel Jewish and Christian literatures because of the similarities of themes, forms, images, and symbols. Muslim scholars were well acquainted even with Jewish and Christian sources written prior to the rise of Islam, but it is important to study also the nature of the relations among the different (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) apocalyptic literatures against the background of the historical and social reality. In fact, extensive apocalyptic literary activity also appeared among Christians and Jews from the 7th century onward, in reaction to the rise of Islam, the invasions of the Christian lands, and the subsequent military and political activities of Islam. The most important and widespread Christian apocalyptic work in the medieval East was the apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. This treatise is attributed to Methodius of Patra, a 4th century martyred bishop, but it was most probably composed in the second half of the 7th century¹. This composition

¹ For different assumptions on the exact date of its composition see, e.g., F.J. MARTINEZ, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius*, Ph.D. Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1985, p. 25-33. I tend to believe that S.P. Brock's suggestion cited there as to the date, around 690-691 AD, might be reasonable also in light of his observation that "in 688, 'Abd al-Malik had renegotiated a humiliating peace treaty with Justinian II" (*ibid.*, p. 29-30). The reason is an element of *hudna* (ceasefire) which is included as one of the "signs of the hour" in a certain Muslim tradition (cf. Ofer LIVNE-KAFRI, "Jerusalem in Muslim Traditions of the End of Days", *Cathedra* 86 [1998], p. 42-43; in Hebrew). This attests to the importance ascribed to such an event, because in many other traditions "the signs of the hour" are much more dramatic, like the appearance of Gog and Magog. It might have

was very widespread among medieval apocalyptic texts. It enjoyed great influence in the East, and it had many translations in both East and West². The tremendous importance of this work leads us to ask whether Muslim scholars were familiar with Pseudo-Methodius, its ideas, themes, and symbols; and if so, did they react to it, did they borrow from it, or did Muslim texts show awareness of its importance among their military, political and religious adversaries? In the framework of this preliminary study I have chosen to display some characteristics, as a model for further studies.

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Most of the Muslim apocalyptic traditions are sayings or short passages relying generally on chains of transmitters (*isnād*). Such traditions of more than one or two pages are rare, contrary to many lengthy Jewish and Christian apocalypses. We try to trace parallel passages and see whether there is an option for comparison. Still, Pseudo-Methodius has the stamp and attitude of one person, and a kind of unity in the text that we are unable to identify in many separate *ḥadīṭ* traditions. Thus, direct proof of borrowing is not easy to find; nevertheless, a reflection of and reaction to ideas expressed in Pseudo-Methodius are found in Muslim traditions. One should bear in mind that Muslim scholars who wished to express apocalyptic ideas actually had to produce equivalent terminology, which was not used earlier in Arabic; they took it, for example from Syriac. Most of the Muslim apocalyptic traditions were apparently created during the 7th and 8th centuries (or at least are based on such traditions). Among Muslims engaged in the creation of apocalyptic traditions we already

been the *ḥudna* that was imposed on 'Abd al-Malik in 688 which was the first great defeat of Islam (cf. O. LIVNE-KAFRI, "Some Notes on Muslim Apocalyptic Literature in Light of the Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Traditions" (accepted for publication in *Studia Islamica*), note 75. Another ceasefire, in the time of the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwīya, seems to me less apt here; cf. S. BASHEAR, "Apocalyptic and Other Materials on Early Muslim-Byzantine Wars: A Review of Arabic Sources", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, third series, 1 (1991), p. 198-207, especially p. 200.

² See e.g., B. MCGINN, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979), p. 70; MARTINEZ, *Pseudo-Methodius* (note 1 above), p. 11 ff.

find companions of the Prophet Muḥammad and their successors, different religious figures, ascetics, Jewish converts to Islam, rulers, and others. Many Muslims seem to have been interested in the subject because of the powerful apocalyptic teaching of the Qur'ān, and because of calamities that shook the Muslim community like civil wars, plagues, or natural disasters. One characteristic in the creation of the tradition was the ability to "play with" and change traditions, when for example, circumstances changed, but also to promote aims through patterns which were widespread and known³. In the 9th century (3rd century of the *hiġra*) books already existed dedicated to apocalyptic traditions. Contrary to similar chapters in the so called "canonical collections" of *ḥadīṭ*, these preserved many traditions that were not always reliable according to the standards of *ḥadīṭ* critics⁴. Traditions preserved in such sources (but also in other genres)⁵ enable us to observe better the various aspects of the different trends in Muslim eschatology.

