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Instances of Cultural Appropriation in the Works of Paulus Alvarus and Eulogius of Córdoba

Hispano-Roman Culture, p. 286. – Cultural Constellations in al-Andalus, p. 289. – Verus Israel, p. 292. – Islam – a Product of Cultural Appropriation?, p. 293. – The Aim: An Intended Revolution of Power Structures, p. 296.

ABSTRACT: In ninth-century Córdoba, Paulus Alvarus and his friend Eulogius were promoters of the so-called ‘movement’ of (voluntary) Christian martyrs in Umayyad al-Andalus. They resented the political and cultural dominance of Arabic and Islam, resorting to an idealised past marked by the Latin und Christian culture of Visigothic Spain. In this context, Paulus Alvarus argued with Eleazar, a Christian convert to Judaism, reproaching him with allegedly appropriating Biblical traditions for himself. According to Paulus Alvarus, the Christian church was now the true Israel, whereby he himself appropriated Jewish traditions for Christianity. On the other hand, he also argued with his Christian opponents who pointed to the monotheistic character of Islam and the generally peaceful nature of Umayyad rule in al-Andalus, denying the possibility of Christian martyrdom under such conditions. To counter such irenic claims, Paulus Alvarus charged the Islamic prophet with falsely appropriating Jewish and Christian, especially heretical, traditions for his new religion. The charge of cultural appropriation was a weapon wielded by proponents of a Christian minority position in the context of their struggle against the political and cultural advances of the Islamic world.

The aristocrat Paulus Alvarus of Córdoba lived as a layman in ninth-century Córdoba, which had been under Muslim domination for more than a century. Even though he was not a cleric, he was learned and cultured; his learning was not confined to secular matters, since he also addressed theological and religious issues¹. He is famous mostly for two reasons: First, he initiated an exchange of letters with the Jewish convert Bodo-Eleazar, a Frankish cleric who defected to al-Andalus where he embraced Judaism².

¹ Cf. CARLETON M. SAGE, *Paul Albar of Cordoba. Studies on his Life and Writings* (Studies in Medieval History N.S. 5), Washington D.C. 1943; KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, *The Indiculus luminosus of Paulus Alvarus* (Translated Texts for Historians 84), Liverpool 2023, pp. 20–42.

² Cf. FRANK RIESS, *From Aachen to Al-Andalus. The Journey of Deacon Bodo (823–76)*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 13, 2005, pp. 131–157; ID., *The Journey of Deacon Bodo from the Rhine to the Guadalquivir. Apostasy and Conversion to Judaism in Early Medieval Europe*, London – New York 2019; WOLFRAM DREWS, *Bodo-Eleazar und Paulus Alvarus von Córdoba. Ein jüdisch-christlicher Disput im umayyadischen Spanien des 9. Jahrhunderts*, in: SEBASTIAN GÜNTHER – FLORIAN WILK (eds.), *Lesen, Deuten, Verstehen?! Debatten über Heilige Texte in Orient und Okzident* (SERAPHIM 10), Tübingen 2021, pp. 130–145.

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Second, he was one of the two ‘patrons’ of the so-called movement of Christian ‘martyrs’, who publicly denounced Islam in the middle of the ninth century; in this context, he wrote the biography of the other champion of the ‘martyrs’, his friend Eulogius, and he also composed the first Latin refutation and indictment of Islam, the ‘Indiculus luminosus’³.

However, from his upbringing and early career, Paulus Alvarus was far from being original. Born into a wealthy family of Hispano-Roman descent, which had embraced Visigothic identity in the seventh century⁴, he led the life of a typical provincial aristocrat. Since there were no longer palace schools after the demise of the Visigothic monarchy, members of the elite were brought up in ecclesiastical schools. Consequently, Paulus Alvarus attended the monastic school of abbot Sperandio, together with his friend Eulogius, who – unlike himself – became a priest.

HISPANO-ROMAN CULTURE

From the perspective of material culture, language and literature, Christianity in al-Andalus was marked by Roman traditions. Paulus Alvarus himself is a good case in point: He cherished Latin learning and literature, and he dedicated himself to a typical pastime of Roman aristocrats, writing and exchanging letters⁵. Increasingly, aristocratic epistolographers in late antiquity included also clerics, mostly bishops, and in this particular case, also a Christian convert to Judaism⁶. Paulus Alvarus saw himself clearly

³ Cf. KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge Iberian and Latin American Studies), Cambridge 1988; FELICIANO DELGADO LEÓN, *Álvaro de Córdoba y la polémica contra el Islam. El Indiculus luminosus*, Córdoba 1996.

⁴ In his correspondence, he styles himself as “the one whom Alexander said should be avoided, whom Pyrrhus feared and Caesar dreaded” (Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 20, quotation in: BAXTER WOLF, *The Indiculus luminosus* [as note 1], p. 22); the wording follows Isidore of Seville and Orosius, indicating two points of reference for Alvarus’s thinking.

⁵ Cf. ULISSE CECINI, *Die lateinische Sprache bei Paulus Alvarus*, in: MATTHIAS MASER – KLAUS HERBERS (eds.), *Von Mozarabern zu Mozarabismen. Zur Vielfalt kultureller Ordnungen* (Spanische Forschungen der Görresgesellschaft 41), Münster 2014, pp. 167–178.

⁶ For Christian epistolography cf. IAN N. WOOD, *Why Collect Letters?*, in: GERNOT MICHAEL MÜLLER (ed.), *Zwischen Alltagskommunikation und literarischer Identitätsbildung. Studien zur lateinischen Epistolographie in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, Stuttgart 2018, pp. 45–62; RALPH WHITNEY MATHISEN, *The ‘Publication’ of Latin Letter Collections in Late Antiquity*, in: *ibid.*, pp. 63–84; HENDRIK HESS, *Gallien zwischen Imperium und regna. Kontingenzdarstellung und -bewältigung in den Briefsammlungen des Sidonius Apollinaris, des Ruricius von Limoges und des Avitus von Vienne*, in: ID. – MATTHIAS BECHER (eds.), *Kontingenzerfahrungen und ihre Bewältigung zwischen imperium und regna. Beispiele aus Gallien und angrenzenden Gebieten vom 5. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2021, pp. 155–200; VERONIKA EGETENMEYER, *Constructing Emotions and Creating Identities. Emotional Persuasion in the Letters of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ruricius of Limoges*, in: MATEUSZ J. FAFINSKI – JAKOB RIEMENSCHNEIDER (eds.), *The Past Through Narratology. New Approaches to Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Das Mittelalter. Beihefte 18), Heidelberg 2022, pp. 75–92. See also JOHANNES SCHNEIDER, s. v. *Brief*, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 2, 1954, cols. 564–585.

in the tradition of earlier Roman elites, who had practiced epistolography for centuries. Since the Christianisation of the empire in late antiquity, men with an aristocratic background had increasingly joined the ranks of the Christian clergy, especially when it was no longer possible to pursue secular careers in imperial service, as had been customary in earlier periods.

Since at least the seventh century, from Isidore of Seville onwards, Hispano-Roman culture had merged with the political heritage of the Visigothic monarchy⁷. After 589, the Visigoths had embraced Catholic Christianity⁸, which had resulted in the elimination of the most visible sign of separate Gothic identity, the profession of Homoian Christianity (Arianism). From then on, the phrase *rex, gens et patria Gothorum* increasingly referred to the aristocratic elite of the Visigothic kingdom, centred around the kingdom of Toledo⁹. In the seventh century, the term 'Roman' mostly referred to the Byzantine empire, which was on occasion also referred to as *res publica*. By contrast, the elite in Spain saw itself as Gothic, even though the majority of its members were of provincial Roman descent, such as the family of Leander and Isidore of Seville¹⁰. Paradoxically, provincial Romans adopted Gothic identity, which was expressed by means of Catholic Christianity and Latin learning. Interestingly, the Spanish church saw itself as the embodiment of religious orthodoxy, against both the Byzantine emperor and the pope of Rome, both of whom were reprimanded by Spanish bishops for allegedly leaning towards heterodox teachings¹¹. The so-called Isidorian renaissance encompassed both the secular heritage of Latin learning and the religious tradition of orthodox Catholicism, both of which were thought to reside in Toledo, perceived as the centre of Latin Christianity¹².

