

# Earliest Christian Views of Islam

PO HIST 119

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## Description

Over the course of the century following Muhammad's death in 632, Muslim armies dominated the eastern, southern, and western shores of the Mediterranean, areas that had been in Christian hands for centuries. How Christian commentators came to terms with this dramatic religio-political transformation of their world is the subject of this seminar. Primary sources from the hands of contemporary Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, and Latin Christian authors will be supplemented by the works of modern scholars.

## Units & Readings

Introduction: Texts in Search of Context.

### 1. Background: The Christian Roman Empire and its Enemies: Internal and External

- Jenkins, *Jesus Wars*, vii-xv, 41-68, 131-265.
- Howard-Johnston, "The Official History of Heraclius' Persian Campaigns," pp. 57-85.

### 2. Background: Islam

- Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the origins of Islam*, xi-xiv, 1-144, 194-224.
- Crone, "Among the Believers" (2010)--review article.
- Ruthven, "The Birth of Islam: A Different View," *New York Review of Books* (2011)--review article.
- Morony, "Religious Communities in Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq," pp. 113-135.

### 3. Bits and Pieces: The Earliest Eastern Christian References to the Arab Conquests

- Anonymous Syriac gospel notes (637)
- Sophronius of Jerusalem (634-637)
- *Doctrina Jacobi nuper baptizati* (634-640)
- Anonymous Continuator of John Moschus (shortly after 637)

- Maximus the Confessor (634-40)
- Thomas the Priest, *Chronicle* (640)
- A Nestorian of Khuzistan (660s/670s)
- Donner, "Visions of the Early Islamic Expansion: Between the Heroic and the Horrific," pp. 9-29.

#### 4. The Apocalyptic Response

- Daniel 7
- Sebeos, *The Armenian History*, (after 661), chapters 42-52, pp. xi-lii, 94-154.
- John Bar Penkaye, *Rish Melle*, Book 15 (687)
- Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse* (692):
  - Alexander, "The Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius," pp. 13-51 (actual text on pp. 36-51).
  - Alexander, "The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor," pp. 1-14.
  - Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," pp. 149-187.
- *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* (c. 705)
  - Drijvers, "The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles," pp. 189-213.

#### 5. The Arab Conquests in the Christian Chronicles of the East

- *The Chronicle of Theophanes* (c. 815), pp. vii-xx, 1-141.

#### 6. Apologetics and Polemics: Early efforts

- Griffith, "Anastasios of Sinai, the *Hodegos*, and the Muslims," pp. 341-358.
- John of Damascus, *De Haeresibus* 101 (743), pp. 133-141.
- Sahas, *John of Damascus on Islam*, pp. 3-95.
- *On the Triune Nature of God* (755 or 788), pp. 2-36.

#### 7. The Dialogues

- The Correspondence between Umar II and Leo III (719?)
- Timothy I's Response to Al-Mahdi (780), pp. 1-41.
- *Risalat al-Kindi* (830?)
- Griffith, "Christian Theology in Arabic," pp. 45-74.

#### 8. Theodore Abu Qurrah and the Appeal to Reason

- Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalam: Theodore Abu Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion," pp. 1-43.

- Theodore Abu Qurrah, *Discerning the True Religion* (c. 785), pp. 1-57.

## 9. Bahira and Counterhistory

- *The Legend of Sergius-Bahira: The East-Syrian Recension* (9C), pp. 255-309 (alt. pages)
- *The Legend of Sergius-Bahira: The Long Arabic Recension* (9C), pp. 435-527 (alt. pages)
- Griffith, "Muhammad and the Monk Bahira: Relections on a Syriac and Arabic text from Early Abbasid Times," pp. 146-174.

## 10. A glance at the Latin West

- Wolf, "Counterhistory in the Earliest Latin Lives of Muhammad."
- Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*.

## Additional units pertaining to the East

### 11. The Hagiography of Christian Martyrs to Islam

- *Passion of the Sixty Martyrs of Gaza* (638), pp. 1-6.
- Theophanes' accounts of Eustathios (d. c. 740) and Peter of Maiouma (aka, Peter of Capitolias, d. c. 742), pp. 105, 107-108.
- *Passion of Anthony Ruwah* (799), pp.1-5.
- Griffith, "The Arabic Account of 'Abd al-Masih an-Nagrani al-Ghassani" (d. 860?), pp. 331-374.

## The Earliest Lives of Muhammad in Context

- *Toldoth Yeshu*
- *Apochrypal Acts of St. Peter*

## Additional Secondary Bibliography:

- Averil Cameron, ed., *Byzantium before the Rise of Islam, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World*, vol. 1 (Ashgate).
- Shaul Shaked, ed., *The Sasanian East before the Rise of Islam, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World*, vol. 2 (Ashgate).
- Fred Donner, ed., *The Expansion of the Early Islamic State, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World*, vol. 5 (Ashgate).
- Michael Bonner, ed., *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World*, v. 8 (Ashgate).

- Robert Hoyland, ed., *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 18 (Ashgate, 2004).
- Sidney Griffith, ed., *The Christian Communities in the Early Islamic World*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 19 (Ashgate).
- David Wasserstein, ed., *The Jewish Communities of the Early Islamic World*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 20 (Ashgate).
- Everett Rowson, ed., *The Rise of Islamic Philosophy*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 39 (Ashgate).
- Manuela Marín, ed., *The Formation of al-Andalus I*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 46
- M. Fierro and J. Samsó, eds., *The Formation of al-Andalus II*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 47

## Additional units: Early Latin Christian Views of Islam

### 1. Latin Christendom on the Eve of Islam

- Isidore, *Chronica Maiora* (615 and 624)
- Isidore, *History of the Goths*, pp. 79-109.
- Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 3-20

### 2. The Muslim Conquests in the Christian Chronicles of the West

- *Chronicle of 754* (754), pp. 111-160.
- *Chronicle of Alfonso III* (880s), pp. 161-177.
- Tolan, pp. 78-85, 98-100.
- *Chronica Prophetica* (883)

### 3. The Earliest Latin Views of Islam

- Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, pp. 1-119.
- Eulogius, "Martyrdom of Isaac," pp. 42-47.
- Paul Alvarus, *Life of Eulogius* (c. 859), pp. 51-55.
- Wolf, "The Earliest Latin Lives of Muhammad" (1990), pp. 89-101.
- Wolf, "Christian Views of Islam in Early Medieval Spain" (1996), pp. 85-108

### 4. The View from Northern Europe

- Fredegar, *Chronicle* (c. 658), selections.
- Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*, pp. 1-33.
- Kedar, "The Early Centuries: the Muslims beyond the Bounds of European Mission and Polemics," pp. 3-41.

- Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 71-108.
- Hroswitha of Gandersheim, *Passio sancti Pelagii* (c. 970), pp. 128-153.
- John of St. Arnulph, *Life of John of Görz* (983), pp. 62-75.

#### 5. The First Crusade and its Triumphant "Hangover"

- Peter Tudebode, *Historia de Hierosolymitano Itinere* (c. 1100), pp. 15-127.
- Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 105-134.
- Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews* (1110), Fifth Titulus, pp. 146-163.
- Halevi, "*Lex Mahomethi: Carnal and Spiritual Representations of Islamic Law and Ritual in a Twelfth-Century Dialogue by a Jewish Convert to Christianity*," pp. 315-338.

#### 6. Peter the Venerable and the Latin Translation of the Qur'an

- Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, pp. 3-47.
- Tolan, "Peter the Venerable on the 'Diabolical Heresy' of the Saracens," pp. 345-367.