An Early Christian Reaction to Islam

When I was sixteen I became an Islamic fundamentalist. Five years later, after much emotional turmoil, I rejected fundamentalist teachings and returned to normal life and my family. I tried to put my experiences behind me, but as the events of 7/7 unfolded it became clear to me that Islamist groups pose a threat to this country that we - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - do not yet understand. Why are young British Muslims becoming extremists? What are the risks of another home-grown terrorist attack on British soil? By describing my experiences inside these groups, the reasons I joined them and how, after leaving I recovered my faith and mind, I hope to explain the appeal of extremist thought, how fanatics penetrate Muslim communities and the truth behind their agenda of subverting the West and moderate Islam. Writing candidly about life after extremism, I illustrate the depth of the problem that now grips Muslim hearts and minds. I will lay bare what politicians and Muslim 'community leaders' do not want you to know. This is the first time an ex-member openly discusses life within radical Islamic organisations. This is my story.

Black Wave

This successor volume to The Hidden Origins of Islam (edited by Karl-Heinz Ohlig and Gerd-R. Puin) continues the pioneering research begun in the first volume into the earliest development of Islam. Using coins, commemorative building inscriptions, and a rigorous linguistic analysis of the Koran along with Persian and Christian literature from the seventh and eighth centuries—when Islam was in its formative stages—five expert contributors attempt a reconstruction of this critical period. Despite the scholarly nature of their work, the implications of their discoveries are startling: • Islam originally emerged as a sect of Christianity. • Its central theological tenets were influenced by a pre-Nicene, Syrian Christianity. • Arabic, the common language throughout the Near East for many centuries and the language of Syrian Christianity, significantly influenced the Arabic script and vocabulary used in the Koran. • Finally, it was not until the end of the eighth and ninth centuries that Islam formed as a separate religion, and the Koran underwent a period of historical development of at least 200 years. Controversial and highly intriguing, this critical historical analysis reveals the beginning of Islam in a completely new light.

The Islamic Jesus

The year 652 marked a fundamental political change in the Middle East and the surrounding region. An important and contemporary source of the state of the Christian Church at this time is to be found in the correspondence of the patriarch of the Church of the East, Is'yahb III (649-659), which he wrote between 628 and 658. This books discusses Is'yahb's view of and attitudes toward the Muslim Arabs.

The Failure of Political Islam

The emergence of Islam in the seventh century A.D. still polarises scholars who seek to separate religious truth from the historical reality with which it is associated. However, history and prophecy are not solely defined by positive evidence or apocalyptic truth, but by human subjects, who consider them to convey distinct messages and in turn make these messages meaningful to others. These messages are mutually interdependent, and analysed together provide new insights into history. It is by way of this concept that Olaf Helso presents the decline of the Eastern Roman Empire as a key to understanding the rise of Islam; two historical processes often perceived as distinct from one another. Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam highlights significant convergences between Early Islam and the Late Ancient world. It suggests that Islam's rise is a feature of a common process in which tensions between imperial ambitions and apocalyptic beliefs in Europe and the Middle East cut straight across today's theological and political definitions. The conquests of Islam, the emergence of the caliphate, and the transformation of the Roman and Christian world are approached from both prophetic anticipations in the Ancient and Late Ancient world, and from the Meccan and Medinan receptions of history. In the shadow of their narratives it becomes possible to trace the outline of a shared history of Christianity and Islam. The "Dark Ages" thus emerge not merely as a tale of sound and fury, but as an era of openness, diversity and unexpected possibilities. Approaching the rise of Islam as a historical phenomenon, this book opens new perspectives in the study of early religion and philosophy, as well as providing a valuable resource for students and scholars of Islamic Studies.
The Hidden Origins of Islam

This unique work takes a method of textual analysis commonly used in studies of ancient Western and Eastern manuscripts and applies it to twenty-one early Qur'an manuscripts. Keith Small analyzes a defined portion of text from the Qur'an with two aims in view: to recover the earliest form of text for this portion, and to trace the historical development of this portion to the current form of the text of the Qur'an. Small concludes that though a significantly early edited form of the consonantal text of the Qur'an can be recovered, its original forms of text cannot be obtained. He also documents the further editing that was required to record the Arabic text of the Qur'an in a complete phonetic script, as well as providing an explanation for much of the development of various recitation systems of the Qur'an. This controversial, thought-provoking book provides a rigorous examination into the history of the Qur'an and will be of great interest to Quranic Studies scholars.

Arabia and the Arabs

A study of Islamic civilization and the intimate link between Jewish religion and the earliest forms of Islam.

Kitab Al-Iman

‘Blistering’ Sunday Times ‘Indispensable’ Observer ‘Fascinating’ The Times ‘Brilliant’ Peter Frankopan ‘Revelatory’ Lindsey Hilsum A timely and unprecedented examination of how the modern Middle East unraveled, and why it started with the pivotal year of 1979. Shortlisted for the Cundhill History Prize 2020 ‘What happened to us?’ For decades, the question has haunted the Arab and Muslim world, heard across Iran and Syria, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, and in the author's home country of Lebanon. Was it always so? When did the extremism, intolerance and bloodletting of today displace the region’s cultural promise and diversity? In Black Wave, award-winning journalist and author Kim Ghattas argues that the turning point in the modern history of the Middle East can be located in the toxic confluence of three major events in 1979: the Iranian revolution; the siege of the Holy Mosque in Mecca; and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Before this year, Saudi Arabia and Iran had been working allies and twin pillars of US strategy in the region - but the radical legacy of these events made them mortal enemies, unleashing a process that transformed culture, society, religion and geopolitics across the region for decades to come. Drawing on a sweeping cast of characters across seven countries over forty years, Ghattas demonstrates how this rivalry for religious and cultural supremacy has fed intolerance, suppressed cultural expression, encouraged sectarian violence, birthed groups like Hezbollah and ISIS and, ultimately, upended the lives of millions. At once bold and intimate, Black Wave is a remarkable and engrossing story of the Middle East as it has never been told before.

Islamic Exceptionalism

A groundbreaking work that delivers a fresh account of the Arab conquests, incorporating the latest research in Late Antiquity history.

Arabs and Others In Early Islam

In God's Path

From the front page of The New York Times to YouTube, Dr. Wafa Sultan has become a force radical Islam has to reckon with. For the first time, she tells her story and what she learned, first-hand, about radical Islam in A God Who Hates, a passionate memoir by an outspoken Arabic woman that is also a cautionary tale for the West. She grew up in Syria in a culture ruled by a god who hates women. “How can such a culture be anything but barbarous?”, Sultan asks. “It can’t”, she concludes “because any culture that hates its women can’t love anything else.” She believes that the god who hates is waging a battle between modernity and barbarism, not a battle between religions. She also knows that it’s a battle radical Islam will lose. Condemned by some and praised by others for speaking out, Sultan wants everyone to understand the danger posed by A God Who Hates.

Crossroads to Islam

European and Arab versions of the Crusades have little in common. For Arabs, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were years of strenuous efforts to repel a brutal and destructive invasion by barbarian hordes. Under Saladin, an unstoppable Muslim army inspired by prophets and poets finally succeeded in destroying the most powerful Crusader kingdoms. The memory of this greatest and most enduring victory ever won by a non-European society against the West still lives in the minds of millions of Arabs today. Amin Maalouf has sifted through the works of a score of contemporary Arab chroniclers of the Crusades, eyewitnesses and often participants in the events. He retells their stories in their own vivacious style, giving us a vivid portrait of a society rent by internal conflicts and shaken by a traumatic encounter with an alien culture. He retraces two critical centuries of Middle Eastern history, and offers fascinating insights into some of the forces that shape Arab and Islamic consciousness today. 'Well-researched and highly readable.' Guardian 'A useful and important analysis adding much to existing western histories worth recommending to George Bush.' London Review of Books 'Maalouf tells an inspiring story very readable warmly recommended.' Times Literary Supplement 'A wide readership should enjoy this vivid narrative of stirring events.' The Bookseller 'Very well done indeed Should be put in the hands of anyone who asks what lies behind the Middle East's present conflicts.' Middle East International
This book traces the history of conflict and contact between Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Ottoman Middle East prior to 1914.

The Death of a Prophet

This book offers a new approach to the vexing question of how to write the early history of Islam. The first part discusses the nature of the Muslim and non-Muslim source material for the seventh- and eighth-century Middle East and argues that by lessening the divide between these two traditions, which has largely been erected by modern scholarship, we can come to a better appreciation of this crucial period. The second part gives a detailed survey of sources and an analysis of some 120 non-Muslim texts, all of which provide information about the first century and a half of Islam roughly A.D. 620-780. The third part furnishes examples, according to the approach suggested in the first part and with the material presented in the second part, how one might write the history of this time. The fourth part takes the form of excurses on various topics, such as the process of Islamization, the phenomenon of conversion to Islam, the development of techniques for determining the direction of prayer, and the conquest of Egypt. Because this work views Islamic history with the aid of non-Muslim texts and assesses the latter in the light of Muslim writing, it will be essential reading for historians of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, or Zoroastrianism—indeed, for all those with an interest in cultures of the eastern Mediterranean in its traditional phase from Late Antiquity to medieval times.

Eastern Rome and the Rise of Islam

Seeing Islam as Others Saw it

This book discusses the common principles of morality and ethics derived from divinely endowed intuitive reason through the creation of al-fitr’a (nature) and human intellect (al-aql). Biomedical topics are presented and ethical issues related to topics such as genetic testing, assisted reproduction and organ transplantation are discussed. Whereas these natural sources are God’s special gifts to human beings, God’s revelation as given to the prophets is the supernatural source of divine guidance through which human communities have been guided at all times through history. The second part of the book concentrates on the objectives of Islamic religious practice—the maqasid—which include: Preservation of Faith, Preservation of Life, Preservation of Mind (intellect and reason), Preservation of Progeny (al-nasl) and Preservation of Property. Lastly, the third part of the book discusses selected topical issues, including abortion, assisted reproduction devices, genetics, organ transplantation, brain death and end-of-life aspects. For each topic, the current medical evidence is followed by a detailed discussion of the ethical issues involved.

Religion in the New Europe

In 1105, six years after the first crusaders from Europe conquered Jerusalem, a Damascene Muslim jurist named ‘Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106) publicly dictated an extended call to the military jihad (holy war) against the European invaders. Entitled Kitab al-jihad (The Book of the Jihad), al-Sulami’s work both summoned his Muslim brethren to the jihad and instructed them in the manner in which it ought to be conducted, covering topics as diverse as who should fight and be fought, treatment of prisoners and plunder, and the need for participants to fight their own inner sinfulness before turning their efforts against the enemy. Al-Sulami’s text is vital for a complete understanding of the Muslim reaction to the crusades, providing the reader with the first contemporary record of Muslim preaching against the crusaders. However, until recently only a small part of the text has been studied by modern scholars, as it has remained for the most part an unedited manuscript. In this book Niall Christie provides a complete edition and the first full English translation of the extant sections (parts 2, 8, 9 and 12) of the manuscript of al-Sulami’s work, making it fully available to modern readers for the first time. These are accompanied by an introductory study exploring the techniques that the author uses to motivate his audience, the precedents that influenced his work, and possible directions for future study of the text. In addition, an appendix provides translations of jihad sermons by Ibn Nubata al-Farqi (d. 985), a preacher from Asia Minor whose rhetorical style was highly influential in the development of al-Sulami’s work.

Textual Criticism and Qur’ān Manuscripts

Présentation de l’éditeur: "The debate continues unabated: Is political Islam decipherable through the tenets of the Islamic tradition or is it a tool of secular actors who shrewdly misuse religious references? Is it an expression of modernity, or a return to the past? Eschewing these dichotomies, Jocelyne Cesari demystifies the continuous process of interaction between secular and religious actors and institutions that is at the core of political mobilization in the name of Islam. Cesari traces the origins of political Islam to the inception of the modern nation-state, revealing the decisive role of secular nationalist rulers in its creation. In the process, she puts to rest the myth that there has been a lack of modernization in the Muslim world—and shows how that myth has proven dangerous. Ranging from Senegal to Egypt, from Indonesia to Iraq, her analysis provides a much needed corrective to the "conventional wisdom."

Contemporary Bioethics

The first Christians to meet Muslims were not Latin-speaking Christians from the western Mediterranean or Greek-speaking Christians from Constantinople but rather Christians from northern M esopotamia who spoke the Aramaic dialect of Syriac. Living in what constitutes modern-day Iran, Iraq, Syria, and eastern Turkey, these Syriac Christians were under Muslim rule from the seventh century to the present. They wrote the earliest and most extensive accounts of Islam and described a complicated set of religious and cultural exchanges not reducible to the solely antagonistic. Through its critical introductions and new
Did Muhammad Exist?

Muhammad's life and career offer the most nearly unparalleled historical importance; yet for all the iconic power of his name, the intensely dramatic story of the prophet of Islam is not well known. In The First Muslim, Lesley Hazleton brings him vibrantly to life. Drawing on early eyewitness sources and on history, politics, religion, and psychology, she renders him as a man in full, in all his complexity and vitality. Hazleton's account follows the arc of Muhammad's rise from powerlessness to power, from anonymity to renown, from insignificance to lasting significance. How did a child shunted to the margins end up revolutionizing his world? How did a merchant come to challenge the established order with a new vision of social justice? How did the pariah hounded out of Mecca turn exile into a new and victorious beginning? How did the outsider become the ultimate insider? Impeccably researched and thrillingly readable, Hazleton's narrative creates vivid insight into a man navigating between idealism and pragmatism, faith and politics, non-violence and violence, rejection and acclaim. The First Muslim illuminates not only an immensely significant figure but his lastingly relevant legacy.

When Christians First Met Muslims

What evidence do we have to reconstruct the origins of Islam? On the basis of what sources can the first century of Islam be accessed? Why do historians of early Islam consider the literary sources of Islamic origin to be so problematic? How is the problem of early Islamic history framed? This book addresses these critical questions by discussing various approaches to the problem of reconstructing Islamic origins.

Throughout its history the Koran has presented problems of interpretation. Some scholars estimate that at least a quarter of the text is obscure in meaning, not only for Western translators but even native Arabic speakers, who struggle with the archaic vocabulary that is no longer used in modern Arabic. In this in-depth study of the language of the Koran, scholar Christoph Luxenberg dispels much of the mystery surrounding numerous hitherto unclear passages. The key, as Luxenberg shows exhaustively, is to understand that Aramaic—the language of most Middle Eastern Jews and Christians of the pre-Islamic era—had a pervasive influence on the development of the Arabic text of the Koran. For a thousand years preceding the advent of Islam, Aramaic (or Syriac as it was sometimes called) was the lingua franca of many parts of the Near East. It was the native language of the first Christian evangelists and the main liturgical language of the early Christian churches from Syria to Iran. Based on this historical context and a profound knowledge of Semitic languages, Luxenberg clarifies many thorny textual puzzles. Perhaps his most interesting argument is that the passage often translated as referring to the “virgins” that are believed to greet the Near East. It was the native language of the first Christian evangelists and the main liturgical language of the early Christian churches from Syria to Iran. Based on this historical context and a profound knowledge of Semitic languages, Luxenberg clarifies many thorny textual puzzles. Perhaps his most interesting argument is that the passage often translated as referring to the “virgins” that are believed to greet the heaven's throne is not about virginity but about purity, not about paradise but about purity. Luxenberg argues that the Koran was written in Aramaic and then translated into Arabic, and that the Arabic translation was not made until after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

What is Political Islam?

Long before Muhammad preached the religion of Islam, the inhabitants of his native Arabia had played an important role in world history as both merchants and warriors. Arabia provides the only up-to-date, one-volume survey of the region and its peoples, from prehistory to the coming of Islam. Using a wide range of sources — inscriptions, poetry, histories, and archaeological evidence — Robert Hoyland explores the main cultural areas of Arabia, from ancient Sheba in the south, to the deserts and oases of the north. He then examines the major themes of the Arab world: the economy, society, religion, art, architecture and artefacts; language and literature; Arab culture and Arabisation. The volume is illustrated with more than 50 photographs, drawings and maps.