This mindset is striking for several reasons. It was ahistorical insofar as it disregarded the barbarian origins of the Gothic monarchy as well as the Jewish origins of Christianity. The Jews were singled out as the most important out-group, against

⁷ Cf. STEFAN PABST, *Das theologische Profil des Julian von Toledo. Das Leben und Wirken eines westgotischen Bischofs des siebten Jahrhunderts* (Vigiliae christianae. Supplement 165), Leiden 2021, pp. 20–58.

⁸ Cf. ALBERTO FERREIRO, *Sanctissimus idem princeps sic venerandum concilium adloquitur dicens*. King Reccared's Discourses at the Third Council of Toledo (589), in: *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 46, 2014, pp. 27–52; ID., *Quia pax et caritas facta est*. Unity and Peace in Leander's Homily at the Third Council of Toledo (589), in: *Annuario Historiae Conciliorum* 48, 2018, pp. 87–108.

⁹ Cf. SUZANNE TEILLET, *Des Goths à la nation gothique. Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident, du V^e au VII^e siècle*, Paris 2011.

¹⁰ Cf. JACQUES FONTAINE, *Qui a chassé de Carthaginoise Sévérianus et les siens? Observations sur l'histoire familiale d'Isidore de Seville*, in: ID., *Tradition et actualité chez Isidore de Séville* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 281), vol. 1, London 1988, pp. 349–400.

¹¹ Cf. FRANCIS-XAVIER MURPHY, *Julian of Toledo and the Condemnation of Monothelitism in Spain*, in: *Mélanges Joseph de Ghellinck* (Museum Lessianum. Section historique 13–14), Gembloux 1951, pp. 361–373; PABST, *Das theologische Profil* (as note 7), pp. 235–299.

¹² Cf. JACQUES FONTAINE, *Isidore de Séville. Genèse et originalité de la culture hispanique au temps des Wisigoths* (Témoins de notre histoire 8), Turnhout 2000.

which Gothic identity was constructed in the seventh century¹³. The Gothic church saw itself as the *Verus Israel*, the true, spiritual Israel, which supposedly had replaced the first covenant, the Old Testament¹⁴. When the Visigoths adopted Catholic Christianity after 589, they took over the traditions of patristic anti-Judaism as well, which had been aimed at disinheriting, expropriating and replacing the supposedly old, carnal Israel, the people of the Jews¹⁵. The barbarian people of the Goths adopted both Roman and Catholic identity, shedding their Germanic heritage but for personal and a few institutional names. This change of political and religious identity was achieved by laying claim to political and religious truth: On the political level, the Byzantine emperor was reproached with fostering heterodox (miaphysite) Christianity, which supposedly made him unfit to represent true Roman traditions, and on the religious level, the Gothic church claimed to represent the centre of orthodoxy, both against the pope of Rome (on the issue of monothelitism) and against the Jews.

The Gothic king Leovigild, who also conquered the kingdom of the Suebi, adopted Byzantine court ceremonial in the 580s, and he also founded a new royal city, named Reccopolis after his son and successor¹⁶. Toledo and its surroundings were turned into the centre of a new, imperial monarchy, which was accentuated by the adoption of the imperial name *Flavius* by several Gothic kings (which was later also used by provincial Roman aristocrats, as evidenced by the correspondence of Paulus Alvarus). In the religious sphere, Gothic Arianism (the Homoian creed) was

¹³ Cf. WOLFRAM DREWS, *The Unknown Neighbour. The Jew in the Thought of Isidore of Seville* (The Medieval Mediterranean 59), Leiden – Boston 2006, pp. 7–32, 317–322.

¹⁴ This language was based on Biblical precedent, cf. John 1, 47, taken up by Isidorus Hispalensis, eccl. off. 2, 10 (De subdiaconis; Isidorus Hispalensis, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, ed. CHRISTOPHER M. LAWSON [CC 113], Turnhout 1989, p. 69): [...] *ad primum diuinitatis indicium fidelis enituit, protestante domino ac dicente: Ecce uere Israelita in quo dolus non est*. Cf. Isidorus Hispalensis, quaest. in IV Reg. 8 (De transmigratione Israel in Babyloniam; Isidorus Hispalensis, *Mysticorum expositiones sacramentorum seu quaestiones in vetus testamentum* [Migne PL 83], Paris 1850, cols. 207–438, here col. 422): [...] *quis non agnoscat quid praefiguraverit, qui attenderit veros Israelitas, in quibus dolus non est, per apostolicam dispensationem cum evangelico sacramento ad regnum gentium transmigrasse?* Cf. also Isidorus Hispalensis, fid. cath. 2, 24 (Isidorus Hispalensis, *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* [Migne PL 83], Paris 1850, cols. 449–538, here col. 532): *omnis enim per fidem verus Israel exit ab Aegypto, dum renuntiat saeculo*. The idea of supplantation is very clear in Taio Caesaraugustanus, sent. 2, 16 (Taio Caesaraugustanus, *Liber sententiarum*, ed. JULIA AGUILAR MIQUEL [CC 116A], Turnhout 2022, p. 134): *Iacob quippe supplantator, Israel uero uidens Dominum dicitur, et quid per Iacob nisi Iudaicus populus, quid per Israel nisi gentilis populus designatur?*

¹⁵ Cf. DREWS, *The Unknown Neighbour* (as note 13), pp. 180–185, 191–192.

¹⁶ Cf. KLAUS RADDATZ, *Reccopolis. Eine westgotische Stadt in Kastilien*, in: HERBERT JANKUHN (ed.), *Vor- und Frühformen der europäischen Stadt im Mittelalter. Bericht über ein Symposium in Reinhausen bei Göttingen in der Zeit vom 18. bis 24. April 1972* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen. Philologisch-Historische Klasse 3, Folge 83–84), vol. 1, Göttingen 1973, pp. 152–162; RAMÓN TEJA CASUSO, *Los símbolos del poder. El ceremonial regio de Bizancio a Toledo*, in: *Toledo y Bizancio*, Cuenca 2002, pp. 113–121; MANUEL CASTRO PRIEGO, *‘Reccopolis’ y los contextos numismáticos de época visigoda en el centro de la Península Ibérica*, in: *Revue numismatique* 171, 2014, pp. 463–495.

abandoned very quickly¹⁷; consequently, it was the Jews who were turned into the main internal enemy, who served as a backdrop for the construction of Gothic orthodoxy. Following patristic tradition, the Jews were marginalised and expropriated, even though they managed to survive in secret¹⁸, probably until the end of the Gothic monarchy.

CULTURAL CONSTELLATIONS IN AL-ANDALUS

After the Muslim conquest of most of the Iberian peninsula, the political conditions changed fundamentally. Christianity lost the political backing of the Gothic monarchy, it was reduced to the status of the religion of a protected people, on a par with the Jews¹⁹. Some Gothic magnates came to agreements with the Islamic authorities, preserving their social status²⁰. In addition, Christians in al-Andalus were able to lead their lives in private mostly as they had done before. However, in public, especially in town centres, they lost their formerly predominant position, especially after the middle of the ninth century, when the splendour of Abbasid court culture from Baghdad was increasingly imitated also in Córdoba.

Most importantly, at least from the perspective of Paulus Alvarus, Latin was no longer the language of power. Members of Christian elites who had lost their former hegemonic social position felt the loss most drastically; from their perspective, it was a downfall, accompanied by social descent. This loss of power entailed a weakening of Latin culture²¹. Whereas the seventh century had seen the blossoming of Latin learning during the Isidorian renaissance, the ninth century seemed to show the opposite tendency, a decline. Christianity lost the position of cultural hegemony, being reduced to an inferior position. For Christians maintaining traditions of Visigothic Spain, it was an unfamiliar situation: Latin was no longer a language of power and prestige, being reduced to the position of some kind of counterculture, preserved in private, outside the public sphere. Paulus Alvarus expressed this feeling of marginalisation towards

¹⁷ Cf. EDWARD ARTHUR THOMPSON, *The Conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism*, in: *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 4, 1960, pp. 4–35.

¹⁸ Cf. WOLFRAM DREWS, *Jews as Pagans? Polemical Definitions of Identity in Visigothic Spain*, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 11, 2002, pp. 189–207.

¹⁹ Cf. CYRILLE AILLET, *Les Mozarabes. Christianisme, islamisation et arabisation en péninsule Ibérique (IX^e–XII^e siècle)* (Bibliothèque de la Casa de Velázquez 45), Madrid 2010, pp. 45–93; KLAUS HERBERS, *Being Christian in the Emirate of Córdoba. The Impact and Concepts of Holiness and Sacrality*, in: ANA ECHEVARRÍA ARSUAGA – DOROTHEA WELTECKE (eds.), *Religious Plurality and Interreligious Contacts in the Middle Ages* (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 161), Wiesbaden 2020, pp. 81–108.

²⁰ On the treaty of Tudmīr see OLIVIA REMIE CONSTABLE, *The Treaty of Tudmir (713)*, in: EAD. (ed.), *Medieval Iberia. Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (The Middle Ages Series), Philadelphia (PA) 2012, pp. 45–46; DANIEL G. KÖNIG, *Year 713. The Treaty of Tudmīr as a Testimony to the Muslim Subjection of the Iberian Peninsula*, in: *Transmediterranean History* 2.1, 2020, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18148/tmh/2020.2.1.24>, [last accessed: 30/10/2024].

²¹ Cf. AILLET, *Les Mozarabes* (as note 19), pp. 133–152.

the beginning of his anti-Islamic treatise: “What greater persecution of any kind could there be and what more severe form of degradation could be imagined than not being allowed to express in public what is reasonably believed in the heart ²²?”

Paulus Alvarus bemoaned the cultural loss perceived by himself in a famous passage criticizing the attraction of Christian youths to Arabic culture at the very end of this treatise:

What clever person, I ask, is to be found today among our faithful laymen who, intent on the sacred scriptures, reviews the works, written in Latin, of any of the doctors? Who is possessed by a fire of love for the evangelical, prophetic, or apostolic writings? Do not all the Christian youths, handsome of face, eloquent in language, conspicuous in demeanour and bearing, outstanding in gentile erudition, and elevated by eloquence in Arabic avidly take out, intently read, and keenly examine the volumes of the Chaldeans, and, gathering together with immoderate zeal, make them known by praising them, with ample and constrained language, while, ignorant of ecclesiastical beauty, they disdain as most vile the rivers of the church flowing from paradise? Oh, the pain of it! Christians do not know their own law and Latins do not pay attention to their own language, so that in the entire brotherhood of Christ scarcely is there found one in a thousand men who is able to direct letters of greeting to a brother in a reasonable manner, and one can find abundant crowds without number that can eruditely set forth Chaldean displays of words, to the point that they adorn the final clauses, drawing them together with a single letter, with more metrically erudite song and more sublime beauty than is done by those peoples themselves; and, in accordance with what the idiom of this language demands, which closes all the vowel marks through the hemistichs and lines, the letters of the entire alphabet are constrained rhythmically, or rather (as it befits the same) metrically, through various turns of phrase and many variants, into a single, or at least similar, letter at the end. There are many other things which would have demonstrated the validity of this exposition of ours, or better, that would have brought it forth more clearly into the light ²³.

Alvarus feared the attraction of Arabic culture, which he equated with the attraction of the religion of Islam. From his perspective, Christian youths appropriated Arabic culture for themselves, which – from his perspective – led to an abandonment of Latin and Christian heritage. The underlying situation was marked first by asymmetrical power relations, and second by an identification of religion and culture. In this last respect Alvarus was clearly under the influence of Visigothic constellations, as explained above: In the seventh century, Catholic Christianity and Roman culture had merged to become almost indistinguishable, ironically under the label ‘Gothic’. Even after the Visigothic monarchy had vanished from the scene, the merger of Catholic religion and Latin culture remained intact. Therefore, Christians abandoning Latin culture in favour of Arabic were suspected of changing their religion as well.

The identification of religion with culture was sustained in several monastic establishments on the outskirts of Córdoba, which included both monasteries and basilicas erected over the tombs of Roman martyrs. It was in these monasteries and basilicas

²² Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 6 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], p. 119); Paulus Alvarus, *Indiculus luminosus*, ed. JUAN GIL (CC Cont. Med. 65A), Turnhout 2020, p. 595: *Et que maior poterit esse persecutio [...] quando quod corde rationauiliter creditur ore in publico non profertur?*

²³ Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 35 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], pp. 200–201; ed. GIL [as note 22], pp. 644–645).

that schools were established where Latin learning continued. It was precisely in these schools that some of the future Cordovan ‘martyrs’ were educated. A case in point is the *exceptor reipublicae* Isaac, a Christian official at the Umayyad court, who suddenly left his office, withdrawing from public life into eremitic solitude in a suburban monastery²⁴. From the perspective of Christians adhering to an identification of religion and culture, urban centres were now dominated by Arabic language, Islamic religion and sophisticated court culture modelled after the example of Abbasid Baghdad²⁵. Since the town centre was now occupied (or appropriated) by Arabic-Islamic authorities, those Christians who continued to adhere to Latin Christian culture and Visigothic traditions withdrew to suburban peripheries, where they established networks able to support people resisting Islamic domination. In many cases, such people came from religiously mixed families, where they were unable to practice Christianity freely; in order to avoid their Muslim family members, they withdrew to monasteries and basilicas where they joined ‘pure’ Christian communities²⁶.

Paulus Alvarus is probably the individual who felt these developments most clearly. To be sure, many ordinary Christians may not have felt that way; such Christians adapted more or less easily to the conditions of Arabic dominance²⁷. This Christian majority rejected the prophetic and radical gestures of the Cordovan ‘martyrs’; they did not accept the Christian victims as martyrs at all, criticizing them for jeopardizing the peaceful life of Christians under Islamic rule. It was precisely against such critics that Paulus Alvarus and Eulogius unfolded their literary activities²⁸.

Cultural appropriation mattered to Paulus Alvarus on several levels. From his perspective, Latin Christianity had been dispossessed of its rightful, inherited position as the dominant cultural force legitimating Visigothic rule in post-Roman Spain. This devaluation of cultural capital was accompanied and made manifest by a contemporary ‘defection’ of Christian youths towards Arabic culture.

²⁴ Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* II, 2, 1 (KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, *The Eulogius Corpus* [Translated Texts for Historians 71], Liverpool 2019, pp. 209–210; Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum*, ed. JUAN GIL [CC Cont. Med. 65B], Turnhout 2020, p. 787).

²⁵ Cf. JANINA M. SAFRAN, *Identity and Differentiation in Ninth-Century al-Andalus*, in: *Speculum* 76, 2001, pp. 573–598; AILLET, *Les Mozarabes* (as note 19), pp. 95–127.

²⁶ A case in point is Leocritia, contact with whom led to the downfall of Eulogius; cf. Paulus Alvarus, *Vita Eulogii* 13–16 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 24], pp. 137–143; Paulus Alvarus, *Vita vel passio Eulogii*, ed. JUAN GIL [CC Cont. Med. 65A], Turnhout 2020, pp. 674–679).

²⁷ Cf. BAXTER WOLF, *The Eulogius Corpus* (as note 24), pp. 3–18, 66–110.

²⁸ Cf. CHRISTOFER ZWANZIG, *Märtyrer in Córdoba. Identitätsbildung und Martyriumsvorstellungen auf der Iberischen Halbinsel im 8.–11. Jahrhundert*, in: GORDON BLENNEMANN – KLAUS HERBERS (eds.), *Vom Blutzügen zum Glaubenszeugen? Formen und Vorstellungen des christlichen Martyriums im Wandel* (Beiträge zur Hagiographie 14), Stuttgart 2014, pp. 245–272; ANDREW SORBER, *The Indiculus luminosus and the Creation of a Ninth-Century Prophetic Conflict between Christianity and Islam*, in: CAROL LYNNE SYMES – NICOLA CARPENTIERI (eds.), *Medieval Sicily, al-Andalus, and the Maghrib. Writing in Times of Turmoil* (The Medieval Globe 5), Leeds 2020, pp. 17–38.

