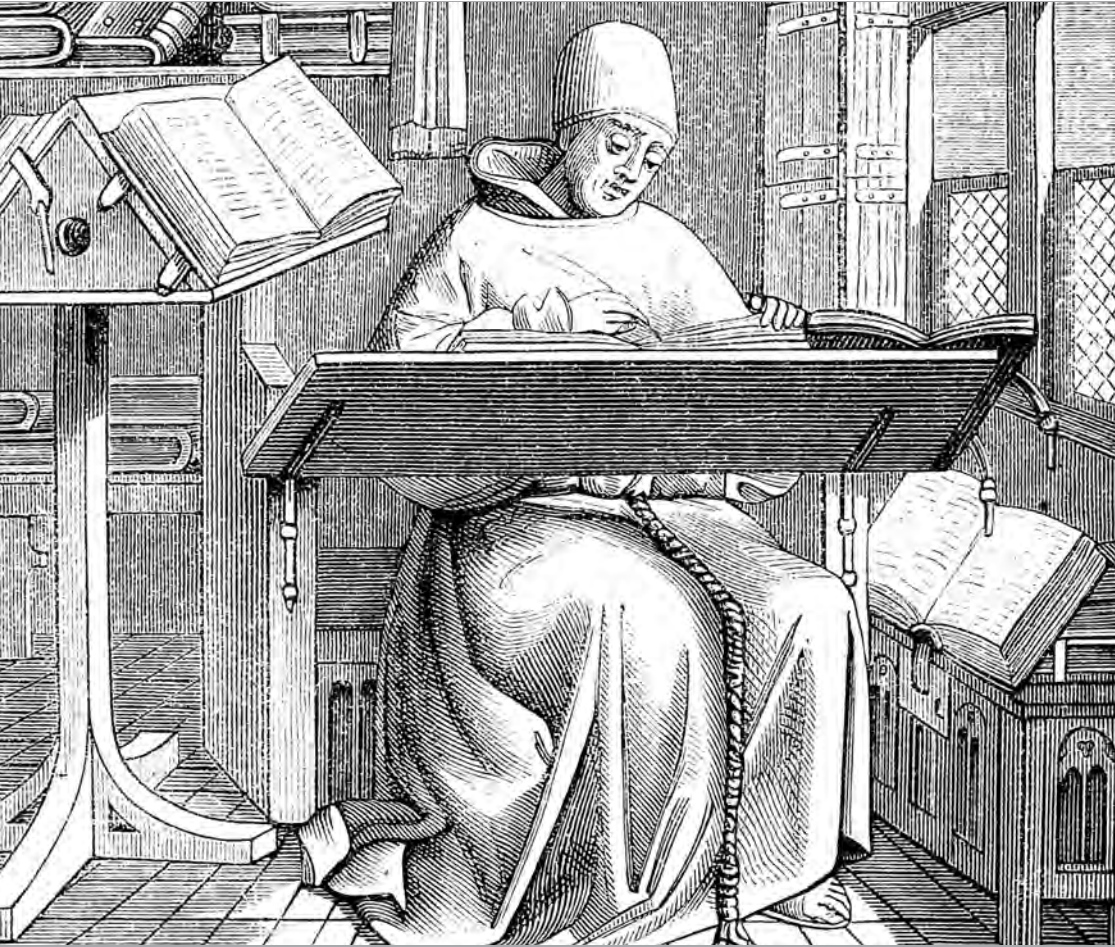


NABIL MATAR

HENRY STUBBE & the **PROPHET MUHAMMAD**

Challenging Misrepresentation



O C C A S I O N A L P A P E R S E R I E S

THE ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (UK)
CENTRE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

OCCASIONAL PAPER SERIES

2

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Nabil Matar



THE ASSOCIATION OF
MUSLIM SOCIAL
SCIENTISTS (UK)



CENTRE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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THIS EDITION REPRINTED 2013

JOINT PUBLICATION

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-56564-586-8

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Layout and design Shiraz Khan
Printed in Turkey by Step Matbaacılık Ltd. Şti.

This reprint sponsored by MAHYA (Turkey) and FED2000 (UK)
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Foreword

THIS PAPER IS THE TRANSCRIPT of a lecture presented by Professor Nabil Matar on Henry Stubbe and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ 28th March 2012 at the University of Cambridge, UK. At the lecture, Professor Matar was presented with the AMSS (UK) Building Bridges Award 2012 for pioneering scholarship on the relationship between Islamic civilization and early modern Europe as well as raising awareness of the historical roots of Western perceptions of Islam.

The history of medieval and early modern European writings about the Prophet Muhammad shows a consistent pattern of misunderstanding. Until the nineteenth century, only one writer challenged that history: the English physician Henry Stubbe (1632–1676), author of “Originall & Progress of Mahometanism.” Neither an Orientalist nor a theologian, Henry Stubbe approached Islam as a historian of religion, perhaps the first in early modern Europe, arguing that the study of another religion should rely on historical evidence derived from indigenous documents, and not on foreign accounts. The result of his new historiographical approach was a “Copernican revolution” in the study of the figure of Muhammad, the Qur’an, and Islam. It shifted the focus from faith to scholarship. Had his treatise been published, the course of Western understanding of Islam might have been different. Upholding the primacy of Arabic writings, rather than of European literary/imaginative or theological works, Stubbe focused on the Latin translations of medieval Christian Arabic writers who had presented a positive and nuanced view of the Prophet Muhammad. His treatise gave primacy to the views of those Arabic writers who had lived in the midst of the Islamic polity and whose chronicles conveyed a history completely different from that of their European counterparts.

ASSOCIATION OF MUSLIM SOCIAL SCIENTISTS (AMSS UK)
CENTRE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE (CIS)

September 2012

Henry Stubbe *and the* Prophet Muhammad Challenging Misrepresentation*

Introduction

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY witnessed an increase in the number of Arabic, and to a lesser extent, Turkish and Persian, manuscripts that became available to British and continental scholars.¹ These non-European acquisitions and the disciplines that were developed to study them showed Britons, for the first time, what the swarthy “Moors” and the “Mahometan Turks” and sword-wielding “Saracens” had produced: a vast civilization that had adopted and developed the same Graeco-Latin legacy which Britons claimed as their own classical patrimony. For the first time in their history, Britons encountered a non-Christian and a non-European civilization that was vast, complex, and rich in chronicle and geography, poetry, astronomy and exegesis.

The Arabic sources were, of course, confined to the learned at the Universities, but their impact sometimes reached wider sectors in English society, from the grocer who learned Arabic, as Samuel Hartlib reported in 1647, to the Quaker leader, George Fox, who read the Qur’an carefully in its first English translation by Alexander Ross.² Others, Quakers, Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike, appropriated the philosophical mysticism of *Ḥay ibn Yaqzān*, while London audiences watched heroic “orientals” on stage.³ Still, there remained among

* I am grateful to Professors Wadad Kadi and Dominic Baker-Smith for their helpful comments. I am also grateful to Professor Muhammad Asfour for commenting on an earlier version, and to Mr. A. A. Baramki for reading various versions. This paper is part of the introduction to my annotated edition of Henry Stubbe’s *The Originall & Progress of Mahometanism*, forthcoming Columbia UP, 2012/13.

the general public as well as the scholars and literati a hostility that could not be eradicated – as if the admiration for the civilization of Islam could not overshadow the clash with the religion of Islam.