A.

There are different suggestions concerning the author, time of composition, and aims of Pseudo-Methodius. It is generally accepted that the work was originally written in Syriac and carried a clear message, both political and religious. According to P.J. Alexander, "Pseudo-Methodius' tract was thus a politico-religious manifesto, rejecting every kind of defeatism or collaboration with the Moslems, warning against reliance on the weak and distant ruler of Ethiopia as a will-o-the-wisp, calling for war to the finish against the conquerors, and preaching that salvation from the Moslem yoke could come from only one source, the most powerful Christian monarch of the time, the

³ Cf. O. Livne-Kafri, "Some Notes Concerning Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition", *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 17 (1999), p. 72-75.

⁴ NU'AYM B. ḤAMMĀD AL-MARWAZĪ [d. 842 AD], *Kitāb al-Fitan wa-l-Malāḥim*, ed. Maġdī b. Maṣṣūr b. Sayyid al-Šūrā (Beirut, 1997). See e.g., also the 11th century ABŪ 'AMR 'UTMĀN B. SA'ID AL-DĀNĪ, *al-Sunan al-Wārīda fī al-Fitan*, ed. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismā'īl al-Šāfi'ī (Beirut, 1997).

⁵ See, e.g., many examples in W. MADELUNG, "The *Sufyānī* between Tradition and History", *Studia Islamica* 63 (1986), p. 5-48; ĠALĀL AL-DĪN AL-SUYŪṬĪ, "al-'Urf al-Wardī fī Aḥbār al-Mahdī", in *al-Ḥāwī li-l-Fatāwā* (Cairo, 1351 AH), vol. 2, p. 213 ff.

basileus at Byzantium”⁶. This is connected to the appearance of Jesus after the rule of the Last Roman Emperor, who (according to one version) after defeating the Muslims at the height of their power will go to Jerusalem. After one year-week and a half (ten and a half years), the antichrist will be born. The Last Emperor will hand over his imperial power to God (symbolically he will take off his diadem and deposit it in Golgotha on the Holy Cross). After the successes of the antichrist, Jesus in his second coming will slay him⁷. This tradition alludes to the Byzantine empire as the last kingdom, namely the Christians (i.e., the Byzantines) will never lose worldly rule even after the rise of the Muslim empire⁸. According to the antichrist legend told by Adso (10th century), the Last Roman Emperor after defeating all his enemies will come to Jerusalem and place his symbols of royalty on the Mount of Olives (not in Golgotha), where Jesus will later kill the antichrist⁹.

⁶ Quoted by MCGINN, *Visions of the End* (note 2 above), p. 70, note 8.

⁷ P.J. ALEXANDER, “Byzantium and the Migration of Literary Works and Motifs: The Legend of the Last Emperor”, *Medievalia et Humanistica*, New Series, 2 (1971), e.g., p. 54-55, the Greek text of Pseudo-Methodius; or p. 57, the Syriac text. The idea that “the transfer of imperial authority from the Last Roman Empire to God at the end of time reflects the Byzantine idea that the Emperor is God’s vice-regent on earth” (*ibid.*, p. 56, note 25 “on the Byzantine view of God as the source of imperial power”) might be likened to the Muslim concept of caliph (*ḥalīfa*; *ḥalīfat Allāh* [God’s vice-regent]); cf. LIVNE-KAFRI, “Some Notes” (note 1 above), note 69.

⁸ Cf. A. WHEALEY, “De Consummatione Mundi of Pseudo-Hippolytus: Another Byzantine Apocalypse from the Early Islamic Period”, *Byzantion* 66 (1996), p. 468, on a more pessimistic solution to the Muslim conquests: not a political saviour like the Last Roman Emperor of Pseudo-Methodius, but expectations of the second coming of Christ, probably because Muslim rule had become more permanent. Cf. Daniel 2:44. Cf. also MCGINN, *Visions* (note 2 above), p. 76 (quoting Pseudo-Methodius), that after the rise of the son of perdition, the king of the Romans will take his crown from his head and place it on the holy cross. The cross and the crown will be taken up together to heaven. It is interesting to compare this to the Dragon handing over his power and might to the antichrist: *ibid.*, p. 52-53.