VERUS ISRAEL

This was aggravated by another case of defection: The conversion of the Frankish deacon Bodo to Judaism²⁹. Both Christian youths, who preferred Arabic culture, and Bodo, who adopted the Jewish faith, seemed to corroborate the deterioration of the position of Latin and Christian culture in al-Andalus. Traditionally, Catholic Christianity had arrogated itself a dominant status vis à vis Judaism, which was relegated to an inferior position; ‘carnal’ Israel was said to represent an earlier phase of salvation history, which had been supplanted by the ‘true’ Israel of the church³⁰. By taking over the Hebrew Bible and laying claim to the title ‘Israel’, Christian theologians performed an act of appropriation, “the adoption of someone else’s history for one’s own”³¹.

In Visigothic Spain, this gesture of dominance had been closely linked to the Visigothic monarchy and its legislation. The defection of Bodo turned this situation upside down, seeming to reverse salvation history. What is more, the Jewish convert could speak his mind freely under Islamic rule; there was no need for him to choose his words carefully when he addressed his Christian adversary, rejecting his opinions. Originally, Paulus Alvarus tried to win Eleazar back for Christianity, but he soon realised that this proved impossible, which led to mutual insults and vituperations.

Paulus Alvarus charged Eleazar with having embraced Judaism for carnal motives, wanting to indulge in sexual debauchery and bodily pleasures³². Alvarus appropriates the Israelitic inheritance for the church: [...] *et ideo non nos gentes didicimus esse, set Srabel, quia ex ipsa stirpe Srabelitica orti parentes olim fuerunt nostri. [...] Nos uerus Srabel sumus*. Probably, this identification with and appropriation of ‘Israel’ has to be taken figuratively, not as a reference to actual Jewish descent: *Quisquis uero ex gentibus Ihesu nostro credidit, confestim in numero Srabelis transiuit*³³. Bodo, who has gone over to Judaism, is dispossessed: *scias mea omnia, non tua esse*³⁴. Consequently, the name ‘Israel’ is reserved for the church, whereas ‘Iudaeus’ is applied to Jews refusing to convert: *Gentes*

²⁹ Cf. HEINZ LÖWE, Die Apostasie des Pfalzdiakons Bodo (838) und das Judentum der Chasaren, in: GERD ALTHOFF et al. (eds.), *Person und Gemeinschaft im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Karl Schmid zum fünfundsechzigsten Geburtstag*, Sigmaringen 1988, pp. 157–170; JUAN CARLOS LARA OLMO, La polémica de Alvaro de Córdoba con Bodón/Eleazar, in: CARLOS DEL VALLE RODRÍGUEZ (ed.), *La controversia judeocristiana en España (desde los orígenes hasta el siglo XIII)*. Homenaje a Domingo Muñoz León, Madrid 1988, pp. 131–159.

³⁰ Cf. MARCEL SIMON, *Verus Israel. Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l’empire romain (135–425)*, Paris 1948; PHILIPPE BOBICHON, Le thème du ‘Verus Israel’. Est-il constitutif de la controverse entre christianisme et judaïsme? in: *Annali di storia dell’esegesi* 22, 2005, pp. 421–444.

³¹ KATHLEEN ASHLEY – VÉRONIQUE PLESCH, The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation’, in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, 2002, pp. 1–15, here p. 6.

³² Cf. Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 18, 16 (Paulus Alvarus, *Epistolae*, ed. JUAN GIL [CC Cont. Med. 65A], Turnhout 2020, pp. 569–570).

³³ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 18, 4 (as note 32), pp. 556–557.

³⁴ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 18, 4 (as note 32), p. 557.

*nero qui ad fidem Sraabelis reuertuntur cotidie inseruntur populo Dei, sicuti tu uisus es Iudeorum adesisse horrori*³⁵.

The ‘defection’ of Bodo, as Alvarus saw it, undermined the concept of the church as the Verus Israel and of the hermeneutic functions attributed to the Jews by Christian theologians: According to this theory, Jews served as witnesses of Christian truth³⁶. A Christian cleric converting to Judaism, embracing the ‘Old’ covenant, contradicted the progress of salvation history, undermining the ideological foundations of Christian truth claims. In al-Andalus, this could also be understood as undermining the social position of a church that saw itself endangered by the advance of Arabic learning and culture. Apparently, Bodo defected to the enemy, at least he seemed to support ideological positions undercutting the standing of the Andalusian church and the triumphalist attitude which had increasingly been adopted by Christian theologians after the Christianisation of the Roman Empire.

ISLAM – A PRODUCT OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION?

The issues proved to be more complicated with regard to Islam. There was no place for Islam in traditional Christian salvation history. In Oriental Christian polemics, the faith preached by Muḥammad was first regarded as a Christian heresy, which made it possible to classify it according to traditional Christian heresiology³⁷. Only later did Christian polemicists realise that Islam was a religion (*lex*) of its own³⁸. Paulus Alvarus was among the first Latin Christian writers to adapt Oriental Christian polemics for his own purposes. In this connection, he adapted the reproach that Muḥammad, the Islamic prophet, had committed acts of ‘cultural appropriation’. This reproach was a rhetorical strategy meant to create the impression that Islam was derived from earlier sources, most importantly Christianity. Historical primacy was equated with superiority, without taking into account that a similar reproach with equal connotations might have been made against Christianity itself with regard to Judaism.

In medieval polemical writings, the Islamic prophet was blamed for taking over – albeit erroneously and accompanied by multiple misunderstandings – elements from the Christian tradition; in the legend of Sergius-Baḥīrā, the agent responsible for this was said to be a Christian heretic, who had made false promises to the would-be

³⁵ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 18, 5 (as note 32), p. 558. But even this distinction is not consistent, cf. Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 18, 5 (as note 32), p. 558: [...] *set etiam et Indeis qui nos sumus*. Cf. ibid., p. 559: [...] *nobis ad bibendum sunt date, id est, Indeis qui Christum expectantes uenientem receperunt*.

³⁶ Cf. JEREMY COHEN, *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jews in Medieval Christianity* (S. Mark Taper Foundation Imprint in Jewish Studies), Berkeley (CA) 1999.

³⁷ Cf. JOHN C. LAMOREAUX, *Early Eastern Christian Responses to Islam*, in: JOHN VICTOR TOLAN (ed.), *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, New York 2000, pp. 3–31; JOHN VICTOR TOLAN, *Saracens. Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*, New York 2002.

³⁸ Cf. KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, *Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain*, in: TOLAN (ed.), *Medieval Christian Perceptions* (as note 37), pp. 85–108.

prophet³⁹. Second, Muḥammad was blamed for taking over prescriptions from Judaism, which allegedly made life easier for his followers compared to a strict observance of Christian dogma⁴⁰. Third, Muḥammad was blamed for arrogating the position of a prophet for himself⁴¹. This was accompanied by derogatory statements regarding the person and life of the prophet: In the ‘Indiculus luminosus’, Paulus Alvarus refers to the prophet of Islam as allegedly being driven by lust for women⁴². The motive of lust is also prominent in the polemical Life of the prophet (‘Istoria de Mahomet’) included by Eulogius in his ‘Liber apologeticus martyrum’⁴³. Interestingly, early Christian polemicists such as John of Damascus and Eulogius cannot have taken up such traditions from written sources, as the episode involving Zaynab was never included in the canonical *ṣīra* tradition of the prophet. Therefore, they must have appropriated this episode directly from interreligious discourse⁴⁴.