But not in the case of a little-known physician from Stratford-upon-Avon, Henry Stubbe.

Sometime in the early 1670s, Henry Stubbe wrote a biography of the foundational figure of that civilization, the Prophet Muhammad. His treatise on the *Originall & Progress of Mahometanism* is just under 60,000 words, and presents the first heavily annotated biography of the man who had given birth to “Islamism.” Stubbe often replaced the objectionable “Mahometanism” with Islam/Islamism, and the equally objectionable “Mahometans” with “Moslemin.” In so doing, he was the first to use these terms in an English text, long before the OED documents them in the first half of the 19th century.⁴ There was nothing like Stubbe’s treatise in English or continental writing, and many readers perused and copied it, as evidenced by the numerous manuscripts that have survived, and the others that are known to have disappeared.

As historian John Tolan has shown, there was uniformity in the negative representation of the Prophet Muhammad in Euro-Christian thought, from Bibliander’s 1543 edition of the Qur’an to Humphry Prideaux’s 1697 invective on Islam and Deism.⁵ Henry Stubbe was the exception, initiating thereby a ‘Copernican Revolution’ (with apologies to Immanuel Kant) in European scholarship. The manner by which Stubbe was able to challenge the prevalent misrepresentation was to move the lens for the study of Islam away from European to Arabic sources. These sources which were being translated into Latin and published in the academic powerhouses of Oxford and Leiden, Paris and Basel relied on the commentaries of some of the most important Muslim historians: al-Ṭabarī, al-Bayḍawī, al-Shahrustānī, among others. A master of Greek and Latin, Stubbe turned to the only three historians whose Arabic texts were translated in toto: al-Makīn, Ibn al-Baṭrīq/Eutychius, and Abū al-Faraj. Citing chapter and page for every reference he made, and combining information from different texts, Stubbe demonstrated how sources indigenous to Islamic civilization could produce new insight into contested history, and a re-assessment

of the most misrepresented man in early modern European religion: the Prophet Muhammad.

Stubbe has been studied always in the context of English “free-thinking” and “anti-Trinitarianism,” and his interests in Islam and the Prophet have been seen as unabashed exploitation of “Islamic sources to heterodox purposes.”⁶ But the earliest fragments of his treatise in two BL manuscripts (Sloane 1786, fos. 181r–185v, 186r–190r and Sloane 1709, fos. 94r–115r) were completely focused on the Prophet Muhammad and the beginning of the message. These densely written folios had nothing to do with Restoration theology and stand as the first English study of Islamic beginnings that employed the nascent methodology of biblical higher criticism. Later, Stubbe added these fragments to an extended discussion of early Christian history in order to start a dialogue with Islam. History was not, for him, geographically or intellectually fragmented: rather, it was a continuum from Judaism into Christianity and then Islam. The revelation to Muhammad was not therefore a religious aberration, as contemporaries insisted, or a heretical outburst. For, as Stubbe explained in the very first pages of his treatise, history followed the rules of causality: there is always “a series of preceding causes which principally” contribute to change.⁷ As in Roman history, the republic’s misguidedness gave rise to the empire, so did the doctrinal disagreements and heresies that bedevilled the first centuries of Christianity give rise to the “revolucion” of Islam (fo. 48). For Stubbe, Islam was a logical effect to a cause, a monotheistic orthodoxy emerging from heretical heterodoxies. It was therefore inherent to the trajectory of civilizations.

The Originall & Progress of Mahometanism

I will preface my discussion of Stubbe’s treatise with a clarification. Every study to date of Stubbe’s view of the Prophet Muhammad and of the beginnings of the Islamic polity has relied on the 1911 edition by Hafiz Mahmud Khan Shairani. That edition, however, is flawed because it is a composite of three treatises: the one by Stubbe, the one expanded by Charles Hornby in 1705, and the one that was editorially changed by Shairani himself.⁸ The discussion below is based on the first complete manuscript of Stubbe’s treatise: MS 537 at the Senate Library, University of London, transcribed in 1701.

In approaching Stubbe's treatise on the Prophet Muhammad, I will focus on three themes: *First*: What made possible Stubbe's shifting of Islamic historiography away from the European/non-Arabic sources? *Secondly*: How did that shift shape his view of the Prophet Muhammad and of the rise of Islam? And *finally*: What impact did the Prophet's protectiveness of the Christian communities have on Stubbe's view of Muslim-Christian relations in the age of early modern empire?

I

The answer to the first question lies in the Latin translations of three medieval Arab chroniclers: al-Makīn, Ibn al-Baṭrīq, and Abū al-Faraj. By the second half of the seventeenth century, their books were the only historical sources about the Prophet Muhammad that had been translated accurately from the original Arabic. Written by men who had lived in Muslim society, from the 9th to the 13th century, and from regions extending from Egypt to Syria, the texts presented a careful description of the mission of the Prophet and the rise of Islam. Stubbe, who had grown suspicious of Greek sources on Islam, duly noted that the Arabic writers had been admired by Muslim readers, and in the case of Abū al-Faraj, the man had been so respected that, according to Edward Pococke, Stubbe's mentor at Christ Church, Oxford, although he was a Christian, Abū al-Faraj was revered by many of the elders of the Muslims/*fuḍalā' al-Muslimīn*.⁹ Stubbe had no problem consulting works by Christian Arab writers because they had been living in the midst of the Islamicate polity and had therefore been fully integrated in language, sensibility, and history. "It is certain," Stubbe wrote, "that the Christians which lived under the Mahometans, as Elmakin and others, do mention Mahomet with great respect as Mahomet of glorious Memory, and Mahumetes super quo pax & benedictio" (fo. 118). The Prophet Muhammad, continued Stubbe, had been a "great Honourer of Isa," which is why, he "alwaies express'd a great Reverence for the [Christians], and 'tis concerning them that he says that Isa their Prophet shall save them in the last day." Since Muhammad respected Christ, the Christians living among the Muslims respected Muhammad, and in turn, Muhammad respected them. "That the Arabian Christians were men of just and strict deportment appears

from hence, that Mahomet saith of them that one might safely intrust them with any sum of money, and they would restore it again” (fo. 146).¹⁰

In the order of their seventeenth-century appearance in print, the Arabic writers were the following:

Jirjīs ibn al-^cAmīd al-Makīn (c. 1205–1273) was the author of *Tarīkh al-Muslimīn*/History of the Muslims which had been translated into Latin by Thomas Erpenius, the Dutch orientalist, and published in 1625 as *Historia Saracénica*. At the outset, al-Makīn stated that he followed the account about the Prophet by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī, the ninth-century historian whose *Tarīkh al-Umam wa al-mulūk*/History of Peoples and Kings was, and remains, one of the most comprehensive histories of early Islam. Pococke, the doyen of Arabic studies at Oxford in seventeenth-century England, confirmed al-Ṭabarī as *thiqah fī naqlihi wa tārīkhibihī*/an authority in record-keeping and history.¹¹ What is striking is that al-Makīn’s section on the Prophet is not very long, but it was intensively quoted by Stubbe, as also by Pococke, by another Christ Church scholar, John Gregory, by Samuel Purchas, Lancelot Addison, and Johann Hottinger, the Swiss orientalist. Al-Makīn’s work was a standard reference among scholars, from Oxford to Basel, but no writer used him as a source for a biography of the Prophet in the vernacular – except Stubbe.

Al-Makīn opened his account, rather strikingly in Erpenius’s translation, with the Qur’anic invocation, “In nomine Dei misericordia miseratoris”/In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, an opening that many Christian writers used.¹² Adopting the words from the Qur’an, al-Makīn found no problem in proclaiming with his fellow Arabic-speaking Muslims the name of God. Al-Makīn then turned in the first chapter to the “Primus Musilomorum Imperator” about “Muhammed Abulcasimus, gloriose memorie”/of glorious memory, and presented some of the famous events mentioned in al-Ṭabarī about Muhammad. It was Muhammad, according to al-Ṭabarī, and as al-Makīn repeated unreservedly, who first revealed the religion of Islam/*aḡhara dīn al-Islam*: “Religionem Islamismi ... primum manifestavit & observavit.” Al-Makīn continued with numerous details from the biography of the Prophet always adding the Muslim

blessing after every mention of his name. Notwithstanding his Christian commitment, al-Makīn confirmed how Khadījah, the Prophet's wife, had been first to accept his prophethood, "Prima in prophetiam ejus credidit Chadiga." Throughout his account, he used the *hijrī* calendar and only sometimes the Christian one, and his tone supported the side of the 'Arabs' as he recounted their wars with the Byzantines.

Al-Makīn furnished Stubbe with a new image of the Prophet, of a man who "was, God's prayer and peace on him, well mannered, gentle in speech. He visited his companions as they visited him, and he kissed their faces as they kissed his. He consoled the weak and praised the strong and was compassionate to the poor, and whoever asked him for anything, received what the Prophet could give him, or received a helpful word."¹³ This was a Prophet never described by English poets or clergy, and whose image challenged prevalent misconceptions. Equally important for Stubbe about the Prophet was the positive history of the Christian community during the early years of Islam. Al-Makīn emphasized how favorable the Prophet was in his relations with the Christians of Arabia who came to see him. For this information, al-Makīn turned to episodes recorded in al-Ṭabarī, one of which was the following:

A dignitary from among the Christians came to him [the Prophet], so he stood up to welcome and honour him. They asked him about that [his action] to which he replied ... "Treat well the Copts of Egypt, for you have relatives from among them" [since one of his wives was a Copt]. And he said, "He who mistreats a *dhimmi* will be punished on the day of judgment." And he said, "He who hurts a *dhimmi* hurts me."¹⁴

The Arabic text edited by Erpenius used "*dhimmī*" instead of "Christianos" and missed a few prepositions in the printing, which may explain why the translation into Latin omitted some words. But, interestingly, the Latin added some marginalia that did not appear in the Arabic, which served to emphasize Muhammad's protectiveness of Christians: "Affectus Muhamadis erga Christianos." In his treatise,

Stubbe echoed those views about the treatment of Christians, always mentioning al-Makīn because he found the information about the Prophet's openness to Christians and Jews very important in the context of his new understanding of Islam:

Elmacin (who collected his history of the Saracens out of the best Mahometan writers, and was himself Secretary of State to one of their Princes) tells us that Mahamet gave protection and Security to the Pagans, Magi, Jews, & Christians, which swore fealty to him and paid him yearly Tribute, and that he sent Omar to the Christians, to assure them that they should live securely under his Dominions, and that he would esteem their Lives & Goods, as the Lives and Goods of his Moslemin (fo. 110).

Actually, a page earlier, Stubbe had quoted the whole Pact of ʿUmar – a text that was believed (erroneously, as Stubbe stated) to have been written and signed by ʿUmar to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.¹⁵ Still, its spirit confirmed for Stubbe a point he repeated often in his treatise: that Islam accepted other religious communities, and did not try to forcibly convert them.

While al-Makīn emphasized how God had facilitated for the Muslim “subjugata Palaestinâ, terraque sancta”/the subjugation of Palestine and the Holy Land,¹⁶ another Arabic chronicle, also translated into Latin, described the arrival of ʿUmar in Jerusalem, the promulgation of the treaty, and later developments. Again, Stubbe wanted his evidence to come from an author who had lived in the midst of Islamic society – even if he was not a Muslim. For such an author was closer to the “originall & progress” of Islam than others. This author was Ibn al-Baṭṭīq.

Aftīshyus/Saʿīd ibn al-Baṭṭīq/Eutychius (877–940) was the author of a history/annals of the Church of Alexandria, *Kitāb al-tārīkh al-majmūʿ*. A selection from this book had been translated by John Selden and published in an Arabic and Latin text, with copious notes, in London in 1642 (the first substantial Arabic printing in England). Selden, “the chief of learned men reputed in this land,” as John Milton wrote about him in 1644, urged his friend Edward Pococke to translate

the whole text because it was “considered by learned Men abroad [Erpenius and Casaubon], as a very useful Work.”¹⁷ Pococke complied.¹⁸

A doctor (an attractive qualification to Stubbe), and a “Historian of good Credit” (fo. 31), Ibn al-Baṭrīq wrote a history of the world from Adam to AD 938. Specifically, he focused on the Christian Eastern (in his case, Coptic) communities and their encounters with the expanding empires of the Persians, the Byzantines, and the Muslims. Although he had nothing to say about the Prophet Muhammad as a person, he started the history of the rise of Islam with the migration to Yathrib/Madinah – correctly recognizing the pivotal importance of that event. He summarized the lives of the first four caliphs and later dynasties, focusing in great detail on the actions of the second caliph ‘Umar, since it was during his reign that important contacts with Christians in Syria and Palestine occurred.