⁹ O. LIMOR, *Christian Traditions of the Mount of Olives in the Byzantine and Arab Period*, M.A. Thesis, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1978, p. 136-141 (in Hebrew).

B.

A *ḥadīth* having a long chain of transmitters, ending in ‘Amr b. ‘Abdallāh al-Šaybānī al-Ḥaḍramī¹⁰, on behalf of the companion Abū Umāma al-Bāhili¹¹, says: “The Messenger of God gave us a sermon, in most of which he was speaking on the *dağğāl* [antichrist of the Muslim legend] and warning us against him, and among the things he said was ‘Oh people! I am the last prophet, and you are the last among the nations, and he [the *dağğāl*] will unavoidably appear among you (*wa-innahu ḥāriğ fikum la maḥālata*)”¹². This statement might be likened, although it is not identical, to the religious-political idea of Pseudo-Methodius mentioned before. “The last nation”, the Muslims, might be compared in a way to the Christians, the last nation, among whom the antichrist will appear. The idea of the *dağğāl* most probably existed in the lifetime of the prophet Muḥammad, but in a rather basic way¹³ (it does not appear in the Qur’ān).

The statement in this tradition seems to me to belong to a later period (even some decades later), which leads us to the possibility of a date close to the treatise of Pseudo-Methodius. By then a more developed picture of the *dağğāl* story existed, undoubtedly influenced by the Christian legend of the antichrist. The other part of the same

¹⁰ On him: MUḤAMMAD B. ISMĀ‘İL AL-BUHĀRĪ, *al-Ta’rīḥ al-Kabīr* (Hyderabad, 1360-1364 AH), vol. 6, p. 349; IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM AL-RĀZĪ, *Kitāb al-Ġarḥ wa-l-Ta’dīl* (Hyderabad, 1371-1373 AH), vol. 3, part 1, p. 244; IBN ḤAJAR AL-‘ASQALĀNĪ, *Tahdīb al-Tahdīb* (Hyderabad, 1325-1327 AH), vol. 8, p. 68.

¹¹ He died in 86 AH. On him ABŪ ‘AMR ḤALĪFA B. ḤAYĀT, *Kitāb al-Ṭabakāt* (Damascus, 1966), vol. 1, p. 71; IBN S‘AD, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr* (Leiden, 1904-1940), vol. 7, part 2, p. 131; IBN AL-ĠAWZĪ, *Salwat al-Aḥzān* (Alexandria, 1970), p. 125; IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *al-Ta’rīḥ al-Kabīr* (Damascus, 1329-1349), vol. 6, p. 417; ‘ABD AL-RAḤMĀN B. ‘ALĪ, IBN AL-ĠAWZĪ, *Šifat al-Safwa* (Medina, 1978), vol. 1, p. 308; IBN AL-‘IMĀD, *Šaḍarāt al-Dahab* (Cairo, 1350-1351), vol. 1, p. 96; AHMAD B. MUḤAMMAD AL-MAQDISĪ, *Kitāb Muṭīr al-Ġarām bi-Faḍā’il al-Šām*, ed. Aḥmad Sāmiḥ al-Ḥālidi (Jaffa, 1365), p. 23.

¹² IBN MĀĠA, *Sunan* (Cairo, 1952-1953), vol. 2, p. 1359; cf. ABŪ NU‘AYM AL-IṢBAHĀNĪ, *Aḥbār Iṣbahān* (Leiden, 1931-1934), p. 281. See also ABŪ AL-MA‘ĀLĪ AL-MUŠARRAF B. AL-MURAĠĠĀ B. IBRĀHĪM AL-MAQDISĪ, *Kitāb Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-al-Khalīl wa-Faḍā’il al-Šām*, ed. O. Livne-Kafri (Shfaram, 1995), p. 217, no. 317.

¹³ See D.H. HALPERIN, “The Ibn Šayyād Traditions and the Legend of *al-Dajjāl*”, *JAOS* 16 (1976), p. 213-225.

Muslim tradition says that Jesus (‘Īsā) will come to Jerusalem at the time of prayer. The *imām* who leads the prayer will step back so that Jesus may lead the prayer, but Jesus will leave him to do that. Then Jesus will order the gate to be opened; there will be the *dağğāl* along with seventy thousand Jews all girding swords¹⁴. According to other Muslim traditions Jesus will then kill the *dağğāl*¹⁵.

