

STUDIES IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY ISLAM

13

**SEEING ISLAM
AS OTHERS SAW IT**

**A SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF
CHRISTIAN, JEWISH AND ZOROASTRIAN
WRITINGS ON EARLY ISLAM**

ROBERT G. HOYLAND

**THE DARWIN PRESS, INC.
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PART I

THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND¹

ONE OF THE MOST significant aspects of early Muslim rule was, as noted by the north Mesopotamian monk John bar Penkaye in the 680s, that “there was no distinction between pagan and Christian, the believer was not known from a Jew.”² This initial indifference of the Muslims to divisions among the peoples whom they conquered, when compounded with the flight and enslavement of an appreciable proportion of the population and with the elimination of internal borders across a huge area extending from northwest Africa to India, meant that there was considerable human interaction across social, ethnic and religious lines.³ This was especially true for those who sought employment in the bustling cosmopolitan garrison cities of the new rulers, where one was exposed to contact with men of very diverse origin, creed and status. In addition, there were the widespread phenomena of conversion and apostasy, of inter-confessional marriage and festival attendance, of commercial contacts and public debate, all of which promoted the circulation of ideas and information.⁴ It is, therefore, particularly important for the study of the seventh and eighth-century Middle East that one’s approach be equally promiscuous, even if one’s interest is in a specific community. By way of example, this chapter will comment briefly upon three issues that are of general import for the history of this time and place.

Late Antiquity to Early Islam: Continuity or Change?

Since the Arab occupation of the Middle East that began *ca.* 640 proved to be permanent, this date is usually taken to mark a turning point in the history of this region and its peoples. To the degree that domination by a different ethnic group and the emergence of a new religious tradition must have had notable repercussions, this periodisation does have some validity. But it also begs a number of questions. For example, to what extent might these events have consolidated, rather than reversed, processes already under way? Also, did these

events have immediate consequences, and if so were they merely superficial—such as the replacement of elites—or infrastructural—such as institutional innovations? These questions acquire a particular significance in the case of Islam, since in the three or four centuries preceding its appearance, a period now usually referred to as Late Antiquity, the world it was to inherit had already been subject to major upheaval and transformation.⁵

In the first place, the loose territorial empires of the Romans and Parthians had given way to the integrated ecumenical empires of the Byzantines and Sasanians.⁶ Their close proximity, the result of Rome's shift to the east in the second century, and the assertiveness of the Sasanians, compared to their complacent predecessors, led to confrontation. Inevitably, such emulation between states of similar standing engendered large-scale political, social and cultural change. Both moved towards greater administrative centralisation and absolutist government, to the detriment of civic autonomy in the West and of the provincial nobility in the East. Byzantium would seem to have had the upper hand initially, at least in terms of wealth and centralisation, and so the Sasanian emperors embarked upon a vigorous campaign of Byzantinisation, actively setting out to acquire the money, skills and ideas of their rival. This they did by extortion as much as by imitation, using their formidable military capacity or the threat of it to extract material, human and intellectual resources.⁷ Further, both empires engaged in a scramble for influence, striving to win peripheral peoples over to their side. Thus the peoples of Ethiopia and southern Arabia and the Arabs of the Syrian steppe and northern Arabia were all actively courted for their allegiance and support.⁸

In the second place, the ruling elites no longer remained indifferent to the beliefs of the masses. Indeed, the emperors of both realms, now sharing their creed with the majority of their subjects, evinced an interest in the promotion of religious uniformity within their lands, achieving this via a hierarchically organised clergy.⁹ As religion and politics became ever more closely related, warfare assumed an increasingly religious character and religious difference frequently became equated with political dissidence, the result being persecutions. This drive towards greater integration and conformity provoked those jealous of their own independence to establish a certain distance between themselves and imperial culture. The result was heresy in the Byzantine sphere¹⁰ and self-administering religious communities under the Sasanians. But—and this is perhaps the most distinctive feature of Late Antiquity—religion pervaded not only political life, but almost every aspect of existence. This can be seen most clearly in the redefinition

of the Classical World brought about primarily through the agency of Christianity.¹¹ Bishops replaced councillors in caring for the welfare of a city's inhabitants, churches and shrines overtook theatres and temples as the centres of communal life, monks and ascetics became the new heroes of the people, hagiographies and miracle stories dislodged secular writings as the most popular choice of literature, and icons and crosses triumphed as symbols of divine protection.¹²