Paulus Alvarus charges Muḥammad with having invented revelations allegedly brought by the archangel Gabriel⁴⁵. Furthermore, while interpreting a Biblical pas-

³⁹ Cf. SIDNEY HARRISON GRIFFITH, Muhammad and the Monk Bahirā. Reflections on a Syriac and Arabic Text from Early Abbasid Times, in: *Oriens christianus* 79, 1995, pp. 146–174; BARBARA ROGGEA, The Legend of Sergius-Bahira. Some Remarks on its Origin in the East and its Traces in the West, in: KRIJNIE N. CIGGAAR (ed.), *East and West in the Crusader States. Context, Contacts, Confrontations*, vol. 2: Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in May 1997 (*Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta* 92), Leuven 1999, pp. 107–123; BARBARA ROGGEA, Salvaging the Saintly Sergius. Hagiographical Aspects of the Syriac Legend of Sergius Bahira, in: ALEXANDRA CUFFEL – NIKOLAS JASPERS (eds.), *Entangled Hagiographies of the Religious Other*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2019, pp. 55–84; MURIEL DEBIÉ, Sergius Bahira and a Syriac ‘Story of Muhammad’, in: BROURIA BITTON-ASHKELONY – MIRIAM L. HJÄLM – ROBERT A. KITCHEN (eds.), *The Third Lung. New Trajectories in Syriac Studies. In Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (*Eastern Christian Studies* 33), Leiden et al. 2023, pp. 363–405; MATTHIAS MASER, Pseudopropeta – Haeresiarches – Antichristus – Deus eorum. Deutungs- und Darstellungsstrategien lateinischer Mahomat-Viten des Früh- und Hochmittelalters im motivgeschichtlichen Überblick, in: CHRISTINE REINLE (ed.), *Religionsgespräche und Religionspolemik im Mittelalter* (Vorträge und Forschungen 96), Ostfildern 2023, pp. 439–442.

⁴⁰ Cf. MASER, Pseudopropeta (as note 39), pp. 444, 447–448.

⁴¹ Cf. Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 8 (ed. GIL [as note 22], pp. 598–599): [...] *iste, qui sub nomine Gabrielis alteram Dei se hominibus detulisse mentitus est legem.*

⁴² Cf. Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 22 (BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], p. 158). Cf. MASER, Pseudopropeta (as note 39), p. 471: “Zur Ausmalung dieser Identifikation (sc. der Zaynab-Episode mit einer polemischen Akzentuierung der Antichrist-Figur) mokierte er (sc. Paulus Alvarus) sich als erster westlicher Autor über die authentische *ḥadīṭ*-Tradition, wonach Gott seinem Propheten die Lendenkraft von 40 Männern verliehen habe.” For more associations of Islam with carnal pleasures see Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 23 (ed. GIL [as note 22], pp. 619–621; BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], p. 159).

⁴³ Cf. Eulogius, *Liber apologeticus martyrum*, ed. JUAN GIL (CC Cont. Med. 65B), Turnhout 2020, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Cf. MASER, Pseudopropeta (as note 39), p. 471.

⁴⁵ Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 23. In ‘*Indic. lum.* 31’, one of the apostate angels, i. e. Satan, is said to have inspired the prophet. Cf. JOHN VICTOR TOLAN, Mahomet et l’Antéchrist dans l’Espagne du IX^{ème} siècle, in: DANIELLE BUSCHINGER – WOLFGANG SPIEWOK (eds.), *Orient und Okzident in der Kultur des Mittelalters* (Greifswalder Beiträge zum Mittelalter 39; Wodan. Recherches en littérature médiévale 68), Greifswald 1997, pp. 167–180; KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, Muhammad as Antichrist in Ninth-Century

sage from Job Alvarus blames Muḥammad for “sucking the painted venom from these sects with his open mouth, painstakingly corrupting the concoction (*confectionem*), he constructed his alluring words from the rites of a thousand sects. Composing his words from the teachings of heretics, philosophers, and Jews [...]”⁴⁶. Alvarus especially refers to the “re-institution” of circumcision⁴⁷. Muḥammad is presented as being unoriginal, everything he taught is said to be based on traditions taken over from Christianity and Judaism: “[...] (he) wove for those who were following him a false third testament by means of deceitful theft⁴⁸.” “Theft” in this context refers to illegal appropriation, carried out in secret with the intention to deceive and mislead the followers, who remain unaware of the true character of the evil machinations orchestrated by the pseudo-prophet.

The layman Paulus Alvarus, who was critical of Andalusian church authorities for their collaboration with the Islamic regime, was in general critical of church hierarchies. An author more clerically minded than him might have pointed out that Muḥammad’s error hailed from his disregard of the teaching office of the church, his lack of subservience to bishops, and also from his lack of contact with orthodox monasticism and institutionalised charismatic leadership. However, the critical position of Alvarus and of Eulogius towards church hierarchy prevented them from blaming Muḥammad for appropriating the teaching office. Their claim that Islam was Muḥammad’s invention was of course a reflection of the Islamic doctrine that Jewish and Christian scriptures had been falsified by Jewish and Christian tradition (*taḥrīf*) and that only the Qur’ān restored the original purity of divine revelation. From an Islamic perspective, appropriation of Jewish and Christian tradition was rather an act of purification and restoration, a reform returning revelation to its pristine state of purity and clarity⁴⁹.

Córdoba, in: MARK D. MEYERSON – EDWARD DONALD ENGLISH (eds.), *Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain. Interaction and Cultural Change* (Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies 8), Notre Dame 1999, pp. 3–19.

⁴⁶ Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 27 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], p. 171).

⁴⁷ Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 35 (ed. GIL [as note 22], p. 643): “[...] *eo quod ueniens Mosaycam legem repriorare sataget, dum circumcisionis iniuriam ob firmitatem fidei exercendam instituat, hic ex parte uisus est renouasse, circumcisionis cultum plausiuiliter acuens et a carnes suillas proibens cultores secte impie uel cohercens.*”

⁴⁸ Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 22 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 1], p. 157). Cf. also *Indic. lum.* 8 and 31 (ed. GIL [as note 22], p. 638): *dum in derogatione euangelii quasi aliut nobis illi contrarium disposuit testamentum.*

⁴⁹ According to RÉMI BRAGUE, *The Legend of the Middle Ages. Philosophical Explorations of Medieval Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*, Chicago (IL) 2009, Islamic culture follows the model of “digestion”, incorporating all earlier traditions: “The Islamic method of appropriation can be deployed only at the price of a denial of origin: Islamic culture claims to be an absolute beginning, and it crushes any awareness of owing something to an earlier situation, which it characterizes as the age of ignorance (*jābilyya*). [...] The Holy Book of Islam replaces the books that preceded it. Moreover, it does so to the extent that it incorporates those other books.” (pp. 154–155).

THE AIM: AN INTENDED REVOLUTION OF POWER STRUCTURES

For his anti-Islamic argument, Paulus Alvarus appropriates material from two different sources: First, his thoughts are based on Oriental Christian polemics, such as John of Damascus⁵⁰. Second, he uses bits of Islamic material, turned against its original context⁵¹. For the sake of argument, both kinds of material are reframed, after having been selected for the purposes of the proposed argument, often inserted in Biblical exegesis and a re-writing of passages of church fathers. The processes of selection and reframing serve a common aim: Paulus Alvarus wants to overturn the existing power structures, at least at the textual level, putting Christianity back into the position of a dominant religion, much in the way he tries to achieve the same hegemonic status for Latin learning⁵². The endeavour to project Christianity into a position of superiority is meant to reestablish the hegemonic position the church had enjoyed before the Muslim conquest.

As an author familiar with the Latin tradition, Paulus Alvarus uses rhetorical means to pursue his aim: Not only does he select material carefully and purposefully, he also adopts an adequate rhetorical stand that puts himself into a position of authority. He tries to bolster his authorial position of power with recourse to exemplary positions from ancient and Biblical tradition. First, he uses *parrhesia*, free speech, a strategy also widely used by the ‘martyrs’, at least according to the hagiographic account of Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus⁵³. Second, he adopts prophetic speech: Not only does he denounce Muḥammad as an impostor and pseudoprophet, he also lays claim to a prophet-like status himself, without however using the actual word⁵⁴. As an author, he claims to speak the truth, acting in accordance with God’s will, thereby continuing the argument of Biblical prophets, renewing and continuing their teachings, criticizing political authorities for misusing their power against innocent people who only want to serve God according to their ancestral religion. Much of this can be seen as a parallel to the role adopted by Biblical prophets according to Old Testament

⁵⁰ Cf. DANIEL J. SAHAS, *Encounter and Refutation. John of Damascus’ Attitude towards the Muslims and his Evaluation of Islam*, London 1981; DANIEL JANOSIK, *John of Damascus, First Apologist to the Muslims. The Trinity and Christian Apologetics in the Early Islamic Period*, Eugene (OR) 2016; PETER SCHADLER, *John of Damascus and Islam. Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations (The History of Christian-Muslim Relations 34)*, Leiden 2018.