Some motifs in the Muslim traditions seem to be connected to the legend of the Last Emperor, like the appearance of ‘Īsā (Jesus) as a Muslim messiah after a just *imām*¹⁶. According to a late version of the antichrist tradition, he will be executed on the Mount of Olives¹⁷, the same place where the Muslim antichrist (called the *ṣahrī*), will be slaughtered¹⁸. I tend to assume that this is not a reflexive influence of the Muslim tradition, but that it is based on an old Christian version of the antichrist legend.

C.

According to McGinn, “the Pseudo-Methodius offered hope in the dark hour [the sudden success of Islamic conquests]. His vision of a coming Emperor who would defeat the Ismaelites, the enemies of Christ, and restore Roman glory incorporated the rise of Islam, the most important historical event since the conversion of the empire, into a Christian apocalyptic scheme of history”¹⁹. Although there is a messianic element connected to Muslim rulers²⁰, such an element of

¹⁴ IBN AL-MURAĞĠĠĀ (note 12 above), p. 217, no. 317.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 218, no. 318; p. 219, no. 320.

¹⁶ On a certain identification of Jesus as the *mahdī* (messiah) see AL-DĀNĪ, *al-Sunan al-Wārīda fī al-Fitan* (note 4 above), p. 200. Cf. LIVNE-KAFRI, “Some Notes” (note 1 above), note 72. It is also connected to a broader idea of ‘two messiahs’; cf. *ibid.*, the chapter “Two Messiahs, Double Figures, and the Legend of the Last Emperor: A brief look into ‘a dual motive’ within the parallel scheme”.

¹⁷ Cf. note 9 above.

¹⁸ See ĠALĀL AL-DĪN AL-SUYŪṬĪ, “al-‘Urf al-Wardī” (note 5 above), vol. 2, p. 234. Cf. LIVNE-KAFRI, “Some Notes” (note 1 above), note 28.

¹⁹ MCGINN, *Visions of the End* (note 2 above), p. 71.

²⁰ See, e.g., AL-DĀNĪ, *al-Sunan al-Wārīda fī al-Fitan* (note 4 above), pp. 199-200: “on those who said that the *mahdī* is ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz” [the pious Umayyad caliph who ruled between 717-720]”. See also e.g., B. LEWIS, “The Regnal Titles of the First Abbāsīd Caliphs”, *Dr. Zakir Husain Presentation Volume*, New Delhi, 1968, p. 13-22.

imperial eschatology is not prominent in the Muslim tradition. In many Muslim traditions the most important moment in the "apocalyptic scheme of history" will be a final victory on the Byzantines with an emphasis on the conquest of Constantinople²¹. A special need to emphasize imperial Byzantine element in the eschatological picture was also a response of the Pseudo-Methodius to his Syrian compatriots "who opposed the anti-Monophysite theology of the emperors and hence had welcomed the Muslim liberation from the Byzantine yoke. Such eschatological hopes as they had seem to have been placed in the Monophysite rulers of Ethiopia. The response of the Pseudo-Methodius to these brethren was to show that the text from Psalm 68:31 on which they based their claims ('... let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out her hands to God') would be fulfilled in a Byzantine ruler, the descendent of the legendary marriage between Philip of Macedon and Chuseth, the daughter of the king of Ethiopia"²².

Special chapters in the Muslim apocalyptic tradition of an eschatological invasion from Ethiopia into the Muslim lands²³ might be connected to Christian traditions of such an invasion. Among the Muslim traditions, some are related to an Ethiopian ruler who at the end of time will destroy the Ka'ba. These traditions most probably carried for Muslims some association with the famous unsuccessful attempt to attack Mecca by Abraha, the Ethiopian ruler of Yemen, in the latter part of the 6th century. If so, this is related to the perception of a repetition of pre-Islamic events after the advent of Islam in an eschatological context²⁴. This is in fact a pattern known from Pseudo-

²¹ On a final eschatological victory over the Byzantines and the conquest of Constantinople by the Muslims at the time of the *mahdī* see ĠALĀL AL-DĪN AL-SUYŪTĪ, "al-'Urf al-Wardī" (note 5 above), vol. 2, p. 244. There are many traditions of this sort in NU'AYM B. ḤAMMĀD, *al-Fitan* (note 4 above), *passim*; see, e.g., p. 281, end of tradition no. 1113. See also the important chapter on "the [future] conquest of the city of unbelief which is Constantinople and the conquest of Rome", in AL-DĀNĪ, *al-Sunan al-Wārīda fī al-Fitan* (note 4 above), p. 212-218. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 210.