Seen against this background, it becomes evident that Islam did not, initially at least, "seal the end of Late Antiquity,"¹³ but rather continued many of its salient features. The expansionist aims of Justinian, Khusrau II and other Late Antique emperors were pursued with alacrity by the youthful Muslim state. And it was in the latter that Late Antiquity's twins, religion and politics, achieved full union. The Sasanian solution to religious difference, the formation of independent religious communities, was institutionalised in Islam, such communities being designated "people of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) and being expected to live by laws deriving from their own scriptures.¹⁴ Moreover, Islam, though distinctive in many ways, fitted well into the Late Antique mould, being all-pervasive, zealously assertive of its God's omnipotence,¹⁵ concerned with the hereafter and confident that the gap between heaven and earth could be bridged by people with special gifts and at places of special significance.¹⁶

But if it is in some measure true that Late Antiquity and Early Islam lay on a continuum, there were nevertheless enough new elements in the latter to determine that it would gradually depart from the former, finally assuming the guise of Medieval or Classical Islam. But what were the junctures along this road? Where, if one were compelled to periodise, would one place the signposts to mark the way? The first indications of the distinctiveness of Early Islam were manifested at the turn of the eighth century in the reigns of the caliphs 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) and Walīd (705–15): aniconic coins, inscriptions condemning Christianity's Trinitarian stance, mosques laid out to uniform specifications, administrative documents all drafted in Arabic and residential estates poised on the desert fringes.¹⁷ The transfer of the seat of government to Iraq by the Abbasid dynasty in the mid-eighth century was actually accompanied by a certain efflorescence of Late Antique forms of life. The presence there of large numbers of willing bureaucrats in the Sasanian mould led to an expansion and centralisation of the administration and cultivation of court manners and etiquette after the fashion of the Khusraus. No more than a stone's throw away from the old Sasanian capital, the caliph's chambers at Baghdad reverberated to discussions

of Greek philosophy and medicine, to “the maxims of Buzurgmihr and the *Testament of Ardashir*,”¹⁸ and to theological debates conducted according to the rules of Aristotelian logic.¹⁹ But after only eight or so decades of unitary rule there occurred a number of events which heralded the second and more significant watershed, namely the withdrawal of the caliph to the isolation of Samarra, the first adoption of the institution of slave soldiers and the beginnings of the fragmentation of the Islamic empire. The Late Antique dream of universal rule coinciding with a universal faith was shattered and the Medieval idea of commonwealth, a group of discrete polities united by a shared culture and history, began to take hold.²⁰

Identity and Allegiance

When the Zoroastrian priests complained to Hormizd IV (–90) about his pro-Christian tendencies, the emperor is supposed to have replied that just as a throne is supported by two opposing pairs of legs, so the Zoroastrian religion required a counterbalance.²¹ Brief episodes of persecution notwithstanding, it is true that the Sasanian rulers were generally tolerant towards the non-Zoroastrian communities of their realm, allowing them to conduct their worship unmolested as long as they paid tribute and obeisance. Emperors ensured compliance by requiring the heads of the various religions, in whose election they would often have had a hand, to spend time at court, accompany them on hunting and war expeditions, undertake diplomatic missions and serve as advisers and physicians; but religious matters proper they left alone. Under these conditions, and especially in pluralist Iraq, the various religious groups gradually transformed themselves into communal organisations with their own schools, law courts, places of worship, religious hierarchy and so on. They were effectively socio-legal corporations ordered along religious lines.²²

This trend continued and was extended under the Muslims, who made little distinction between any of the conquered peoples, designating most as “people of the Book” and offering them freedom of action in return for taxes and loyalty. This was accepted with some relief by many groups formerly under the rule of Byzantine emperors, who had generally pursued a less liberal policy than their Sasanian counterparts with regard to religious difference. Jews had been tolerated, but had been placed under a number of strictures and had encountered increasing hostility in the sixth and early seventh centuries. The Monophysite communities of Egypt and Syria, too, had faced mounting pressure to conform, culminating in the persecution of Heraclius’ reign, and indeed, had already begun to take steps towards separate organisation.²³ Gradually the Muslim authorities

became more involved in the internal affairs of the various communities, largely because of the bribes offered to them and the denunciations made before them by non-Muslims wishing to advance their cause. And in Abbasid times it was once more common practice for the heads of the religions to appear at court and to escort the caliph on expeditions.