⁵¹ Cf. MASER, *Pseudopropeta* (as note 39), p. 489: “Viele nicht-islamische Quellen des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts bewahren daher ursprünglich genuin muslimische Aussagen über den Propheten, die auf islamischer Seite später aus dem Traditionsbestand getilgt wurden.”

⁵² Cf. ASHLEY – PLESCH, *The Cultural Processes* (as note 31), p. 3: “Beyond the simple acknowledgment of borrowing or influence, what the concept of appropriation stresses is, above all, the motivation for the appropriation: to gain power over [...]”.

⁵³ Cf. Paulus Alvarus, *Vita Eulogii* 15 (ed. GIL [as note 26], pp. 676–679); Eulogius, *Memoriale sanctorum* 1, 2 (Isaac); 2, 1, 2, 4 (Perfectus), see BAXTER WOLF, *The Eulogius Corpus* (as note 24), pp. 139–141, 154–155, 203–206.

⁵⁴ Cf. ANDREW SORBER, *Prophetic Resistance to Islam in Ninth-Century Córdoba. Paulus Alvarus and the Indiculus Luminosus*, in: *Medieval Encounters* 25, 2019, pp. 433–456.

accounts⁵⁵. The role of a prophet provides the author with religious capital, assuring him a dominant position, if not politically, then at least culturally and religiously. In addition, a prophet is able to interpret signs, he has hermeneutic power based on divine revelations. This provides the basis for the hermeneutic manoeuvres used by Paulus Alvarus and Eulogius whereby the Christian victims are presented as martyrs according to the ancient model.

However, in the ‘Indiculus luminosus’ Paulus Alvarus does not recommend specific actions, unlike Biblical prophets. In his correspondence with Eleazar, he wants to win the convert back for Christianity, at least at the beginning of their letter exchange. One might postulate that he wants to win back ‘cultural converts’ in general by denouncing Islam⁵⁶. However, in his anti-Islamic treatise he merely denigrates the religious and cultural opponent, without actually recommending an attractive cultural alternative. The Latin style of his writings is highly involved on the one hand and marked by vulgar Latin on the other. Reading his works, one cannot escape the impression that Christian youths were quite justified in feeling attracted to the splendour of Arabic culture. Also, in the generation following Alvarus, Andalusian Christians started to translate Christian scriptures, such as the psalms, into Arabic, which was later followed by gospels, calendars and canon law⁵⁷. Latin continued to be used and spoken, but Latin literature dried up. From the second half of the ninth century onwards, cultural creativity of Andalusian Christians unfolded in Arabic only.

In several of his writings, Alvarus was eager to draw a clear line between the standing of Latin and Arabic. In one of his letters to John of Seville, he criticises his correspondent for applying the term *grammatica* to ‘Oriental’ learning referring to the teaching of “Chaldean” wisdom by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar⁵⁸. From Alvarus’s perspective, only God can be the source of wisdom, which justifies the use of dignified terms from ancient tradition⁵⁹. Jerome, for Alvarus probably the most

⁵⁵ Cf. TOM BOLAND, A Genealogy of Critique. From Parrhesia to Prophecy, in: *Critical Research on Religion* 5, 2017, pp. 116–132.

⁵⁶ Cf. JESSICA ANN COOPE, Religious and Cultural Conversion to Islam in Ninth-Century Umayyad Córdoba, in: *Journal of World History* 4, 1993, pp. 47–68.

⁵⁷ Cf. DOUGLAS M. DUNLOP, Ḥafṣ b. Albar – the Last of the Goths?, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 86, 1954, pp. 137–151; REINHART DOZY, *Le Calendrier de Cordoue* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula 1), Leiden 1961; MARIE-THÉRÈSE URVOY, *Le psautier mozarabe de Hafs le Goth*, Toulouse 1994; ANN ROSEMARY CHRISTYS, Christians in al-Andalus (711–1000) (Culture and Civilization in the Middle East), Richmond 2002, pp. 108–134; AILLET, Les Mozarabes (as note 19), pp. 185–213; WOLFRAM DREWS, ‘Mozarabische’ Christen zwischen Zugehörigkeit und Abgrenzung, in: JOHANNES HEIL (ed.), *Sprache – Religion – Grenzen. Spätantike und Frühmittelalter. Verläufe und Vergleiche* (in print).

⁵⁸ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 4, 11 (as note 32), p. 457: [...] *miror te prudentem hominem tam leuiter opinasse, ut Caldearum disciplinam grammaticam asseras, quum grammatica Grece dicatur.*

⁵⁹ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 4, 11 (as note 32), p. 458: *Animaduerte quia Deus dedit eis intelligentiam et scientiam, ut de Caldeorum scientia ipsos refutarent Caldeos. Et notandum quod non ab illa disciplina uel ab eisdem deceptoribus sunt docti, set a Deo deciplo sunt inlustrati, ut intellegas non arte eos hoc fuisse adsecutos, set Dei munere ad quod necessarium erat inspiratos. “Discunt autem”, ut ait Ieronimus, “non ut sequantur, set ut indicent adque conuincant [...]”.*

cherished church father⁶⁰, is taken as an authority to justify his position that foreign, oriental learning should not be considered a source of wisdom, but that it should rather be turned into an object to be denounced and denigrated, at most into a source from which intellectual enemies can be refuted, for whom such learning has cultural relevance⁶¹. We can be fairly sure that for Alvarus contemporary Arabic learning had the same qualities as the Chaldean tradition of the Biblical past⁶². For him, true learning does not derive from such “disciplines”, but from God’s revelation, who is the source of “illustration” and wisdom. The passage quoted above shows that he warns Christians to follow the teachings derived from foreign sources; such traditions should rather be judged – according to divine revelations –, which provides the basis for intellectually overcoming the “enemy”, who is “convinced” by the truth ultimately deriving from God. Divine wisdom refutes human science, erudition and prudence, which are grounded merely on arts and arguments⁶³.

For Alvarus, this religious devaluation of ‘Oriental’ disciplines even extends to ancient Latin culture, which is also played down vis à vis Christian learning⁶⁴. In line with earlier interventions by Jerome, Alvarus accords only subservient positions to ancient philosophy and philology; they serve as means used to express religious truth, which is derived from Christian faith only. Plato and Donatus remain time-honoured sources of learning, but only as functions of Christian erudition. By late antiquity, ancient tradition had been appropriated by Christians, ancient philosophers had been dispossessed, as evidenced by the closure of the Academy of Athens by Emperor Justinian in 529⁶⁵. Alvarus tries to apply the patristic method of a religious functionalisation of culture also to contemporary Arabic learning, but here an additional factor comes into play: Christian scholars are called upon to refute the intellectual adversary

⁶⁰ Cf. Paulus Alvarus, Indic. lum. 2 (ed. GIL [as note 22], p. 589): *sanctus ille et abyssus scientie Iheronimus*.

⁶¹ Cf. NEIL ADKIN, Jerome’s Vow ‘Never to Reread the Classics’. Some Observations, in: *Revue des études anciennes* 101, 1999, pp. 161–167; HARALD HAGENDAHL, Jerome and the Latin Classics, in: *Vigiliae christianae* 28, 1974, pp. 216–227.

⁶² With regard to his own times, the term Chaldean is used by Alvarus referring to Arabs, as shown by repeated references in the ‘Indiculus luminosus’; cf. Paulus Alvarus, Indic. lum. 1 (ed. GIL [as note 22], p. 588) and the famous final passage quoted above.