²² MCGINN, *Visions of the End* (note 2 above), p. 71, note 11.

²³ See, e.g., NU'AYM B. ḤAMMĀD, *al-Fitan* (note 4 above), p. 453-457; ABŪ AL-FIDĀ', ISMĀ'IL B. KAṬĪR, *Kitāb al-Nihāya aw al-Fitan wa-l-Malāḥim* (Cairo, 1969), vol. 1, p. 154-158.

²⁴ Cf. LIVNE-KAFRI, "Some Notes Concerning Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition" (note 3 above), p. 85, note 82.

Methodius, according to which in the fifth millennium the sons of Ismael conquered and subdued the earth, but then they were overcome by the sons of Israel and Gideon. They will emerge again in the future and rule the earth, but they will be overcome by the kingdom of the Romans²⁵. One Muslim tradition tells of an Ethiopian army of three hundred thousand warriors under a man called “اسيس” that will fight the Muslims²⁶. Perhaps this is the Greek ἀσεβής (ungodly, unholy, profane). If so, I wonder if this Muslim tradition is not based on a Greek-Byzantine apocalyptic passage in which the supposed Monophysite ruler of Ethiopia appears as a wicked figure. Only a detailed study of the Muslim traditions of the invasions from Ethiopia (included the historical background) might help to solve such problems; any way, it seems that they are connected to Christian traditions, especially the one of Pseudo-Methodius²⁷.

D.

According to McGinn, in the Methodian picture of the Last Emperor and imperial Byzantine apocalypticism “Byzantium had become the new Rome, Daniel’s fourth kingdom, identified with that force which restrained the coming of the Antichrist”²⁸, and eventually it would subdue the Muslim empire.

● In fact the book of Daniel (the source of the “four kingdoms”) inspired the creation of Muslim literature attributed to Daniel. It generally deals with the revelation of future events of the Muslim community²⁹. The wish to identify apocalyptic periods, specific years, and

²⁵ MARTINEZ, *Pseudo-Methodius* (note 1 above), p. 127-130 (text of Pseudo-Methodius translated by Martinez).

²⁶ NU‘AYM B. ḤAMMĀD, *al-Fitan* (note 4 above), p. 455-456, nos. 1408, 1414.

²⁷ I wonder if there is a way to identify the 19 years of the reign of the Umayyad caliph Ḥiṣām with the 19 years of Alexander as an “eschatological number”, or if it is just a coincidence. Alexander reigned 19 years according to Pseudo-Methodius (see MCGINN, *Visions* [note 2 above], p. 73). Cf. B. LEWIS, “An Apocalyptic Vision of Islamic History”, *BEOAS* 13 (1941-1945), p. 327, identification of the dates of Ḥiṣām’s reign. See also Y. EVEN SHMUEL, *Midreshei Geula* (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 185 (in Hebrew).

²⁸ MCGINN, *Visions* (note 2 above), p. 71.

²⁹ See G. VAJDA, “Dāniyāl”, *EF²*, vol. 2 (1965), p. 112-113. According to the entry “Malāḥim”, *EF²*, vol. 6 (1995), p. 216, “it is mainly devoted to the *Malḥamat Dāniyāl*”, with a leaning to predictions of the fate of different dynasties. Regard-

events was partly connected to the grand vision like the cosmic week of seven thousand years. This is in fact the scheme of world history of seven millennia in Pseudo-Methodius³⁰. A highly irregular apocalyptic tradition in Nua'ym b. Ḥammad's *fitan* (our note 4) is connected to such a view. The tradition is attributed to an ancient prophet named Nāṭ. M. Cook, who first discovered it³¹, emphasized that its transmitters were from Ḥims, where Muslim apocalypics had flourished³². The beginning of the tradition is quoted by Cook: "He [Nāṭ] spoke of time (*al-dahr*), and said: Time consists of seven 'weeks', a 'week' (*sābū*) being seven thousand years, and an 'epoch' (*'iddān* [Cook refers to this term as prominent in the Book of Daniel, and among other sources he refers to the Christian aspect as reflected in Pseudo-Methodius])³³ being a thousand years"³⁴. But does this Muslim tradition reflect the millennium concept as presented in Pseudo-Methodius? I believe that the general concept is similar: there is a borrow-