The boundaries between communities were patrolled by religious specialists whose task was to reinforce allegiance to the community. This they did by urging exclusive attendance of the institutions of that community,²⁴ by issuing laws prohibiting interaction and intermarriage with non-members, by promoting distinctive insignia and symbols,²⁵ and by disseminating propaganda against the adherents and beliefs of all other groups. Much of this polemic would have been for internal consumption only, as is clear from the somewhat stale and one-sided Christian anti-Jewish literature of pre-Islamic times, but in our period a considerable proportion of the apologetic writing seems to derive from real debate. This was particularly true in the early Abbasid era, when there were a number of propitious factors: the cosmopolitan nature of Baghdad and its province, the caliphs' patronage of scholarship, the emergence of Arabic as a *lingua franca*, the universal deployment of dialectical reasoning based upon categorical definitions, and the proliferation of converts and apostates, which meant that there were many with a genuine knowledge of two religions and with a real will to champion one over the other. But also, quite simply, there were matters that needed debating. Islam prompted questions that had not arisen before, such as what were the attributes of a true prophet, and challenged long-cherished assumptions, such as that imperial ascendancy confirmed possession of truth.²⁶ The latter point did put the non-Muslims on the defensive, especially the Christians and Zoroastrians, but for the Muslims too it was to be no easy contest. They were new at the game and entered the arena with only a weakly articulated confessional identity and an underdeveloped battery of doctrine, and it was thus particularly in the sectarian milieu of eighth and ninth-century Iraq that communal boundaries were staked out and dogmatic territories delineated.²⁷

Nevertheless, though religious allegiance came to be the prime form of identity, other forms of affiliation—political, linguistic, geographical, ethnic, historical, cultural and sectarian—still bore weight. Thus Maximus the Confessor (d. 662) could aver: "I love the Romans because we are of the same faith and the Greeks because we have the same language;"²⁸ Arab and Armenian Monophysite Christians could fight in the armies of Heraclius all the while that Monophysite ecclesiastics were railing against imperial policies; and East Arabian Christians

could secede from the religious suzerainty of Iraq though all professed the same Nestorian creed. It is, however, very difficult in the period of Late Antiquity and Early Islam to assess the extent and significance of these other claims upon a person's loyalty and to estimate the degree to which they might have coalesced.²⁹ Should we, for example, characterise the ninth-century monks of Mar Saba monastery in Muslim-ruled Palestine, who were assiduously translating Greek hagiographies into Arabic, as Byzantine? Could those Muslim Arabs among the frontier troops of Khurasan, who spoke Persian, celebrated Persian festivals, wore trousers and had Iranian wives, be considered Persian? To what degree was the use of a particular language or script a sign of partiality?³⁰

A diligent perusal of the sources with these questions in mind would probably produce interesting results, for even a cursory inspection shows much local pride and old prejudice still to exist.³¹ "The Egyptians are an obstinate people," observes Sophronius, patriarch of Jerusalem (ca. 634–39); "when they have once decided upon something, whether good or bad, they are not easily diverted from it, and they are all like that."³² The famous logician and astronomer Severus Sebokht (d. 667) expresses his pride in being a Syrian and often polemicises against Greek cultural chauvinism. Having noted the dependence of Ptolemy on Babylonian science, he adds: "That the Babylonians were Syrians I think no one will deny, so those who say that it is in no way possible for Syrians to know about these matters (astronomy) are much mistaken." And he concludes another work by sarcastically remarking: "Being an unlearned Syrian, I am putting these small queries to you to convey to those who assert that the whole of knowledge exists only in the Greek tongue."³³ When Simeon, Jacobite bishop of Ḥarran (700–34), asked George, Chalcedonian governor of Ṭur 'Abdin, to provide him with workmen for the building of a church, the latter "delayed a little, for he did not have much faith in the holy men of our region, of us Syrians. This was because he had been brought up in the west with the Greeks and had become accustomed [to their ways]."³⁴ Conversely, Syrian ascetics are accused of emitting an evil odour by one Chalcedonian monk; and another, the chronicler Theophanes (d. 818), calls Athanasius, Jacobite patriarch of Antioch (603–31), a wicked man, "filled with the cunning that is native to the Syrians," on account of his part in the religious controversies of the early seventh century.³⁵ A Jewish taverner named Samuel speaks disparagingly of his Arabic agnomen (*kunya*): "No Arab *kunya* can honour me, nor fill me with pride and lend me high rank. Though light and made up of few letters, unlike others, yet it was created as a burden [for me]."³⁶ And if we turn to ninth-century Iraq we find a vigorous debate under way concerning the merits and

demerits of various cultural traditions, most notably Arab versus Persian.³⁷

This complex tissue of identities and allegiances forms the background to the emergence of Islam and helps explain the very different reactions of the various confessional communities. The hostility of Greek writers to the Muslims (mis)led one scholar into inferring that “the early Islamic conquests were accompanied by persecution, intolerance, massacres, havoc and enslavement.”³⁸ Another scholar, concentrating on the comments of eastern authors, is able to speak of “an eirenic response to Islam.”³⁹ The Muslims themselves appear to have made no discrimination in their attacks nor in their government; complaints about both are heard from all quarters. One is forced to conclude that the differing reactions of Christians reflects not a difference in their treatment at the hands of the Arabs, but rather a difference in their perceptions and intentions, which in turn depended upon and mirrored their differing allegiances.

