The Earliest Christian Views of Islam

History 100WC
Pomona College
Ken Wolf

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


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

2. Background: Islam
   - Crone, "Among the Believers" (2010)--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)

4. The Apocalyptic Response

- Daniel 7
- John Bar Penkaye, *Rish Melle*, Book 15 (687)
- Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse* (692):
- *The Gospel of the Twelve Apostles* (c. 705)

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


6. Apologetics and Polemics: Early efforts


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?)

8. Theodore Abu Qurrah and the Appeal to Reason

- 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)

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.

The Earliest Lives of Muhammad in Context

• Toldoth Yeshu
• Apochrypal Acts of St. Peter

Additional Secondary Bibliography:


Additional units: Early Latin Christian Views of Islam

1. Latin Christendom on the Eve of Islam
   - Isidore, *Chronica Maiora* (615 and 624)
   - Tolan, *Saracens*, pp. 3-20

2. The Muslim Conquests in the Christian Chronicles of the West
   - Tolan, pp. 78-85, 98-100.
   - *Chronica Prophetica* (883)

3. The Earliest Latin Views of Islam

4. The View from Northern Europe
   - Fredegar, *Chronicle* (c. 658), selections.

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.

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.