Stubbe found in Ibn al-Baṭrīq historical descriptions about how Christians interacted with the early Muslim conquerors. And these interactions, although sometimes confrontational, were by far more accommodating than the battles and hostilities that Stubbe had witnessed during the mid-seventeenth-century wars among his compatriots. Whether he himself had participated in the defacing of churches and cathedrals in East Anglia is not known, nor whether he had gloated over the massacre of Catholics in Drogheda (1651): with such violence around him, Stubbe was struck by the story of the Caliph ‘Umar and his meeting the patriarch of Jerusalem, Sofronius, and granting him a treaty of peace saying:

In nomine Dei misericordis, miseratoris, Ab Omaro Ebnil Chetabi, urbis AEliae incolis. Securos sore ipsos quod ad vitas suas, & liberos, opes, & Ecclesias suas; illas feci. Nec dirutum iri, nec habitatum: testeque adhibuit. In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate. From Omar ibn al-Khattab to the inhabitants of the city of Aelia: you are protected in your lives, children, properties, and churches that shall not be torn down or occupied. And witnesses attested.¹⁹

When prayer time came, the patriarch told ʿUmar to pray inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, but ʿUmar refused, so the Patriarch laid out a mat for him in the Church of Constantine, but ʿUmar again refused. Then ʿUmar went out and prayed in the yard facing the Church, explaining later to the patriarch that had he prayed inside the churches, his followers would have wanted to build mosques there, which he did not want, in order that the Christian sites be preserved.

The third and final Arabic authority who inspired Stubbe was **Abū al-Faraj** (1226–1286) author of *Tārīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwall*/A Short History of Dynasties. From Abū al-Faraj, thirty pages had been translated by Edward Pococke in 1650: *Specimen historiae Arabum: sive, Gregoriee Abul Farajii Malatiensis, de Origine & Moribus Arabum* to which he added two hundred pages of dense notes. Over a decade later, Pococke translated the whole book.²⁰ Also opening with the *basmalah* (In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate), Abū al-Faraj included only a brief description of the rise of the Prophet Muhammad, since his book was about the history of later dynasties and empires. But in that short description, and like the other writers, Abū al-Faraj mentioned the famous episode from the biography of the Prophet by Ibn Hishām about the monk Baḥīrah. The latter declared that the boy Muhammad, who was then traveling to Syria, would be famous all around the world: In the future, he said, this boy will enjoy greatness, and his fame will spread in east and west, for when he arrived here, a cloud covered him with its shade.²¹ Quite striking a few lines later was the terminology that Abū al-Faraj used regarding the prophetic revelation: “*aḡhara al-daʿwah*”/he revealed the message, which is the same Arabic verb that had been used by al-Makīn. Two pages later, Abū al-Faraj cited the words of Abū Sufyān to ʿAbbās after Muhammad’s entry into conquered Makkah in 630. Abū Sufyān, the erstwhile enemy, converted to Islam in order to save his life, and when he saw the armies of Muhammad, he turned to the Prophet’s uncle, ʿAbbās, who had also initially opposed his nephew, and said: Your nephew has become a great king. To which the uncle replied, “Be quiet [*wayḥak*], it is Prophecy. Yes, it may be so, he replied,”/Imo vero, *Prophetia est. Respondit ille. Esto igitur [si libet]*.²²

This brief summary shows how the Arabic writers furnished Stubbe with a new historiography of Islam and the Prophet. Because these chroniclers had written from within the Islamic tradition, Stubbe treated them as the measure of all information about the Prophet Muhammad, and anything that they did not confirm, he rejected. None of them, for instance, ever mentioned the frequently repeated “Fable” that Muhammad had been inspired by a pigeon which he claimed as the “Holy Ghost.” Following in the footsteps of Pococke, who in his notes, had also rejected this allegation, as well as the other allegation about Muhammad’s tomb being suspended in mid-air, Stubbe denounced such credulity in his compatriots. What clinched Stubbe’s refutation of these silly but solidly upheld allegations was that no “Xtian of the Arabians mention” the pigeon (fo. 121). The Arabic writers, he was saying, should be the final arbiters about what is and what is not accurate about the life and history of the Prophet.

II

Alongside the Arabic sources, Stubbe read other sources, which is why he ended up deviating in some points from the canonical view of Muhammad as it is expressed in the Qur’an, the Hadith, and the biography. Notwithstanding their meticulous scholarship, not a single European writer was favorable to the Prophet or to Islam, from Selden to Pococke to Hottinger. Stubbe not only selected information from their writings that best described the Prophet’s achievements but also refuted some of their hostile remarks. Stubbe wanted to re-define the Prophet to his English readers and bring him into the religious parameter of his compatriots – which is why he frequently used in the speeches of Muslim leaders the archaisms of the King James Bible: the language that had characterized the history of Judaism and Christianity in English was also to characterize the history of Islam.

Stubbe’s interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad is unique in early modern European imagination. And it is as follows:

1. At the outset of his treatise, Stubbe described a heroic and gracious man. Although he relied on the universal history of Marcus Boxhornius (1652), what is indicative of Stubbe’s positive stand

toward the Prophet and toward Islam was his information selectivity. Stubbe simply ignored misrepresentations and focused on the place of Muhammad in the prophetic tradition of Moses and Jesus, in the manner that the Qur'an does. Because his approach was that of a historian of religion, Stubbe was interested in showing how the Prophet, "a fiercely opposed" man of low social standing ("mean estate," fo. 1), was able to transform the Arabs from tribes to empire through the power of revelation.

2. Like earlier prophets, Muhammad had received a holy book, the "*Coran*," the same word that Stubbe used in connection with the books revealed to Moses and Jesus. Stubbe highlighted the analogy that he found in Pococke (who cited al-Shahrustānī): as God revealed the *injīl*/New Testament to Jesus (Stubbe used the Qur'anic name ʿĪsā) in the mountains of Palestine, so did He reveal the *Coran* to Muhammad in Makkah and its mountains.²³ There was no difference between the original *injīl* and the *Coran* as revelations from God. Stubbe was also struck by the description of the destruction of the idols in the Kaʿbah after the victorious return of the Prophet to Makkah in 630. The scene in which he described the fall of the idols in the treatise ("*Aljanabus* tells us that upon his approach to the temple, all the idols (even the great Hobal) did prostrate themselves unto him.")²⁴ recalls John Milton's youthful Christmas poem ("Upon Christ's Nativity," written 1629, publ. 1645) about the fall of the pagan idols at the birth of Christ. For Stubbe, both Jesus and Muhammad cooperated to end idolatry.
3. Most urgently for Stubbe, however, was the need to present the Prophet Muhammad in a manner that undermined the denigrations prevalent in medieval and contemporary European writings. Some of these denigrations included references to Muhammad as a camel driver, poor and uncultured: *homo pauper & mercaturam exercens cum camelis*, wrote Marcus Boxhornius.²⁵ In regard to the first, Stubbe reminded his readers of the humble backgrounds of many of the Hebrew prophets, and of Jesus and his carpentry. Against the accusations of 'Saracenic' uncouthness leveled at Muhammad, Stubbe asserted that the Prophet had been versatile, traveling far and wide, all the way to Egypt and Spain. These regions had not

been associated with the Prophet in Ibn Hishām's biography,²⁶ but by sending the Prophet into the larger world, Stubbe explained how Muhammad became familiar with the varieties of aberrant Christianities that the Qur'an sought to reform. Muhammad, concluded Stubbe, was not as outlandish a man as he appeared in the "great untruths" of European sources. For he had been, like any of the "Nobles of Venice or Genoa" (fo. 57), a merchant with acute observation. The Prophet, continued Stubbe, had grown up in Makkah, a city of wealth and energy, so much so that in his 1613 oration on the dignity of the Arabic language, Thomas Erpenius had compared Makkah to "our" Amsterdam "*Meccam, Amsterdami nostri magnitudine emporium*"²⁷ – an analogy that Stubbe repeated (fo. 99).²⁸

4. Most daring and unprecedented in Stubbe's presentation was the rejection of the illiteracy of the Prophet, a *sine qua non* in Muslim historiography that was discussed in all writings that Stubbe consulted.²⁹ From the start, Muslim exegetes had appealed to the illiteracy of the Prophet in confirmation of the divine revelation of the Qur'an. But European authors used illiteracy as proof of the falsity of "Alcoran": since Muhammad was illiterate, they argued, he could not but have sought help in formulating his revelation. Since Muhammad was "illiterate," to cite one example by Sir William Temple, a contemporary of Stubbe's, he produced a "Rhapsody of ... Visions or Dreams,"³⁰ Of course, it did not help that very very few men of those who attacked the divine origin of the Qur'an could read it in Arabic, but rather relied on the poor Latin translation by Robert of Ketton (in the 12th century and reproduced in Bibliander in 1543), the poorer translation to French by André du Ryer (in 1647), and the poorest of all translations, to English by Alexander Ross in 1649.
5. Nor could Stubbe read Arabic. But at least he recognized how bad the English translation was, and never cited it.³¹ Intent on confirming the revealed nature of the Qur'anic prophecy, Stubbe turned the tables on the detractors by arguing for literacy in an unprecedented manner. He asserted that, according to Muslims, the Qur'an was the word of God. In support of his view, Stubbe recalled

the translation of *sūrah Yūsuf*/the Sura of Joseph by Erpenius earlier in the century. As the Dutch Arabist wrote: “per verbum Dei intelligent suam quae Coranum ipsis dicitur,”³²/by the word of God they understand their own [book] which they call the Coran. Also, in one of Edward Pococke’s works, *Porta Mosis*, Stubbe came across a reference to al-Ghazālī’s discussion of Muhammad’s *luminis prophetici/nūr al-nubuwwah*/the light of prophecy.³³ Stubbe concluded that whatever the level of the Prophet’s literacy, it remained separate from authorship because the “*sūrahs*” of the Qur’an had been delivered through the angel Gabriel (fo. 100). They were revelations that contained “divine things” (fo. 82), which was why they were “inimitable,” a word that Stubbe repeated twice in the treatise (fos. 100, 138). It was a word that also resonated with the description of the Qur’an by Abū al-Faraj: “eloquentissimi.”³⁴ And so, Stubbe concluded his treatise with a set of affirmations regarding both the Qur’an and the Prophet that appear nowhere else in early modern European writings about Islam. “God by Mahomet,” he wrote, “took a better course by leaving to mankind one lasting miracle, the truth whereof should in all ages be satisfactory and convincing” (fo. 138). In the eyes of Muslims, and in the writings of the Arabic chroniclers, the Qur’an was the miracle that God granted Muhammad, “a great prophet” (fo. 137) – the same phrase that describes Jesus in the Gospel of Luke (7: 16): “A great prophet has risen up among us.”

Alongside this unprecedented re-defining of the Prophet, Stubbe turned to re-define the Prophet’s cousin, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Stubbe was the first English and indeed European writer to describe at length the role that ‘Alī played in spreading the message of Islam during Muhammad’s lifetime. But while all contemporary representations of ‘Alī in European literature emphasized his geographical/Persian association,³⁵ Stubbe ignored such allusions and wrote an amazing description of ‘Alī’s actions in the service of the Prophet. In so doing, he took his cue from al-Makīn and also from Gabriel Sionita, a 17th-century priest from Lebanon, who had translated al-Idrīsī’s geography into Latin. In an appendix, Sionita described ‘Alī as saying “ego sum

primus Moslemannus”/I am the first Muslim.³⁶ Basing his views on Arabic sources, Stubbe turned ‘Alī into the mouthpiece of Islam to his English readers. In the speeches that Stubbe put in the mouth of ‘Alī, he echoed the beautiful proverbs and sayings in *Nahj al-Balāgha* (a huge portion of which had been translated by Pococke but never published). Where Muhammad was the political and religious leader, ‘Alī was the spiritual commentator and missionary of Islam.

Much as Stubbe focused in his treatise on the human agencies in the origins of Islam, he fully recognized that the importance of Muhammad lay in his transmission of the Qur’an, and not in his personal life. No European writer before Stubbe said, or would say for generations, what he wrote about the Qur’an in his last pages:

The Alcoran, a transcendent miracle, and which is more one that is permanent, from generation to generation. Nor is there any lasting miracle of the prophet, excepting that whereunto he appealed, challenging all the wits of Arabia (and Arabia did then abound with thousands whose chief study was eloquence and poetry) to make one chapter or more that might compare therewith and thereby demonstrated to the most incredulous, the truth of his prophesy. And God said concerning it, that if all men and angels should combine to write any thing like it, they should fail in their enterprise (fos. 138–139).

It is interesting that Stubbe, ever meticulous in recording his sources, did not mention that the last sentence was the Qur’anic verse 17:88:

قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ
كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

Say: “If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.”

Unless readers knew that this verse had been cited and discussed by Hottinger, they would have taken the Qur’anic assertion as Stubbe’s own conviction.³⁷ And it was a conviction on which Stubbe elaborated. Having read Pococke’s translation of al-Ghazālī’s *Tarjamat ‘qīdat ahl al-sunnah*/Summary of the Orthodox creed,³⁸ Stubbe found no qualms in presenting that creed in his treatise: it is in the Qur’an that God is revealed, His Oneness, Omnipotence, and Omniscience; the power of God over all the creation; the prophetic continuity in God’s messengers to humankind; reward and punishment; and the salvation of the damned (apocatastasis). There is nothing comparable to Stubbe’s breadth and passion regarding Islam in any contemporary English or European text.

III

The presence of Christian chroniclers in the midst of Islamic society who wrote so informatively about Muhammad and the Qur’an led Stubbe to an unprecedented contrast – unprecedented at least in early modern thought. Nearly every Euro-Christian who visited, or did not visit, the Ottoman Empire wrote about the plight of the Christian minorities, and how they were living in fear and ignorance; others expressed hostility, describing the eastern Christians as intellectually and theologically superstitious, which is why they hoped to convert them to Protestantism or Catholicism.³⁹ To repudiate such views and goals, Stubbe introduced into the discourse about eastern Christians an unusual contrast: between the condition of the American Indians and of slaves under the Iberians and other Europeans, including “us,” “the English,” and the condition of Christians under Muslim rule.

How Christians fared under Islam is a topic that has always been approached from the angle of their *dhimmī* status. In an essay on “The Concept of *Dhimma* in Early Islam,” the distinguished historian C.E. Bosworth observed the following:

Although protected by the contract of *dhimma*, the *dhimmīs* were never anything but second-class citizens in the Islamic and social system, tolerated in large measure because they had special skills such as those of physicians, secretaries, financial experts,

etc., or because they fulfilled functions which were necessary but obnoxious to Muslims.⁴⁰

That the minorities of the Empire did not have the same privileges or opportunities as the Muslim majority, and that they were marginalized and sometimes maltreated, is not contested. Given the vastness of Ottoman lands, the central government in Istanbul was unable to control fully the errant activities of its local governors.

The Ottomans, like their contemporary Spaniards and Portuguese, and the French (and the British later), were launched in the early modern period on territorial expansion that resulted in the subjugation of large populations with different religions and languages. The same could be said for the progress of the early Islamicate caliphate about which Stubbe wrote. Which is why, and after having consulted the histories and chronicles, Stubbe added a unit in his treatise, which survives as a separate fragment, under the following title: "Concerning the justice of the Mahometan wars, and that Mahomet did not propagate his doctrine by the sword." Stubbe had been impressed by Muhammad's attitude to the Christians in the seventh century; in this unit (fos. 107-114), he became even more impressed when he learned about Christian societies in the empires of seventeenth-century Islam. Stubbe carefully read the travelogues of two European authors: Adam Olearius who wrote about Persia and Paul Rycaut who wrote about Turkey. Both appeared in print just about the time that Stubbe started working on his treatise. Meticulously citing them, Stubbe showed that what he had read in the medieval Christian Arabic chronicles about Christian life in the Islamicate polity was not a thing of the past. Both authors, continental and English, confirmed that among the Persians and the Ottomans, Christians, be they Armenians, Greek or Antiochian Orthodox, or Catholic, were leading active lives, both religiously and commercially. The numerous descriptions of Christian celebrations and communities which Olearius recorded during his 1630s journey would have been impossible to duplicate for a Jewish or Muslim community in any European country then. Indeed, that Christian/Armenian communities prospered was much more than could be said

about early modern Christian polities and their destruction of the native populations in the brutal American colonies.

Stubbe did not need to elaborate on the plight of the Indians or the slaves under the Spaniards; such knowledge had become widely familiar in England especially after the publication of Bartolome de las Casas, *The Tears of the Indians*⁴¹ as well as William Davenant's *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658) and John Dryden's *The Indian Emperour, or the Conquest of Mexico* (1667). And so Stubbe bluntly contrasted the plight of the Indians under Christian rule with the "Musarabick Christians"/Arabized Christians under Muslim rule in Spain. While the former had been annihilated, the latter "alwaies lived quietly & Safely" in the Islamic "Kingdoms & Dominions, An inviolate Justice being preserved towards them, ... tho' the rich & potent Nobility & Rulers were destroyed or reduced to nothing which was don to prevent future Rebellions." Such Muslim strategy toward the Christians was confirmed by one of the greatest scholars of Europe: "Yet 'tis observed by Scaliger," continued Stubbe, quoting the French historian/orientalist Joseph Scaliger, "& 'tis an assured truth that the vulgar Greeks live in a better Condicion under the Turk at present then they did under their own Emperors when there were perpetuall Murders practiced on their Princes & tyranny on their people, But they are now Secure from Injury if they pay their Taxes" (fos. 109–110).

Stubbe recognized that such acceptance on the part of Muslims of the religious Other was not just a matter of Qur'anic theology, but also of commonality of belief. Muslim rulers shared with their Christian subjects the expectation of the return of 'Īsā – a messianic finalé that must have resonated with the eschatological and millenarian excitement of Britons during the civil wars. Pococke, ever Stubbe's mentor, described the signs of the end in Islamic eschatology, and noted that the final moment would witness *nuzūl 'Īsā ilā al-ard' 'ind al-manārah al-bayḍā' sharqiy dimashq*/Descensus Jesu in terram ... apud turrim albam ad parté Damasci orientalem/ the descent of 'Īsā/Jesus to earth near the white minaret east of Damascus.⁴² Stubbe observed that it was perhaps because of that Islamic openness to Christ/Christians that made European princes willing to join forces with Muslim armies

and to invade Christian regions. Religion, observed Stubbe sardonically in a treatise he was writing simultaneously with *Originall & Progress*, had never been a divisive factor when it came to the advancement of empire. “How often,” he asked rhetorically, “did the Emperours of Constantinople, the Kings of Spain and France, contract for the assistance of the Saracens against Christians?” It was hypocritical to trade and cooperate with Muslims and then denounce their theology or ignore their prophetic legacy.⁴³

Whether, in this unique perspective on the religious Other, Stubbe wielded any influence on John Locke, the father of modern liberalism, is an intriguing question. Both were at Christ Church at the same time, in the 1650s, both having been born in the same year 1632. Both were pupils of Edward Pococke, and Locke corresponded with Stubbe in 1659. As the writings of Locke demonstrate, as early as the 1660s, the philosopher became interested in Islam and in questions about different religious communities and the roles they could play in the Christian commonwealth. As his first manuscript on toleration demonstrates, Locke began to think of the challenges to coexistence, given the violent persecution of nonconformists in Restoration England, in what came to be known as the Great Persecution. Furthermore, both Stubbe and Locke practiced medicine, and both were active in political circles in the early 1670s – especially that of Lord Shaftesbury.⁴⁴

What is striking is that the openness which Stubbe expressed in his study of the history of religious interactions was gaining some kind momentum among his compatriots – even as far as the colony of Tangier with its 3,000 British settlers. A few years after the death of Stubbe, one observer noted that in North Africa, the “English and Moors seem’ed to differ in nothing but Religion”⁴⁵ – words that point to the kind of thinking informing Locke’s first *Letter Concerning Toleration*:

Neither pagan nor Mahometan nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion.⁴⁶

Locke urged the integration of Muslims in British society because he believed that they possessed divine law through revelation. “The Alcoran ... being taken for a divine law it would have served men who made use of it and judged of their actions by it to have given them notions of morality or Moral Ideas.” Muslims in obedience to the Qur’an exemplified the Moral Ideas that Britain’s Glorious Revolution proclaimed. After all, continued Locke, people upheld the same religion that their parents and community upheld: no religious group, therefore, had the divine authority to judge another since all men, Muslims, Christians and Jews alike, were error-prone, and judgment on their error did not lie with the state magistrate but with God:

In this, whether and how far any one is faulty, must be left to the Searcher of hearts, the great and righteous Judge of all men, who knows all their circumstances, all the powers and workings of their minds: where it is they sincerely follow, and by what default they at any time miss truth. God, we are sure, will judge uprightly.⁴⁷

By Way of Conclusion

Stubbe did not discover new material about the Prophet Muhammad or Islam, nor did he have access to sources that were denied his contemporaries. What he read was what others read. Stubbe therefore demonstrates that, as of the 17th century, it was possible for a European writer to read Latin translations of Arabic chronicles (and the commentaries on them), consult the publications of Dutch and English and Swiss orientalists, and then write a history of the Prophet Muhammad and of Islam that corrected a large number of misrepresentations. What was needed was to de-center the sources for the study of Islam and to approach Islam not as an appendage to Graeco-Roman civilization, but as a fresh start, “a revolution,” in world history.

What Stubbe also demonstrates is the possibility of transformation. Like his contemporaries, Stubbe did not escape preconceptions and falsities. As he explained, he relied heavily on the Arabic chronicles, but he also used other sources (fo. 58), some of which were unreliable. But

as he steeped himself in scholarship, applying rigorous measures for evaluating information and informants, he moved toward balance and perspicacity. The last third of the treatise (fos. 107–142) is an encomium on the Prophet and the beginnings of Islam the like of which exists nowhere else in early modern Europe.⁴⁸ Not only does Stubbe defend the teachings and practices of Islam from the aspersions of “European Xtians,” he also emphasizes the importance of studying the historical context, and of approaching Islam with a fresh eye: only “an allegorical brain which knows how to dive into mysteries may undoubtedly find out rich mines of knowledge, types and figures in Mahometanism” (fo. 131). Significantly, it is in this last third that the names of the Arabic historians are constantly cited. Stubbe’s change shows how long-held bigotries can be overcome – by consulting indigenous history of the caliber produced by al-Makīn, Ibn al-Baṭrīq and Abū al-Faraj.

In the *Originall & Progress*, Stubbe was the first writer in English to demonstrate the effectiveness of moving beyond the Euro-centric production of knowledge about Islam to alternative sources. It is therefore in the area of historiography that his importance lies. University scholarship, if translated into the language of the general reading public, could effect change in religious as well as historical perspectives. This emphasis on research and precision in data collecting, evidenced by the relentless marginalia in the treatise, stemmed from Stubbe’s profession. As a physician, he treated the maladies of patients: as a writer, he sought to treat the malady of ignorance – which he diagnosed, as he would have a disease, through careful and rigorous examination of symptoms. For him, the historian, like the physician, should rely on meticulous research: and as the treatment of diseases did not discriminate on the basis of culture or geography, so the treatment of history. It is not surprising, therefore, that Stubbe became the first Englishman to use the term “semiotics,” by which he meant interpreting the medical signs of disease. As he pored over the tomes of English Edward Pococke, Swiss Johann Hottinger and Isaac Casaubon, French Claudius Salmasius, English John Selden, and Dutch Thomas Erpenius, and the chronicles of al-Makīn, ibn al-Baṭrīq and Abū al-Faraj, Stubbe became the physician trying to find the cure for the

disease of ignorance. It is no coincidence that the *Panarion* of Epiphanius, that fifth-century compendium of pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian heresies, which Stubbe constantly cited, was subtitled: *Contra octoginta haereses opus, Panarium, sive Arcula, aut Capsula medica appellatum/the Medicine Chest against Heresies*.

Henry Stubbe belongs to that century in English and continental history when Arab-Islamic manuscripts made an impact on European thought.⁴⁹ They were collected, edited, translated, and integrated into early modern intellectual activity, sometimes accepted, sometimes rejected, and sometimes adapted into discussions of biblical history and philosophy, philology and law, geography and mathematics. They became a reference that could not be ignored by scholar and layman alike, from the cloisters of the universities to the multi-denominational readers of *Hay ibn Yaqzān*. Which is why, a physician from the sleepy town of Stratford-upon-Avon ventured to write about the “originall and progress” of Islam. Stubbe cannot, of course, rival his famous fellow townsman: he did not have the genius of the bard. Nor did he have the fame: while countless visitors flock to Shakespeare’s memorial, Stubbe has neither a memorial nor even a gravestone in the Abbey of Bath where he was buried.⁵⁰ But Stubbe had the courage of the bard: as Shakespeare forced his London audiences to reevaluate their views of the Other, be they Jews or Moors, so did Stubbe rewrite the history of the most contested man in early modern religious history in the West: the Prophet Muhammad. Had his treatise not remained in manuscript, I would like to believe that it might have contributed to changing the European approach to the study of Islam. And who knows, the world might have been different today.

NOTES

¹ G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), remains the most important study of this topic. See also Karl H. Dannenfeldt, “The Renaissance Humanities and the Knowledge of Arabic,” *Studies in the Renaissance*, 2 (1955): 96–117.

² See my “Some Notes on George Fox and Islam,” *The Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, 55 (1989): 271–76.

³ Fourteen plays between 1671 and 1676 alone: Louis Wann, “The Oriental in Restoration Drama,” *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature* 2 (1919): 171 in 163–186.

⁴ Strangely, the new edition of the OED (1989 and online 2011) still defines Islam as “The religious system of Muhammad, Muhammadanism.” Stubbe found the word “Islam” in Pococke’s translation of Abū al-Faraj, *Specimen Historiae Arabum* (Oxford, 1650), 2.

⁵ John Tolan, “European Accounts of Muhammad’s life,” in Jonathan E. Brockopp, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 226–250.

⁶ Justin Champion, “‘I remember a Mahometan Story of Ahmed Ben Edris’: Freethinking uses of Islam from Stubbe to Toland,” *Al-Qantara* 31 (2010), 466 in 443–480.

⁷ “[I]t is certain,” he continued, “that when the previous dispositions intervene, a slight occasion, oftentimes a mere casualty, opportunity taken hold of and wisely prosecuted, will produce those revolutions which otherwise no human sagacity or courage could accomplish” (fo. 4).

⁸ Shairani wrote the following in his introduction: “Some passages, again, have been omitted because they militate against modern canons of taste, or because they break the continuity of the text”: *An account of the rise and progress of Mahometanism: with the life of Mahomet and a vindication of him and his religion from the calumnies of the Christians/ by Henry Stubbe: from a manuscript copied by Charles Hornby of Pipe Office, in 1705, with an appendix, by Mahmud Khan Shairani* (London, 1911), x.

⁹ “Christianus erat, à quo tamen didicerunt multi è Muslemorum eximiè doctis,” in “Ad lectorem,” Edward Pococke, *Specimen historia Arabum* (Oxford, 1650), 6.

¹⁰ For other early Christian Arabic views on Muhammad, see Samir K. Samir, “The Prophet Muhammad as Seen by Timothy I and Some Other Arab Christian Authors,” in *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, ed. David Thomas (Leiden, 2001): 75–106.

¹¹ Pococke, *Specimen*, 383: “Fidus fuit in allegationibus fuis, est que historia ipsus historiarum verissima & certissima, inquit Ebn Challecan.”

¹² See P. S. van Koningsveld’s discussion of its use in Muslim Spain, “Christian Arabic literature from medieval Spain: An attempt at periodization,” in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)*, eds. Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen S. Nielsen (Leiden, 1994): 216–217.

¹³ Al-Makīn, *Historia Saracenica*, trans. Thomas Erpenius (Leiden, 1625), 3, 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11: “Cumque venisset ad eum magnus quidam Christianus; surrexit honorem ei exhibens qua de re cum cum alloquerentur quidam, respondit; Cum

venerit ad vos Primarius populi alicjus, honorate eum: Atque hic vir maximus est in populo suo. Dixit quoque: Benefacite Cophitis Aegypti: sunt enim vobis genere & affinitate juncti. Item: Qui Christianum opprimit, adversarius cum habeat die Juidici. Et, Qui Christiano nocet, mihi nocet.”

¹⁵ See A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects* (London, 1930), 5–17 and an extended discussion in Maher Y. Abu Munshar, *Islamic Jerusalem and its Christians* (London, 2007), chs. 2 and 3.

¹⁶ Al-Makīn, *Historia Saracenicā*, 22.

¹⁷ Edward Pococke, *The Theological Works*, ed. Leonard Twells (London, 1740), 53.

¹⁸ In 1654, he finished a translation of *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annalium*, followed by another edition with the title of *Nazm al-Jawhar/Contextio gemmarum, sive, Eutychii patriarchae Alexandrini annales* (1656). This latter edition included a picture of John Seldon along with the following explanation on the title page: “Illustriss: Johanne Seldeno” and “Interprete Edwardo Pocockio.”

¹⁹ *Eutychii Patriarchae Alexandrini Annalium* (Oxford, 1654), 2:284. The two volumes are bound in one.

²⁰ *Historia compendiosa dynastiarum / authore Gregorio Abul-Pharajio ... historiam complectens universalem, á mundo condito, usque ad tempora auctoris, res orientalium accuratissimè describens* (Oxford, 1663).

²¹ “Futurum est (inquit) ab hoc Puero magnum aliquid, cujus fama per Orientem & Occidentem se diffundent, nam cum appropinquaret nube obnumbraus apparuit.”

²² Pococke, *Specimen*, 9, 13. See also the Oxford 1672 edition of the *Historia Orientalis* (another title to the work of Abū al-Faraj), for the same quotation, 103.

²³ *Ibid.*, 183–184: “Meccam, aut montes ejus ... demissionem Alcorani ad legatum ipsius Mohammedem.”

²⁴ Pococke, *Specimen*, 98.

²⁵ Marcus Zeuerius Boxhornius, *Historia universalis sacra et profana a Christo nato ad annum usque* (Lugduni, 1652), 397.

²⁶ One source for this information is found in Bibliander’s *Machvmetis Sarracanorum principis vita, ac doctrina omnis*, Part II, “De Haeresi Herachii et Principatu ac Lege Machvmeti,” col. 1.

²⁷ Thomas Erpenius, *Orationes Tres, De Linguae Ebraeae atque Arabicae Dignitate* (Leiden, 1621), 42.

²⁸ A hundred years later, Edward Gibbon compared the Arabs to the “Medici of Florence.” Had he been reading Stubbe? *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, introd. Christopher Dawson (Everyman, 1910/1978), 5:217.

²⁹ Gibbon mentions “Mr. White” who argued for literacy but to expose the “imposture” of the Prophet. I have not been able to identify the *Sermons* to which he alludes, *The Decline and Fall*, 5:233, n. 1. See the discussion of “*ummiyy*” as illiterate in *Specimen*, 156.

³⁰ But first published in 1691: *The Works of Sir William Temple* (London, 1720), 2:221–222.

³¹ “[O]ur English doth follow the French & the French is very corrupt altering & omitting many passages” (fo. 139). It is not clear which version of the Qur’an Stubbe read: the Latin and the French translations did not include the names of the suras, which he mentions at various occasions in *Originall & Progress*.

³² *Historia Josephi Patriarchae, ex Alcorano* (Leiden, 1617): “& quàm Muhamed ijs persuasit coelitus ad se demissam/and which Muhamed persuaded them had been sent down to him from heaven.”

³³ Pococke, *Porta Mosis* (Oxford, 1655), 244.

³⁴ Pococke, *Specimen*, 17.

³⁵ Contrast, for instance, Purchas in his *Pilgrimage* (1617): “Halli was Author of the Sect Imemia, which was embraced of the Persians, Indians, and of many Arabians,” 310.

³⁶ Sionita *De Nonnullis in Geographia Nubiensis* (Paris, 1619), 24: “simul cum Mohamede Moslemannica lege fuit imbutus, quam ob cause saepe dicere solebat,” followed by the quotation.

³⁷ *Historia Orientalis* (1650), 487.

³⁸ Pococke, *Specimen*, 274–292.

³⁹ See the section on eastern Christians in chapter 5 in Gerald MacLean and Nabil Matar, *Britain and the Islamic World: 1558–1713* (Oxford, 2011).

⁴⁰ *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Benjamin Baude and Bernard Lewis (New York and London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1982), 1:49 in 37–51.

⁴¹ The title continues: *being an historical and true account of the cruel massacres and slaughters of above twenty millions of innocent peoples*, trans. J. P. (London, 1656).

⁴² Porocke, *Porta Mosis*, 260.

⁴³ Henry Stubbe, *A Further Vindication* (London, 1673), 23.

⁴⁴ See the discussion in Jacob, *Henry Stubbe* (Cambridge, 1984), 117.

⁴⁵ William Crooke, *The Moores Baffled: Being a Discourse Concerning Tanger* (London, 1681), 18.

⁴⁶ Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 56, quoted in my “John Locke and the ‘Turbanned Nations’,” *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2 (1991): 67–77.

⁴⁷ *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1692), in *Works*, VI, 298, quoted in my “John Locke.”

⁴⁸ See the three consecutive units: “Concerning the justice of the Mahometan wars, and that Mahomet did not propagate his doctrine by the sword,” “Concerning the Christian Additions,” and “As to their opinions concerning God, purgatory, judgement, and paradise, they are these.”

⁴⁹ It was thanks to Pococke's *Specimen*, concludes Toomer, that the Arabic corpus "was worth studying in its own right," *John Selden*, 2:814.

⁵⁰ I am grateful to the volunteers at the Abbey who consulted for me the recently completed inventory of all tombstones and memorials. While there is no mention of Stubbe, as I walked around (26 March 2012), I found the tombstone of Joseph Glanvill, Stubbe's adversary, who preached the funeral sermon.

The history of medieval and early modern European writings about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shows a consistent pattern of misunderstanding...
only one writer challenged that history: the English physician Henry Stubbe (1632-1676)

The history of medieval and early modern European writings about the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shows a consistent pattern of misunderstanding. Until the nineteenth century, only one writer challenged that history: the English physician Henry Stubbe (1632–1676), author of “Originall & Progress of Mahometanism.” Neither an Orientalist nor a theologian, Henry Stubbe approached Islam as a historian of religion, perhaps the first in early modern Europe, arguing that the study of another religion should rely on historical evidence derived from indigenous documents, and not on foreign accounts. The result of his new historiographical approach was a “Copernican revolution” in the study of the figure of Muhammad, the Qur’an, and Islam. It shifted the focus from faith to scholarship. Had his treatise been published, the course of Western understanding of Islam might have been different.

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