It has often been claimed that the Monophysites of the Byzantine provinces welcomed the Arabs in some measure, based on assumed reaction to the persecutions of Heraclius and on hindsight comments of later writers.⁴⁰ Yet the only surviving seventh-century Coptic texts are all hostile to the Arabs.⁴¹ And later observations, such as that by the Jacobite patriarch Dionysius of Tellmahre (d. 845): “If, as is true, we have suffered some harm... nonetheless it was no slight advantage for us to be delivered from the cruelty of the Romans,”⁴² contrast strongly with the anguish in earlier accounts like the following:

When the Arabs heard of the festival which took place at the monastery of S. Simeon the Stylite in the region of Antioch, they appeared there and took captive a large number of men and women and innumerable boys and girls. The Christians who were left no longer knew what to believe. Some of them said: “Why does God allow this to happen?”⁴³

And behind the casual notices in Arabic sources that such and such a city surrendered without a struggle is not necessarily a welcome of the Arabs, but often a sad recognition that no help was coming:

The people of Ḥimṣ were exhorting one another: “Hold out, they are only bare-footed ones. ..” An old man stood up and urged them to make peace with the Muslims, but they said: “How can we do that when the emperor is still in authority and power?”⁴⁴

Certainly, the heavy-handed approach of the Chalcedonian patriarch Cyrus must have alienated many Copts, and this is important for explaining why they so quickly came to an acceptance of Muslim rule. For this is where the difference in

Christian reactions is most marked. Christians writing in Syriac and Arabic, though wishing to disprove the Muslims' assertions, do so with rational argument and fair characterisation of their beliefs. The Nestorian catholicos Timothy I (780–823) even goes so far as to say that the Arabs “are today held in great honour and esteem by God and men, because they forsook idolatry and polytheism, and worshipped and honoured one God. For this they deserve the love and praise of all.”⁴⁵ But in Greek writings the Muslims were never anything but enemies of God. They were never to replace the Persians as a topic of learned digressions and diplomatic analyses, but rather to join the ranks of pagans and Jews as an object of attack and ridicule.

There are a number of reasons for this. In the first place, the image that an average Byzantine had of the Arabs was conditioned by more than a millennium of prejudice.⁴⁶ Their non-urban style of life rendered them culturally inferior; the observation that “the Saracen tribe is known to be most unreliable and fickle, their mind is not steadfast” betrays all the disdain of a city-dweller for the non-urban barbarian.⁴⁷ And their Biblical ancestry, as descendants of the slave-woman Hagar, tarnished them as religiously inferior, as “the most despised and insignificant of the peoples of the earth.”⁴⁸ Secondly, though Zoroastrianism had made pretensions of being a universal truth, it was too different to be a serious challenge to Christianity. Islam, however, drew on the same religious heritage as Christianity. It recognised Moses and Jesus, the Torah and the Gospels, but demoted them in favour of Muhammad and the Qur'an. When backed with dazzling military success, the Muslims' claim to have the latest version of God's revelation was hard to refute. “It is a sign of God's love for us and pleasure at our faith,” they said, “that God has given us dominion over all lands and all peoples.”⁴⁹ This brings us to the crucial point: that whereas the Persians had been evicted from the provinces, the Arabs had stayed and made them their own.

But this is still insufficient explanation. Christians in Sasanian lands had also been overrun by the Arabs, and they would appear to have harboured similar opinions towards pre-Islamic Arabs as their Byzantine co-religionists. “There were many people between the Tigris and the Euphrates,” comments one late sixth-century writer, “who lived in tents and were barbarians and murderers; they had many superstitions and were the most ignorant of all the people on the earth;” “furious are the wild asses, children of Hagar, and they have laid waste both good and bad,” says a late fifth-century poet about the Persian bedouin.⁵⁰ The crucial difference was that the Christians of Iraq had no lost or diminished sovereignty to lament. As regards their faith, they had no reason to rue the Sasanians' passing

nor to expect deliverance from them. Thus it was both easier and more necessary for them to accept the change of rulers than for their Byzantine counterparts. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's," advised the catholicos Isho'yahb III (649–59). So when the Muslims replaced the Persians, the Christians simply set about establishing the same pattern of relations and agreements as had obtained in Sasanian times, seeking freedom to pursue their worship unmolested in return for political loyalty and payment of taxes.⁵¹

It is, then, because the Arabs were to them political as well as religious enemies that Byzantines were so hostile. This affected Greek writings in particular, since by the seventh century the Greek language had become intimately linked with Greek identity and with allegiance to Chalcedon and the empire. Its outpourings were, therefore, dominated by imperial concerns, with an eye suspicious of outsiders and dissenters.⁵² But it is also true for Byzantines of other extractions in varying degrees. Thus the Coptic writer John of Nikiu (fl. 690s) has only abuse for the Muslims, and Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) speaks of "the harsh yoke of the Arabs," though he is able to give us some objective descriptions of their beliefs and practices. Armenians were bellicosely proud of their identity, both political and religious, and had little love for Arab, Byzantine or Persian rule. Their writings on Islam tend, therefore, to be vitriolic, though Sebeos (wr. 660s) is able to give a dispassionate account of its emergence, perhaps because he lived before the Muslim occupation of Armenia.⁵³

Apocalypticism

Already in the late sixth century there were many convinced "that the end of the present world is already near and that the never-ending kingdom of the saints is about to come."⁵⁴ In the ensuing two centuries such speculation intensified and was rife among all the communities of the Middle East. This mood of apocalypticism, of concern for the end of history and what lay beyond it, expressed itself in a variety of different ways for a number of different purposes. But in each case the chief benefit of apocalypticism was that it could fit contemporary political and social events into a transcendent scheme of meaning, thus giving them religious validation, into a broader explanatory context, thus making them understandable.⁵⁵

For Christians and Zoroastrians it was of crucial importance to account for the successes of the Muslims, who had done so much damage to their respective empires and their self-esteem, and to divine what would be their outcome. In answer to the first question both communities pointed to the laxity of their

members, and in response to the second they reinterpreted and recast earlier apocalyptic scenarios. Christians viewed Arab rule as the time of testing before the “final peace” when “the churches will be renewed, the cities rebuilt and the priests set free from tax.” To the Zoroastrians it was the age of adversity which closed the millennium of Zoroaster and preceded the millennium of Ushedar in which the Good Religion would flourish. In both cases the ousting of the Muslims and regeneration of the religion was to be achieved by a saviour figure, whether an idealised Christian emperor in the image of Alexander the Great, Constantine and Jovian, or the warrior-king Wahram Warjawand coming from India with an army and one thousand elephants to destroy Iran’s enemies. Apocalypses thus offered an interpretation for historical change, thereby rendering it more meaningful, and hope for redemption in the near future, thereby encouraging steadfastness.⁵⁶

As regards the Muslims, their greatest worry was whether they would manage to hold on to their acquisitions. And at certain key times—such as during their various civil wars, when it looked as if they might lose all, and during their siege of Constantinople in 717, when it looked as if they might gain all—these fears and hopes found their voice in a veritable explosion of apocalyptic sentiment. The battles with their enemies, chiefly the Byzantines, were identified with the *malāḥim*, the final wars at the end of the world which would eventually, after many setbacks, conclude with the Muslim capture of Constantinople and the appearance of the Antichrist. This construction aided the Muslim warriors to weather any reverses, for they could see that they would ultimately triumph, and gave added meaning to their efforts, since it was no ordinary war they were fighting, but Armageddon itself.⁵⁷

The changes in the life of the Jewish communities brought about by the rise of Islam provoked much messianic speculation among Jews of our period and even led to a number of uprisings. The first occurred in the wake of the Arab conquests and was initiated by a Jew from Beth Aramaye, who “said that the messiah had come. He assembled weavers, barbers and fullers, some 400 men in all, who set fire to three churches and killed the local governor.”⁵⁸ In the aftermath of the 717 siege of Constantinople and Leo III’s forced baptism of Jews in 721, a Christian convert to Judaism from the district of Mardin proclaimed to Jews that he was Moses, “sent again for the salvation of Israel and to lead you into the desert in order to introduce you then to the inheritance of the Promised Land, which you will possess as before.”⁵⁹ And around the time of the Abbasid revolution “an illiterate tailor” named Obadiah, also known as Abū ‘Īsā al-İşfahānī, claimed to be the

“prophet and apostle of the awaited messiah” and “led a rebellion against the government.”⁶⁰ Like contemporary apocalyptic writers, the leaders of these insurrections evidently interpreted the momentous events taking place around them as heralding the world’s end, but they sought not merely to speculate on, but also to participate in, and even to accelerate, this great drama and to enjoy the fruits of the messianic age.⁶¹

On the fringes of the Muslim empire, in eastern Iran and Azerbaijan, there occurred a number of millenarian revolts in the course of the eighth and ninth centuries. Their participants sought salvation, but of a very terrestrial kind; they hoped not for the end of the world *per se*, but the end of the present evil world with all its inequities, and they wished it to be replaced with an infinitely better one, effectively heaven on earth.⁶² So the leaders of these revolts did not merely herald the last days, but announced that “the rule of the Arabs was at an end,”⁶³ or proclaimed that from the progeny of their hero Abū Muslim there would arise “a man who would take possession of the whole world and wrest the rule from the Abbasids,” or even that Abū Muslim himself would reappear to “fill the world with justice.”⁶⁴ Their goad was the intrusiveness of Abbasid rule which, particularly through extension of fiscal controls, was beginning to make its presence felt and to disrupt traditional patterns of life even at a village level.⁶⁵ That it was chiefly villagers who were involved is indicated by the large numbers participating in the revolts, by the ease with which these were put down and by the fact that their instigators were themselves of lowly extraction and village origin.⁶⁶ Apocalyptic rhetoric served here an integratory function, welding together an otherwise disparate people unaccustomed to political organisation, and provided them with a goal, an era of justice and equity for all, the institution of which was imminent.⁶⁷

On contemplating the great number of apocalyptic movements and writings of the seventh and eighth centuries, one is led to wonder whether this is also the case for other periods or whether ours is in any way unusual. Of course, an interest in the structure and goal of history was central to each of the four principal religions of the Middle East and consequently all produced their fair share of visionaries to interpret the significance of events and to depict the end of times. One must, however, make a distinction here between eschatology and apocalypticism, “between a general consciousness of living in the last age of history and a conviction that the last age itself is about to end, between a belief in the reality of the Antichrist and the certainty of his proximity, between viewing the events of one’s own time in the light of the end of history and seeing them as the last events themselves.”⁶⁸ Certainly, eschatological speculation can become

apocalyptic, and this is likely if some significant date draws near or some disaster befalls. Thus when it was the 500th anniversary of the Incarnation, supposedly marking the 6000th year since Creation, “the end of the world was awaited as never before;” and when in 557 Constantinople was shaken by a series of tremors, “immediately fantastic and fallacious pronouncements began to circulate, to the effect that the whole world was on the point of perishing. For certain deceivers, behaving like self-inspired oracles, prophesied whatever came into their heads and terrified all the more the populace who were already thoroughly disposed to be terrified.”⁶⁹

Such calendrical or physical crises could, however, be accounted for by traditional theories of time and meaning, and so they occasioned no innovations in apocalyptic writing. The same is true of the outbreaks of bubonic plague in the 540s and 1340s, which must have entailed greater loss of life than the Arab conquests and the Crusades. Yet the latter two events spawned numerous apocalyptic tracts, whereas the former two left little trace in the apocalyptic record. Evidently, it was not the degree of destruction or number of fatalities caused by a catastrophe that counted, but the challenge that it posed to the established understanding of history. Indeed, great challenges might come from a non-life-threatening event, such as the conversion of Constantine to Christianity and the Arabs’ active assertion of Islam. Apocalypses served to interpret such epoch-making changes, to make sense of and facilitate adaptation to new developments, and it is in this light that we should see the plethora of such writings in our period.

¹There is no multi-faceted introduction to the history of the seventh and eighth-century Middle East. One must simply consult the relevant works for each community (useful are Whittow, *Making of Orthodox Byzantium*; Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*; Spuler, *Iran in frühislamischer Zeit*; Hawting, *First Dynasty of Islam*, and Noth, “Früher Islam,” together with Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*). A chronological outline of events may be found in Excursus C below. Note that non-Muslim sources will be quoted in this and the next chapter without explanation of their nature or background, for which see the relevant entry in Part II below.

²John bar Penkaye, 151/179.

³Compare again *ibid.*, 147/175: “Their robber bands went annually to distant parts and to the islands, bringing back captives from all the peoples under the heavens.” Anastasius of Sinai, *Narrat.*, C5, gives us an example of Jewish and Christian prisoners-of-war performing forced labour together at Clysma in Sinai. The removal of borders also permitted the free flow of natural and manufactured artefacts (see Watson, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World*, and its assessment by Crone, “Review”).

⁴On conversion and apostasy see the introduction to [Chapter 9](#) below. The fact of inter-confessional fraternisation may be deduced from the frequent condemnation of its various forms by religious leaders (see the entries on “Athanasius of Balad,” “Jacob of Edessa” and “George I” in [Chapters 4–5](#) below for some examples). On public debates see the comment in the introduction to [Chapter 2](#) below. Two likely places of exchange were the public baths (Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 56, notes that the Quinisext Council of 692 forbade Christians to bathe with Jews; Emed i Ashawahishtan, *Rivāyat*, no. 19, bans Zoroastrians from frequenting

Muslim baths) and the tavern (see *Synodicon orientale*, 225: canon against Christians who go after mass to Jewish taverns; Kennedy, “Abū Nuwās, Samuel and Levi:” discussion of the famous poet’s conversation with two Jewish taverners; Manushchih, *Dādīstān ī dēnīg*, no. 49, permits Zoroastrians to sell wine to non-believers).

⁵On the Byzantine side see especially Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*, and Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity*. For Sasanid Iran the standard work is still Christensen, *L’Iran sous les Sassanides*. For an overview of both sides see Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*, 41–70; Garsoïan, “Byzantium and the Sasanians;” Howard-Johnston, “The Two Great Powers in Late Antiquity.”

⁶On “the Roman territorial empire” and “the Christian *ecumene*” and the advantages of the latter over the former see Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, 250–340 (esp. 306–307). For simplicity I shall in this book use the term Byzantine to designate that empire which had its capital at Constantinople (330–1453), though the reader should bear in mind that some scholars prefer the term Late Roman for at least the fourth and fifth centuries and that the citizens of this empire always styled themselves as Romans.

⁷Cf. Hall, *Powers and Liberties*, 139, 141 (“The invasion of Italy by the French in the late fifteenth century spread the styles of the Italian Renaissance around Europe, and thereafter rivalry and status-seeking ensured that what was fashionable elsewhere had to be copied at home. This emulation was not confined to artistic matters....War in European history served as a source of progress”). Likewise, Iran took over from Byzantium mosaics and building techniques, baths, medicine, philosophy and astronomy, as well as tribute and captives.

⁸Smith, “Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.”

⁹Zoroastrianism was closer to Judaism than Christianity in that it was chiefly the religion of a nation and had little sensitivity to the problem of the clash between orthodoxy and heresy that so affected Christianity. It was, therefore, more tolerant than the latter in the face of religious difference. The Sasanian emperors did, however, urge some conformity (enacting calendrical and liturgical reforms, outlawing images in favour of sacred fires), suppressed overt dissent (e.g. Mazdakism), were usually hostile to missionary efforts by Christians and occasionally struck a more universalist note (e.g. Shapur II asks a Christian martyr: “What god is better than Ahuramazda? Which one is stronger than Ahreman? What sensible human being does not worship the sun?”—cited by Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, 91).

¹⁰For Eastern Christians the question of orthodoxy/heresy mostly turned on the problem of Christ’s nature. The Monophysites (Copts in Egypt, Jacobites in Syria) wished not to dilute the divinity of Christ and so insisted on one divine nature, the human and divine elements having fused at the incarnation. The Nestorians, found chiefly in Iraq and Persia, wanted to hold on to the very comforting fact that Christ had become a man like us and to avoid saying that God had suffered and died, and so stressed two distinct natures, a human and a divine. Trying desperately to eschew the two extremes of denial of Christ’s humanity and dualism, the Chalcedonians or Melkites, who represented the imperial position, postulated two natures, united but distinct. Though important in their own right, these confessional divisions were also bound up with regional, ethnic and linguistic affiliations. General introductions are given by Atiya, *Eastern Christianity*, and Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*.

¹¹Two recent and very readable studies illustrating some aspects of this transformation are Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, esp. 118–58, and Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*.

¹²The spread of Manichaeism and Zurvanism, reforms in Zoroastrian worship and the proliferation of visions of the hereafter all suggest that religion may have played an enhanced role in the Sasanian realm, but this still requires documentation. See Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 101–44, and esp. Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*.

¹³Herrin, *Formation of Christendom*, 134, invoking Pirenne. The continuation of Late Antique ideas into Islam was pointed out long ago by Becker, *Islamstudien*, 1.201 (“Der Islam...ist die Weiterbildung und

konservierung des christlich–antiken Hellenismus....Es wird eine Zeit kommen, in der man rückwärtsschauend aus der islamischen Tradition heraus den späten Hellenismus wird verstehen lernen”). It is so far non-Islamicists who have begun to recognise this; e.g. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, 71–82 (Hellenism and Islam); Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, esp. 138–68 (boldly argues that Islam is the consummation of Late Antiquity by virtue of its achievement of politico-cultural universalism).

¹⁴The phrase “people of the Book” is found scattered throughout the Qur’an, meaning those possessing a scripture (though seeming primarily to intend Jews and Christians). For hints that the Muslims did from an early date expect their subjects to live according to their Books, see the entries on “Isho’bokht of Fars” and “Patriarch John I” in [Chapters 5](#) and [11](#) below respectively.

¹⁵Note, for example, the hostility of Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism to magic, an alternative source of supernatural power, though of course each had to put up with its persistence.

¹⁶Some may be surprised to see Zoroastrianism placed on a par with Judaism, Christianity and Islam as a Late Antique religion, especially given its traditional presentation as aristocratic, dry and ritual-bound. The glimpse of a more syncretic Zoroastrianism that we get from the early Abbasid prophetic movements in Iran (see n. 63 below) and the recent study of Shaked, *Dualism in Transformation*, should go some way to dispelling this notion.

¹⁷On these developments see Excursus F, nos. i–iv, below; Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 45–187.

¹⁸Jāhīz, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb*, 191. Buzurgmihr was minister for Khusrau I.

¹⁹Examples and literature given in the introduction to [Chapter 11](#) below.

²⁰Thus it is with these events in mind that Crone speaks of the “emergence of the Medieval polity” (*Slaves on Horses*, 82–91); see also Fowden, *Empire to Commonwealth*, 100–68, and Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, 200–11 (“The structure of politics in the Muslim commonwealth”). The two periodisations proposed here are confirmed by material culture (e.g. Walmsley, “The Social and Economic Regime at Fihl,” 256, on ceramics at Fihl: “Two periods of accelerated change, which involved the loss of some wares and the appearance of new types, occurred between AD 600 and 900. The first can be dated to the end of the 7th and early 8th century, the second to the first half of the 9th century”), and are suggested by the progress of the Arabic language, which began to be used as an official language at the turn of the eighth century and as a *lingua franca* in the early ninth century, and of conversion to Islam, which first appears as an issue in non-Muslim sources at the end of the seventh century and starts to gain momentum in the late eighth and early ninth century. The reason for this agreement is that these two times mark the acme of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties respectively, when they would have been able to affect the greatest change and make the greatest impression.

²¹*Chron. Siirt XXXVII, PO 7*, 195–96.

²²See Morony, “Religious Communities in Late Sasanian and Early Muslim Iraq.” For some general comments, based on Palestine, see Stroumsa, “Religious Contacts in Byzantine Palestine.”

²³Wigram, *Separation of the Monophysites*; Harvey, “Syriac Historiography and the Separation of the Churches.”

²⁴On the admonition not to seek judgements from the law courts of non-believers, see the entry on “George I” in [Chapter 5](#) below. For examples on the Muslim side against interaction with outsiders, see Kister, “Do not assimilate yourselves’.”

²⁵Note, for example, “the attention paid to the cross as a religious and political symbol, which for specific reasons intensified during the seventh century....What we see at this time is the development of a religious discourse focused on a symbol which could be universally accepted” (Cameron, “Byzantium and the Past in the Seventh Century,” 261–65).

²⁶From the Muslims' point of view, of course, they had corroborated that assumption, but for the non-Muslims it was essential to refute it. See the entries on "Anti-Jewish Polemicists," "ps.-Methodius" and the "Monk of Beth Hale" in [Chapters 3, 8 and 11](#) below respectively.

²⁷See further the introduction to [Chapter 11](#) below, and Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 98–129. Note how the first Muslim creeds state what we do not believe or what we avoid rather than what we hold to, indicating that they were the product of debates with others (see Ibn AbīYa'lā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, 2.40, on the attempt of 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Mubārak [d. 797] to determine the orthodox sect by a disavowal of the erring sects; cf. Abū Hanīfa's *Al-fiqh al-akbar*, discussed in Wensinck, *Muslim Creed*, 102–24).

²⁸Maximus, *Relatio Motionis* §13, PG 90, 128C.

²⁹Even in the Muslim Arab case, where there was a fair degree of coincidence (compare the words attributed to one general by Lewond, XXIV [tr. Arzoumanian, 116]: "We all belong to the same race, speak the same language and are subject to one and the same rule and, above all, we are brethren"), there were still tribal, factional and sectarian divisions. See Crone, "The Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad Period;" Khalidi, "Aspects of Communal Identity in Umayyad Poetry."

³⁰Compare the discussion by Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art*, 1–18, on what constitutes Islamic art.

³¹Millar, "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East," 162, argues that "the combined effects of Hellenisation and Roman rule served in the median term to suppress local identities." This is to some degree true, but unfortunately Millar takes Jewish identity as his yardstick, whereas a more subtle gauge is needed. There is no sense of territorial nationalism among non-Jews of our period (Jones, "Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?"), but there is much ethnic chauvinism and this could blend with religious loyalties. For example, it is said that the Coptic monastery of Metras remained firm against the Chalcedonian patriarch Cyrus, since "the inmates of it were exceedingly powerful, being Egyptians by race and all of them natives without a stranger among them; and therefore he could not incline their hearts toward him" (*Hist. Patriarchs XIV, PO* 1, 498).

³²Sophronius, *Miracles* no. 39, PG 87, 3573B (= Marcos, 332).

³³Nau, "Le traité sur les 'constellations' par Sévère Sebokht," 332–33; *idem*, "La cosmographie au VIIe siècle chez les syriens," 251–52. See also Brock, "Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning," 23–24.

³⁴Simeon of the Olives, *Life*, 135–36. Compare the use of the expression "the land of the Greeks" by Jacob of Edessa, *Canons to John*, B23 (in Vööbus, *Synodicon*, 244).

³⁵John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale*, CVI; