



# **Redefining Christian Identity: Cultural Interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta)**

*H. Murre-Van den Berg, J.J. Van Ginkel, T.M. van Lint*

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'Cultural interaction in the Middle East since the Rise of Islam'- such was the title of a combined research project of the Universities of Leiden and Groningen aimed at describing the various ways in which the Christian communities of the Middle East expressed their distinct cultural identity in Muslim societies. As part of the project the symposium 'Redefining Christian Identity, Christian cultural strategies since the rise of Islam' took place at Groningen University on April 7-10, 1999. This book contains the proceedings of this conference. From the articles it becomes clear that a number of distinct 'cultural strategies' can be identified, some of which were used very frequently, others only in certain groups or at particular periods of time. The three main strategies that are represented in the papers of this volume are: reinterpretation of the pre-Islamic Christian heritage; inculturation of elements from the new Islamic context; isolation from the Islamic context. Viewed in time, it is clear that the 'reinterpretation' of older Christian heritage was particularly important in the first two centuries after the rise of Islam, that 'inculturation' was the dominant theme of the Abbasid period, whereas from the Mongol period onwards, 'isolation' more and more often occurs, although inculturation of elements from the predominantly Muslim environment never came to a complete standstill.

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