Henry Stubbe and the Beginnings of Islam: The Originall & Progress of Mahometanism. Henry Stubbe.
Ed. Nabil Matar. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. xi + 274 pp. $50.

Once again, Nabil Matar brings his interdisciplinary expertise and mastery of Arabic to bear on an important example of Christian-Muslim transculturation, in this case a critical edition of *The Originall & Progress of Mahometism*, a manuscript written by Henry Stubbe (1632–76). Matar asserts that Stubbe, a well-educated country physician, was "the first writer in English to use Arabic and non-Chalcedonian [non-Roman Catholic] sources to develop a largely accurate interpretation of the beginnings of Islam and of the life of its prophet" (3). Moreover, he argues persuasively that Stubbe's painstaking reconstruction of the historical context, his admiration for the Prophet as a religious and political leader, his ridicule of Christian misrepresentations of Islam, and his defense of the pragmatic usefulness of Islam's core beliefs made him "the 'exception' to all early modern writers on Islam" (1). Stubbe's laudatory view of the Prophet, writes Matar, probably explains why his work, though circulated in manuscript, was never published in his lifetime (47–48).

Matar's critical introduction provides a brief biography of Stubbe, analyzes his motives for undertaking this project, and explains the relationships among the various extant manuscripts. Matar aims at a scholarly audience (students and professors interested in the history of Anglo-Islamic exchange), but Stubbe's courage in debunking the errors of his contemporaries and pursuing historical analysis rather than religious polemic may also appeal to a broader audience. Matar describes in considerable detail Stubbe's new sources, namely Arabic Christians writing between the tenth and the seventeenth centuries, such as Saʿīd al-Batrīq, or Eutychius of Alexandria (877–940); Jirjis ibn al-ʿAmīd al-Makīn (1205–73); and Gregorios Abū al-Faraj (1226–86). These works had been translated into Latin by pioneering Arabists, such as Thomas Erpinus, Edward Pococke, and John Selden, and synthesized by Johann Heinrich Hottinger, in his *Historia Orientalis*. Just as the Arabists made these sources available to educated Europeans, Stubbe made them available to English speakers more comfortable in the vernacular than in Latin. Stubbe uses these

sources to argue (among other things) that while the Prophet used violence to establish his empire, he never enforced people's consciences; rather, he offered protection and religious freedom to those who accepted his political program. Further, Stubbe follows his sources in viewing Muhammad as a legitimate prophet and religious reformer.

Despite the overall excellence of Matar's edition, some of his editorial practices hinder the reader and obscure the evidence for the text's significance. On the first point, the text and introduction are full of Latin and Arabic titles and phrases. Most are translated either in the body of the text or in an explanatory endnote, but some are not. For example, a bilingual edition is cited by both its Arabic and Latin title, but the Latin is not translated. Many readers will intuit that *Testamentum et pactiones initae inter Mohamedem et Christianae fidei cultores* refers to something that transpired between (*inter*) the Muslims and Christians, and the text later mentions "treaties" (20). However, even those who have studied Latin might like to know exactly who or what is *fidei* (of trust or faithfulness) and whether Matar reads the *cultores* as "friends" or merely "inhabitants." (Similar examples occur on pages 22 and 24.) More important, since Matar emphasizes the importance of Stubbe's new Arabic sources and asserts that he cites them prominently, Stubbe's explicit references to them need to be crystal clear. Sometimes they are, as when he refers to "Ismael ibn Ali, a Mahometan historian" and to Eutychius and Josephus, "an Egyptian presbyter" (187–88). But often it is Matar's note that identifies the source, not Stubbe himself. After describing Muhammad's actions just prior to his flight from Mecca, Matar inserts an endnote: "The previous four paragraphs are from al-Makīn" (242–49). Thus the editor highlights the source, not Stubbe himself. Finally, sometimes when Stubbe does cite his Arabic source by name, the reference is opaque, as on page 189, where he asserts that "Elmacin and [other Christians who lived under Muslim rule] do mention Mahomet with great respect as 'Mahomet of glorious memory.'" A reader might realize that "Elmacin" is a variant of al-Makīn, but adding the more familiar form in a note would have strengthened Matar's claim about Stubbe's giving prominence to his Arabic sources.

Despite these minor drawbacks, this is an excellent edition of an important work that testifies to the benefits of scholarly translation and the ability of an Englishman writing in the late 1600s to open his mind to alternate narratives about the rise of Islam and the merits of the Prophet as a man and religious reformer.

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