Iran and Iraq at War

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Geography, Religion, Gods, and Saints in the Eastern Mediterranean

Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty

The first Christians to encounter Islam were not Latin-speakers from the western Mediterranean or Greek-speakers from Constantinople but Mesopotamian Christians who spoke the Aramaic dialect of Syriac. Under Muslim rule from the seventh century onward, Syriac Christians wrote the most extensive descriptions extant of early Islam. Seldom translated and often omitted from modern historical reconstructions,
this vast body of texts reveals a complicated and evolving range of religious and cultural exchanges that took place from the seventh to the ninth century. The first book-length analysis of these earliest encounters, Envisioning Islam highlights the ways these neglected texts challenge the modern scholarly narrative of early Muslim conquests, rulers, and religious practice. Examining Syriac sources including letters, theological tracts, scientific treatises, and histories, Michael Philip Penn reveals a culture of substantial interreligious interaction in which the categorical boundaries between Christianity and Islam were more ambiguous than distinct. The diversity of ancient Syriac images of Islam, he demonstrates, revolutionizes our understanding of the early Islamic world and challenges widespread cultural assumptions about the history of exclusively hostile Christian-Muslim relations.

Early Islam

Is there any sound historical evidence that the prophet of Islam actually existed, or is the entire story of Muhammad false or fiction? It is a question that few have thought—or dared—to ask. Virtually everyone, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, takes for granted that the prophet of Islam lived as a prophet, as well as a political and military leader, in seventh-century Arabia. But this widely accepted story begins to crumble on close examination. In his blockbuster New York Times bestseller The Truth about Muhammad, historian and Islam expert Robert Spencer revealed the often shocking contents of Islamic teachings about Muhammad. Now, in this newly revised and expanded version of Did Muhammad Exist?, he lays bare those teachings' surprisingly shaky historical foundations. This updated and enlarged version of this acclaimed book examines even more striking and compelling evidence that the story of Muhammad, who for so long was assumed to have lived in the "full light of history," could be more myth and legend than historical fact. Spencer meticulously examines historical records and archaeological findings, pioneering new scholarship to reconstruct what we can know about Muhammad, the Qur'an, and the early days of Islam. The evidence he presents challenges the most fundamental assumptions about Islam’s origins.

The Formation of Islam

Controversies Over Islamic Origins

Omar Mouallem grew up in a Muslim household, but always questioned the role of Islam in his life. Mouallem explores the unknown history of Islam across the Americas, travelling to thirteen unique mosques in search of an answer to how this religion has survived and thrived so far from the place of its origin. Along this journey he comes to understand that Islam has played a fascinating role in how the Americas were shaped - from industrialization to the changing winds of politics. Residence: Edmonton, AB. Print run 10,000.

The Encounter of Eastern Christianity With Early Islam

Based on the premise that reliable history can only be written on the basis of sources that are contemporary with the events described, the contributors to this in-depth investigation present research that reveals the obscure origins of Islam in a completely new light.

A God Who Hates

For the first time in history Dan Gibson has undertaken a comprehensive survey of Islamic mosques from the first two centuries of Islam. Using this data, Gibson demonstrates that Muhammad and the first four caliphs never knew of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. This book shatters old perspective about Islamic history and is unlocking the truth about Islam.

Early Islamic Qiblas

In Islamic Exceptionalism, Brookings Institution scholar and acclaimed author Shadi Hamid offers a novel and provocative argument on how Islam is, in fact, "exceptional" in how it relates to politics, with profound implications for how we understand the future of the Middle East. Divides among citizens aren't just about power but are products of fundamental disagreements over the very nature and purpose of the modern nation state— and the vexing problem of religion’s role in public life. Hamid argues for a new understanding of how Islam and Islamism shape politics by examining different models of reckoning with the problem of religion and state, including the terrifying—and alarmingly successful—example of ISIS. With unprecedented access to Islamist activists and leaders across the region, Hamid offers a panaromic and ambitious interpretation of the region's descent into violence. Islamic Exceptionalism is a vital contribution to our understanding of Islam's past and present, and its outsized role in modern politics. We don't have to like it, but we have to understand it— because Islam, as a religion and as an idea, will continue to be a force that shapes not just the region, but the West as well in the decades to come.

Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World

The contributions in this volume deal with crucial subjects of political and theological dialogue and controversy that characterized the varying responses of the Christian communities in the Byzantine Eastern provinces to the Islamic conquest and its subsequent impact on Byzantine society and history.

Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam
The oldest Islamic biography of Muhammad, written in the mid-eighth century, relates that the prophet died at Medina in 632, while earlier and more numerous Jewish, Christian, Samaritan, and even Islamic sources indicate that Muhammad survived to lead the conquest of Palestine, beginning in 634-35. Although this discrepancy has been known for several decades, Stephen J. Shoemaker here writes the first systematic study of the various traditions. Using methods and perspectives borrowed from biblical studies, Shoemaker concludes that the reports of Muhammad's leadership during the Palestinian invasion likely preserve an early Islamic self-identity that was later revised to meet the needs of a changing Islamic self-identity. Muhammad and his followers had to come to terms with the need to reconcile the world to come in the immediate future, perhaps even in their own lifetimes. Shoemaker contends that when the eschatological Hour failed to arrive on schedule and continued to be deferred to an ever more distant point, the meaning of Muhammad's message and the faith that he established needed to be fundamentally rethought by his early followers. The larger purpose of The Death of a Prophet exceeds the mere possibility of adjusting the date of Muhammad's death by a few years; far more important to Shoemaker are questions about the manner in which Islamic origins should be studied. The difference in the early sources affords an important opening through which to explore the nature of primitive Islam more broadly. Arguing for a greater methodological unity between the study of Christian and Islamic origins, Shoemaker emphasizes the potential value of non-Islamic sources for reconstructing the history of formative Islam.

The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran

Geography, Religion, Gods, and Saints in the Eastern Mediterranean explores the influence of geography on religion and highlights a largely unknown story of religious history in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the Levant, agricultural communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims jointly venerated and largely shared three important saints or holy figures: Jewish Elijah, Christian St. George, and Muslim al-Khi?r. These figures share ‘peculiar’ characteristics, such as associations with rain, greenness, fertility, and storms. Only in the Eastern Mediterranean are Elijah, St. George, and al-Khi?r shared between religious communities, or characterized by these same agricultural attributes—attributes that also were shared by regional religious figures from earlier time periods, such as the ancient Near Eastern Storm-god Baal-Hadad, and Levantine Zeus. This book tells the story of how that came to be, and suggests that the figures share specific characteristics, over a very long period of time, because these motifs were shaped by the geography of the region. Ultimately, this book suggests that regional geography has influenced regional religious history, but that shared religious practices between members of these and other local religious communities are not unusual. Instead, shared practices arose out of a common geographical environment and an interconnected religious heritage, and are a natural historical feature of religion in the Eastern Mediterranean. This volume will be of interest to students of ancient Near Eastern religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, sainthood, agricultural communities in the ancient Near East, Middle Eastern religious and cultural history, and the relationships between geography and religion.

The Islamist

The articles in this volume deal with the role of Christianity in the definition of European identity. Europeans often identify advanced civilizations with secularity. But religion is very much alive in other fast developing countries of the world. In Europe, nevertheless, the organized churches very much wanted to stress the Christian character of European identity, and this engendered a lively protest focusing on the perceived threat to the secular European tradition. Also, Europe is facing its greatest cultural challenge in the demand of Turkey to be admitted as a member, and in the demand of many Muslims in Europe, often citizens of the countries in which they live, to be recognized in their difference and at the same time integrated in the European national and supranational institutions.

The Crusades Through Arab Eyes

Olivier Roy demonstrates that Islamic Fundamentalism of today is still the Third Worldism of the 1960s: populist politics and mixed economies of laissez-faire for the rich and subsidies for the poor. In Roy's striking formulation, those marching today beneath Islam's green banners are the same as the 'reds' of yesterday, with similarly dim prospects of success. Richly informed, powerfully argued, and clearly written, this is a book that no one trying to understand Islamism can afford to overlook.

The First Mulsim

Amid so much twenty-first-century talk of a "Christian-Muslim divide"—and the attendant controversy in some Western countries over policies toward minority Muslim communities—a historical fact has gone unnoticed: for more than four hundred years beginning in the mid-seventh century, some 50 percent of the world's Christians lived and worshipped under Muslim rule. Just who were the Christians in the Arab-Islamic-speaking milieu of Muhammad and the Qur'an? The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque is the first book-length discussion in English of the cultural and intellectual life of such Christians indigenous to the Islamic world. Sidney Griffith offers an engaging overview of their initial reactions to the religious challenges they faced, the development of a new mode of presenting Christian doctrine as liturgical texts in their own languages gave way to Arabic, the Christian role in the philosophical life of early Baghdad, and the maturation of distinctive Oriental Christian denominations in this context. Offering a fuller understanding of the rise of Islam in its early years from the perspective of contemporary non-Muslims, this book reminds us that there is much to learn from the works of people who seriously engaged Muslims in their own world so long ago.

The Book of the Jihad of 'Ali ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106)

"A delightfully original take on... the prospects for liberal democracy in the broader Islamic M iddle East."— Matthew Kaminski, Wall Street Journal As the Arab Spring threatens to give way to authoritarianism in Egypt and reports from Afghanistan detail widespread violence against U.S. troops and women, news from the Muslim world raises the question: Is Islam incompatible with freedom? In Islam without Extremes, Turkish columnist Mustafa Akyol answers this question by revealing the little-understood roots of political Islam, which originally included both rationalist, flexible strains and more dogmatic, rigid ones. Though
The rigid traditionalists won out, Akyol points to a flourishing of liberalism in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire and the unique “Islamo-liberal synthesis” in present-day Turkey. As he powerfully asserts, only by accepting a secular state can Islamic societies thrive. Islam without Extremes offers a desperately needed intellectual basis for the reconcilability of Islam and liberty.

The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque

In this controversial exploration of the early history of Islam, archaeologist Yehuda D. Nevo and researcher Judith Koren present a revolutionary theory of the origins and development of the Islamic state and religion. Whereas most works on this subject derive their view of the history of this period from the Muslim literature, Crossroads to Islam also examines important types of evidence hitherto neglected: the literature of the local (Christian) population, archaeological excavations, numismatics, and especially rock inscriptions. These analyses lay the foundation for a radical view of the development of Islam. According to Nevo and Koren, the evidence suggests that the Arabs were in fact pagan when they assumed power in the regions formerly ruled by the Byzantine Empire. They contend that the Arabs took control almost without a struggle, because Byzantium had effectively withdrawn from the area long before. After establishing control, the new Arab elite adopted a simple monotheism influenced by Judaism-Christianity, which they encountered in their newly acquired territories, and gradually developed it into the Arab religion. Not until the mid-8th century was this process completed. This interpretation of the evidence corroborates the view of other scholars, who on different grounds propose that Islam and the canonized version of the Koran were preceded by a long period of development. This new view turns on its head the traditional history of the rise of Islam, which claims that Islam began with Muhammad in Mecca and Medina around 622; then spread throughout Arabia under his charismatic leadership; and finally, after Muhammad’s death (632), inspired his followers to conquer widespread territories both in the East and West. By contrast, Nevo and Koren suggest that the rise of the Arab state created a need for a state religion, eventually called Islam.

This absorbing and controversial rethinking of Islam’s early history is must reading for students and scholars of Islamic history and anyone interested in the origins of the world’s second largest religion.

Envisioning Islam

“A welcome expansion of the fragile territory known as common ground.” —The New York Times When Reza Aslan’s bestseller Zealot came out in 2013, there was criticism that he hadn’t addressed his Muslim faith while writing the origin story of Christianity. In fact, Ross Douthat of The New York Times wrote that “if Aslan had actually written in defense of the Islamic view of Jesus, that would have been something provocative and new.” Moustafa Akyol’s The Islamic Jesus is that book. The Islamic Jesus reveals startling new truths about Islam in the context of the first Muslims and the early origins of Christianity. Muslims and the first Christians—the Jewish followers of Jesus—saw Jesus as not divine but rather as a prophet and human Messiah and that salvation comes from faith and good works, not merely as faith, as Christians would later emphasize. What Akyol seeks to reveal are how these core beliefs of Jewish Christianity, which got lost in history as a heresy, emerged in a new religion born in 7th Arabia: Islam. Akyol exposes this extraordinary historical connection between Judaism, Jewish Christianity and Islam—a major mystery unexplored by academia. From Jesus’ Jewish followers to the Nazarenes and Ebionites to the Qur’an’s stories of Mary and Jesus, The Islamic Jesus will reveal links between religions that seem so contrary today. It will also call on Muslims to discover their own Jesus, at a time when they are troubled by their own Pharisees and Zealots.