

*posse nemo obligatur*, or the dictum by Celsus the younger (ca. 100 CE): 'Impossibilia nulla obligatio est' (Dig. 50, 17, 185). A detailed discussion of the subject may be found in Brunshvig, *Devoir et pouvoir. Histoire d'un problème de la théologie musulmane*, in: SI 20/1964/5ff.; more briefly Daiber, *Mu'ammār* 102ff.

#### 2.1.1.1 The Predestination of the Date of Death

The idea that death was inevitable was expressed insistently in the Quran as well as in pre-Islamic poetry, but while the poets of the Jāhiliyya spoke of the lot of death (*maniyya*),<sup>1</sup> the Quran used the term (*ajal*) allocated by God;<sup>2</sup> this word was adopted in hadith, too.<sup>3</sup> The Qadarites, at least those in Basra, were at first not against it; both Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Amr b. Fā'id al-Uswārī believed the date of death to be predestined.<sup>4</sup> The Qadarite *Risāla* transmitted under Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's name does not touch upon the subject, although the author was presumably familiar with the prophetic dictum cited above that postulates predestination from the womb onwards.<sup>5</sup> Christian theology, on the other hand, discussed the question. Jacob of Edessa (d. 89/708) felt compelled to write about it after an inquiry;<sup>6</sup> at the same time Germanus, who became ecumenical patriarch in Byzantium in 715 at an advanced age, expressed his opinion on it.<sup>7</sup> Earlier, maybe even during Muḥammad's lifetime, Theophylact Simocatta, the secretary and prefect under Heraclius, had already done so.<sup>8</sup> The *locus classicus* on the subject was found in the Church Father Basil's (ca. 330–379) works;<sup>9</sup> later it was treated stereotypically in the Ἑρωταποκρίσεις literature.<sup>10</sup> What exercised the Christians was that death, which is predestined by God, may be harmful; they probably meant that it arrived too early for many people. The rekindling of interest during the seventh century may be linked to the deterioration of the quality of life in the wake of the Persian wars and the expansion of Islam; at a later stage the Quranic view may have become better known,

1 Caskel, *Das Schicksal in der altarabischen Poesie* 22ff.; Ringgren, *Arabian Fatalism* 16ff.

2 Sura 63:11, with the parallels listed in Paret, *Kommentar* 479.

3 Cf. *Conc.* 1 22f.; also HT 85.

4 See vol. II 54 and 95 above.

5 *Risāla* 74, 17ff.; also HT 31.

6 See vol. II 499 above; in more detail Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* 145ff.

7 *Germanos on Predestined Terms of Life*. Greek Text and English Translation by Charles Garton and Leendert G. Westerink (Arethusa Monographs VII. Buffalo 1979).

8 His text was edited and translated by the same authors as Arethusa Monograph VI (Buffalo 1978): *Theophilactus Simocates on Predestined Terms of Live*. The treatise is structured as a dialogue (*in utramque partem disserere*).

9 *Homilia quod Deus non est auctor malorum*; PG xxxi 333 B.

10 *Germanos*, intro. xxiv f.