ing Jewish sources see, e.g., EVEN SHMUEL (note 27 above), p. 199-252; for an example from a Judaeo-Arabic text see O. LIVNE-KAFRI, "The Commentary on Habakkuk by the Karaite Yefeth b. 'Alī al-Baṣrī", *Sfunot* 6 (21), 1993, p. 88 (interpretation of Habakkuk 3:2; in Judaeo-Arabic). An interesting example is the eschatological numbers 1335 and 1295, probably under the influence of Daniel 12:11 (1290), 12:12 (1335) in NU'AYM, *al-Fitan* (note 4 above), p. 466. Cf. MCGINN, *Visions* (note 2 above), p. 54 ("The Revelation of John and Daniel the Prophet prove that the consummation and perfection of the times is to be completed in three years and six months [said to be 1260 days or to make forty-two months]"). Cf. Daniel 7:25, "The saints will be handed over to him for a time, two times and half a time".

³⁰ Cf. basic perceptions in the Qur'ān, Su. 22, 47 ("... A day for your God is like a thousand years of your reckoning"); cf. Su. 32, 4 ("God who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days..."), 5 ("He manages the affairs from the heavens to the earth; then it will go up to Him in a day whose measure is like a thousand years of your reckoning").

³¹ M. COOK, "An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), p. 25-29. Cook quoted MS British Library, Or. 9449, fols. 198b-200b. In the published edition (our note 4 above), it is on p. 477-480, no. 1496.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 26. He quotes W. MADELUNG, "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥims in the Umayyad Age", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31 (1986), p. 143. See also LIVNE-KAFRI, "Some Notes Concerning Muslim Apocalyptic Tradition" (note 3 above), p. 87.

³³ M. COOK, "An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle", (note 31 above), p. 27, note 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

ing from Christian literature, but not necessarily from Pseudo-Methodius. The manner itself of attacking the Muslims through the validity of old prophecies based on seven millennia is used by Nāṭ's tradition. Most of Nāṭ's prophecy relates to future events after the appearance of the prophet of Islam. There, in several places, are promises of the fall of Rome (*rūmiya*) and Byzantium (*bizantiya*). This last word is very rare in Muslim tradition, as usually the term *qustanḫīniyya* (Constantinople) is used. Cook was right to point out that this tradition is "quite unlike the rest" of Nu'aym's materials³⁵. I believe that this difference is connected to such a terminology for the whole scheme, for example, the use of the statement: "*al-'adrā' al-batūl* [both words mean 'the virgin'; such a combination is not very common in Muslim traditions] will give birth and he [Jesus] will make miracles (*āyāt*) and will revive the dead, and will be elevated to heaven"³⁶. It seems that Arṭā b. al-Munḍir (d. 163 AH/779-780 AD), who told this tradition³⁷, or someone who knew his fame as a learned man of apocalyptic materials and attributed the tradition to him, used a Christian apocalypse and adapted it to the Muslim value systems and needs. This was done especially in reaction to Byzantine apocalyptic propaganda. We might say that just as the Christian apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius wished to ignite hope of the destruction of the Muslim invaders, Muslim literary activity did likewise, with the roles reversed. Nāṭ's tradition is very different from many Muslim apocalyptic traditions (even in Nu'aym's book), which emphasize the rivalry with the Byzantines and the future conquest of Constantinople by the Muslims as the final stage of history³⁸.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁶ NU'AYM, *al-Fitan* (MS British Library, or 9449, fol. 198b. The reading in the published edition (note 4 above), p. 477, line 6, is not entirely correct.

³⁷ M. COOK, "An Early Islamic Apocalyptic Chronicle" (note 31 above), p. 26, note 10. According to one account he was even considered to be one of the *abdāl* saints. See LIVNE-KAFRI, "Early Muslim Ascetics and the World of Christian Monasticism", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996), p. 123.

³⁸ Cf. note 21 above. Such traditions might have been influenced by Christian apocalypses as well, but they are very different from Nāṭ's way.

parallèles, à cause des similarités de thèmes, de formes, d'images et de symboles. Cet article entend trouver des réponses à la question de savoir si les auteurs musulmans connaissaient bien l'importante apocalypse du Pseudo-Méthode, composée très probablement dans la deuxième moitié du septième siècle. Sous forme de notes et de suggestions préliminaires, il suppose que certaines traditions apocalyptiques musulmanes, comme celles concernant la notion d'un "dernier royaume", la légende du dernier empereur, l'invasion à partir de l'Éthiopie, ou le schéma millénariste – en plus d'autres questions comme les légendes d'Alexandre ou de l'anti-christ – reflètent une connaissance du Pseudo-Méthode ou d'ouvrages chrétiens qui lui ressemblent ou lui ont emprunté certains éléments.

IN CONCLUSION

These were preliminary notes and suggestions, and the entire matter needs more specific studies. Although it is very hard to prove direct borrowing, I believe that certain Muslim apocalyptic traditions, like those related to the notion of “a last kingdom”, the legend of the Last Emperor, the invasion from Ethiopia, or the millenary scheme as described, reflect knowledge of Pseudo-Methodius (or Christian works similar to it or that borrowed from it) among Muslim scholars who borrowed from it and created Muslim traditions as a reaction in the opposite direction: engendering hope for the Muslims in apocalyptic terms against the Christian threat represented by perpetual military confrontations between the Byzantine and the Muslim empires. This is related to other themes too, like the Alexander legend and the appearance of Gog and Magog, and especially to the legend of the antichrist, which obviously influenced the Muslim legend of the *dağğāl*. If indeed there is an influence of Pseudo-Methodius on the creation of Muslim traditions, it still amounts only to a fraction of the similarities and connections in apocalyptic traditions created by Jews, Christians, and Muslims after the rise of Islam³⁹. This proves a similar cultural background, connections among the different communities and their scholars, and the enormous importance given to the role of eschatology in people’s lives. Apocalypses expressed agonies and hopes, promoted religious, social and political aims. Often they used traditional apocalyptic themes and forms combined with the needs of an actual reality. Identifying of these elements, such as the religious and political significance of Muslim traditions related to Pseudo-Methodius, is not easy.

Dr Ofer LIVNE-KAFRI

Department of Arabic
University of Haifa, Mount Carmel

Ofer LIVNE-KAFRI, **Y a-t-il un reflet de l’apocalypse du Pseudo-Méthode dans la tradition musulmane ?** — *L’interprétation des traditions apocalyptiques musulmanes requiert souvent une étude des littératures juives et chrétiennes*

³⁹ See, e.g., O. LIVNE-KAFRI, “Some Notes on Muslim Apocalyptic Literature in Light of the Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Traditions” (note 1 above).

CHRONIQUES

Deuxième semestre 2005

CHRONIQUES DES ÉGLISES

ÉGLISES ORIENTALES ORTHODOXES

ÉGLISE ARMÉNIENNE ORTHODOXE

Visites pastorales de S.S. Aram I^{er} en Amérique du Nord

Durant les mois de septembre et d'octobre 2005, S.S. Aram I^{er}, catholicos de Cilicie, a fait un long séjour auprès des communautés arméniennes orthodoxes du Canada et des États-Unis. Étant donné qu'il est aussi président du Comité central du Conseil œcuménique des Églises, son voyage a comporté plusieurs rencontres œcuméniques au plan local comme au plan international. Son passage fut l'occasion de célébrer à la fois son 10^e anniversaire comme catholicos, le 75^e anniversaire de l'ouverture du séminaire d'Antélias et le 90^e anniversaire du génocide arménien.

Au Canada, les premières célébrations ont eu lieu à Montréal, le 24 septembre, où le catholicos eut droit à de nombreux et touchants témoignages de reconnaissance pour son engagement pastoral. Lui-même répondit par une exhortation, qu'il reprendra tout au long de son périple nord-américain :

“Pour nous le travail principal et constant est le service. Notre nation grandit à travers ce que nous lui donnons avec dévouement et générosité et nous grandissons avec elle. Nous nous enrichissons dans la mesure où notre nation s'enrichit. Je n'ai pas travaillé seul durant ces années passées. J'ai toujours cru au travail d'équipe. Je n'ai jamais désiré rester dans des cercles étroits et clos. J'ai toujours voulu la même chose pour toutes nos institutions et organisations. Nous devons nous ouvrir et sortir de nos cercles étroits.”

Le 25 septembre, après avoir célébré la sainte Liturgie à St-Ke-vork de Laval, le catholicos s'est rendu au centre Pierre Mercure de Montréal, où il a présidé une cérémonie de commémoration, organi-