⁶³ Cf. Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 4, 11 (as note 32), p. 458: [...] *que illi per artes et argumenta nefanda cognouerant, isti inspiratione Dei contrariis uis [...] adsecuti fuerant, ut per hoc sapientia diuina umanam refutaret scientiam et dextrueret que in eruditione tota conicitur esse prudentiam*.

⁶⁴ Paulus Alvarus, Ep. 4, 10 (as note 32), p. 457: *Sensus enim hominis, quem “Plato in cerebro, Christus monstrat in corde”. [...] Ille enim Donati querat auxilium cui deuitas inficit gradum. Nobis tamen quorum Christus, qui est sapientia uera, instruit, fobet et erudit intellectum, ut quid per gentilium uagabimus delubra, quum constet nostra totius doctrinarum fontibus oppleta uitalia? Vnde sancti et apostolici uiri, etsi per peritiam Donati uisi sunt loqui, non ab eodem credendi sunt fuisse instructi [...]*.

⁶⁵ Cf. GEORGES ARABATZIS, The Closure of the Academy of Athens, in: PATRICIA F. O’GRADY (ed.), *Meet the Philosophers of Ancient Greece. Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Ancient Greek Philosophy but Didn’t Know Who to Ask*, Aldershot 2005, pp. 247–252; ALAN D.E. CAMERON, The Last Days of the Academy at Athens, in: ID., *Literature and Society in the Early Byzantine World* (Variorum Collected Studies Series 209), nr. 13, pp. 7–30.

by means of arguments derived from his own tradition, i. e. from Islam. Unlike classical ancient learning, which was no longer backed by political powers perceived as being hostile towards Christianity⁶⁶, Arabic culture was sustained by the Islamic caliphate, much as Chaldean learning of Biblical times had been upheld by the Babylonian empire.

Ultimately, Paulus Alvarus failed in the cultural endeavours he wanted to achieve. As in most cases of cultural appropriation, he started with the perception of an imbalance of power⁶⁷, associated with an imbalance in the sphere of cultural expression and creativity. However, he was uncritical regarding the prehistory of the 'heritage' he considered to be his 'own'. He disregarded the appropriation of Jewish scriptures by Christianity, as well as the appropriation of Roman traditions by the Visigoths. The political preconditions of the Isidorian renaissance were equally left out of the picture; the hegemonic, perhaps even imperial character of Isidorian 'Spain' and its heritage were taken for granted. Paulus Alvarus was looking back to a situation of power when 'Visigothic' culture, nourished by Catholic, Roman and Latin traditions, was in a 'rightfully' hegemonic position sustained by the Gothic monarchy.

Consequently, the situation after the Muslim conquest appeared to him as unnatural, unlawful, and out of order. Even though his family seems to have preserved its social status in the private sphere, he lost access to political power, since he was unwilling to compromise with Muslim authorities as a subordinated *dhimmi*. This loss of political influence entailed a feeling of resentment regarding the Islamic authorities and those Christians collaborating with the Islamic regime, including church hierarchies⁶⁸.

This feeling of resentment provided the basis for Paulus Alvarus's cultural project of Latin-Christian empowerment. First, he promoted traditional learning in monastic schools, as he had himself experienced in the school of abbot Speraindeo. This was associated with a movement of withdrawal from the public sphere into suburban peripheries safe from Islamic influence, as evidenced in many stories recounting the life of would-be martyrs in the accounts written by Eulogius. A corollary of this was – second – Alvarus's refutation of an attempt – as he perceived it – to increase the status of Judaism by conversion from Christianity. Third, and perhaps most importantly, Paulus Alvarus denigrated Islam as the principal source of the cultural and political capital of the Umayyad regime. It was in this context that he identified and employed cultural appropriation most forcefully: He charged Muḥammad with unlawfully adopting the role of a prophet and with appropriating Christian heresies and Jewish teachings that allegedly had already been overcome by Christianity. Furthermore, Muḥammad was charged with seeking political power by seducing his followers

⁶⁶ The exile of the last Platonic philosophers in Sassanian Persia cannot be considered as a backing of classical learning by the principal political enemy of the Eastern Roman Empire.

⁶⁷ Cf. ASHLEY – PLESCH, *The Cultural Processes* (as note 31), p. 3: "[...] the model (sc. of appropriation) is always a relationship between cultural unequals."

⁶⁸ Cf. Paulus Alvarus, *Indic. lum.* 9 (ed. GIL [as note 22], p. 599): *ipsi nostri, qui palatino officio illorum iussis inserbiunt*.

with machinations based on traditions appropriated wrongfully from earlier religions. Consequently, it was by instances of cultural appropriation – as Alvarus conceived it – that the pseudo-prophet was able to seduce his followers and secure a dominant position for himself, thereby dispossessing the legitimate heirs to political, religious and cultural dominance.

However, this multifaceted reproach of appropriation directed at Muḥammad was accompanied by acts of appropriation committed by Paulus Alvarus himself: He selected bits and pieces from the Islamic tradition to produce an anti-Islamic counter-history that was meant to justify attempts at producing a Christian renaissance and a recovery of social positions lost under the Umayyad regime⁶⁹. While Alvarus seems to have been content with the role of an ideological supporter of the ‘martyrs’, his friend Eulogius was more active in encouraging, indeed forging the ‘movement’ of martyrs⁷⁰. When Eulogius finally suffered martyrdom as well, it was Alvarus who composed his *vita*, following ancient hagiographic models⁷¹. Hagiographic discourse had become traditional by the early Middle Ages, but its origins had equally been due to acts of cultural appropriation, using court proceedings to overturn power structures rhetorically in order to empower martyrs and their followers against pagan Roman authorities, whose power was undermined – at least in literary compositions – by acts of *parrhesia*⁷².

⁶⁹ Cf. KENNETH BAXTER WOLF, Counterhistory in the Earliest Latin Lives of Muhammad, in: CHRISTIANE J. GRUBER – AVINOAM SHALEM (eds.), *The Image of the Prophet Between Ideal and Ideology. A Scholarly Investigation*, Berlin et al. 2014, pp. 13–26. For counterstorytelling as a means of modern, contemporary global mediaevalism, animated by postcolonial thinking, cf. HELEN YOUNG – KAVITA MUDAN FINN, *Global Medievalism. An Introduction*, Cambridge 2022, pp. 6, 11 and passim. See also CLAIRE SPONSER, In Transit. Theorizing Cultural Appropriation in Medieval Europe, in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 32, 2002, p. 29: “[...] helping social groups establish ways of seeing themselves that stand outside and in opposition to existing social structures [...]”.

⁷⁰ Cf. RYAN D. GILES, Contested Martyrdom. Voluntary Death and Blessed Cursing in the Works of Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus of Córdoba, in: ID. – EDMUND MICHAEL GERLI (eds.), *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Medieval Iberia. Unity in Diversity* (Routledge Companions to Hispanic and Latin American Studies), Milton 2021, pp. 1–11; WOLFRAM DREWS, Vertrauenswürdige Glaubenszeugen? Der Streit um religiöse Autorität im Umfeld der sogenannten Märtyrer von Córdoba, in: MARCEL BUBERT – PIA DÖRING (eds.), *Fake News im Mittelalter? Zur kulturellen Aushandlung von Falschheit in politischen, religiösen und literarischen Diskursen* (Das Mittelalter. Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung. Beihefte 22), Heidelberg 2025 (in print).

⁷¹ Cf. MARÍA JESÚS ALDANA GARCÍA, La imagen literaria de la investigación al martirio en Eulogio de Córdoba. Algunos testimonios de fuentes paleocristianas, in: *Actas del I Congreso Nacional de Cultura Mozárabe* (Colección mayor), Córdoba 1996, pp. 165–173.

⁷² Cf. TIMON BINDER, *Semen est sanguis Christianorum*. Literarische Inszenierungen von Macht und Herrschaft in frühchristlicher Passionsliteratur, Berlin 2005; MAARTEN TAVEIME, Das Martyrium als *imitatio Christi*. Die literarische Gestaltung der spätantiken Märtyrerakten und -passionen nach der Passion Christi, in: *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 18, 2014, pp. 167–203; BEATE BEER, s. v. Parrhesia, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 26, 2015, cols. 1014–1033, esp. 1028–1032 for early Christian Acts of Martyrs as well as early monasticism, both of which were relevant for the redaction of the Cordovan sources. In addition, it should be noted that because of *parrhesia* the martyrs are accorded special access

The literary activities of Paulus Alvarus can be interpreted as conservative acts of resistance to political and cultural change. When he commits acts of appropriation, this is part of his endeavour to regain lost territory for the Catholic cause. With the exception of the ‘Indiculus luminosus’, which is nonetheless heavily indebted to Biblical exegesis, his writings follow established genres of Latin literature, be it epistles or saints’ lives. The hagiographic impulse was much stronger in Eulogius, who tried to show that the Christians executed by Umayyad authorities were actual martyrs, even though they lacked miracles for the most part ⁷³. By using hagiographic discourse, Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus followed established practices of the Christian tradition. By turning the victims of Umayyad executions into religious martyrs, both authors laid the basis for their cultic veneration. This effort proved to be successful very soon when Frankish monks arrived from Paris to recover relics from Saint Vincent of Zaragoza. When this proved to be impossible, they were redirected to al-Andalus, because rumours of recent martyrdoms had already reached northern Spain. After the Frankish monks had brought back Cordovan relics with them to the abbey of St Germain-des-Prés, they composed an account of the *translatio*, which provided the basis for the inclusion of Andalusian ‘martyrs’ in later martyrologies ⁷⁴. This act of religious appropriation was again coupled with an attempt to bolster power relations: Monks from Carolingian West-Francia used religious capital from southern Spain in much the same way that Saxon monasteries acquired relics from Roman catacombs to increase their religious standing in the emerging church of the East-Frankish realm ⁷⁵.

to God, which grants them a priestly, mediating position between ordinary believers and transcendent divinity, dispensing with episcopal authority (ibid., col. 1029). Sidelineing episcopal authority was one of the strategies and aims of both Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus.

⁷³ Cf. JUAN PEDRO MONFERRER SALA, *Mitografía hagiomartirial. De nuevo sobre los supuestos mártires cordobeses del siglo IX*, in: MARÍA ISABEL FIERRO BELLO (ed.), *De muerte violenta. Política, religión y violencia en al-Andalus* (Estudios onomástico-biográficos de al-Andalus 14), Madrid 2004, pp. 415–450.

⁷⁴ Cf. BAUDOUIN DE GAFFIER, *Relations religieuses de l’Espagne avec le Nord de la France. Transferts de reliques (VIII^e–XII^e siècles)*, in: ID. (ed.), *Recherches d’hagiographie latine* (Subsidia hagiographica 52), Brussels 1971, pp. 7–29; BONNIE EFFROS, *Usuard’s Journey to Spain and its Influence on the Dissemination of the Cult of the Cordovan Martyrs*, in: *Comitatus* 21, 1990, pp. 21–37; JANET LOUGHLAND NELSON, *The Franks, the Martyrology of Usuard, and the Martyrs of Cordoba*, in: *Studies in Church History* 30, 1993, pp. 67–80. See also JACQUES FONTAINE, *Mozarabie hispanique et monde carolingien. Les échanges culturels entre la France et l’Espagne du VIII^e au X^e siècle*, in: *Anuario de estudios medievales* 13, 1983, pp. 17–46.

⁷⁵ For the process of creating cultural capital by relic transfer cf. ASHLEY – PLESCH, *The Cultural Processes* (as note 31), p. 7: “[...] medieval relics acquired meaning primarily through this creative process of exchange that continually revalidated and reinterpreted their power.” For “processes of meaning-manufacture” cf. also SPONSLER, *In Transit* (as note 69), p. 28. For East Francia, see HEDWIG RÖCKELEIN, *Reliquientranslationen nach Sachsen im 9. Jahrhundert. Über Kommunikation, Mobilität und Öffentlichkeit im Frühmittelalter* (Beihefte der Francia 48), Stuttgart 2002.

The acts most clearly in line with current models of cultural appropriation are the expropriation of Judaism in favour of the church, which laid claim to the position of *Vernus Israel*, and the adaptation of Islamic material for his 'Indiculus luminosus' by Paulus Alvarus. His friend Eulogius even included a polemical Life of Muḥammad in his hagiographic corpus⁷⁶, where he clearly uses the motif of the alleged 'appropriation' of Christian thought by Muḥammad: "[...] he began assiduously to attend assemblies of Christians, and – as he was a shrewd son of darkness – began to commit some of the sermons of the Christians to memory and became the wisest among the irrational Arabs in all things"⁷⁷. The hint that the Islamic prophet allegedly memorised content he had heard while listening to Christian preaching takes up the Islamic belief that Muḥammad was incapable of reading and writing, meant to underscore the belief that he was incapable of acquiring Christian teaching by studying Christian scripture. Taking up the Islamic topos of an analphabet Muḥammad, Eulogius appropriates an important element of the prophetic biography, which he transforms according to his own concept of a deceitful pretender posing as a pseudo-prophet, exposed by the Christian hagiographer as a heresiarch.

By adapting Islamic material for their own purposes, both Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus shaped anti-Islamic Latin discourse which appropriated Islamic traditions for the purposes of some kind of anti-imperial counterhistory. This included the reproach, levelled against Islam, of being a religion of violence. The 'Istoria de Mahomet' included in the 'Liber apologeticus martyrum' of Eulogius explains the violent spreading of Islam during the alleged struggle of the prophet against the Roman Empire, while Paulus Alvarus juxtaposes his military exploits with the Christian exhortation towards peace and charity⁷⁸. Both authors take up Islamic traditions, contextualizing them in a polemical way in order to enhance the standing of Christendom by blemishing Islam⁷⁹. This strategy can be compared to practices studied by Jorge Klor de Alva, who referred to the transformation of religious and political discourse in a colonial Latin-American context where European traditions were "appropriated and reencoded to fit within the registers that affirm local sovereignty."⁸⁰ In the context of al-Andalus, this local empowerment was intimately connected to the overarching project, pursued by Eulogius and Paulus Alvarus, aiming at political mobilisation and cultural renaiss-

⁷⁶ Eulogius, *Liber apologeticus martyrum* 16 (as note 43). Cf. JANNA CATHERINE WASILEWSKI, The 'Life of Muhammad' in Eulogius of Córdoba. Some Evidence for the Transmission of Greek Polemic to the Latin West, in: *Early Medieval Europe* 16, 2008, pp. 333–353.

⁷⁷ Eulogius, *Liber apologeticus martyrum* 16 (transl. BAXTER WOLF [as note 24], p. 335).

⁷⁸ Cf. MASER, *Pseudopropeta* (as note 39), p. 475.

⁷⁹ Cf. FERNANDO GONZÁLEZ MUÑOZ, En torno a la orientación de la polémica antimusulmana en los textos latinos de los mozárabes del siglo IX, in: CYRILLE AILLET – MAYTE PENELAS – PHILIPPE ROISSE (eds.), *¿Existe una identidad mozárabe? Historia, lengua y cultura de los cristianos de al-Andalus (siglos IX–XII)* (Collection de la casa de Velázquez 101), Madrid 2008, pp. 9–31.

⁸⁰ Quoted from ASHLEY – PLESCH, *The Cultural Processes* (as note 31), p. 5.

sance⁸¹. This was to be achieved by reinterpreting and reframing traditions taken over from the Islamic community; such traditions were taken out of their original context, given new – subversive – meanings and rearranged in polemical contexts. Their hagiographical corpus contains a few examples where individuals striving for ‘martyrdom’ speak up against Muslim authorities in acts of *parrhesia*; during such speeches, the Christian rebels utilise bits of material in line with the ideology of counterhistory, nourished by previous acts of appropriation.

⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6: “[...] appropriation is aimed at creating and/or consolidating identity”.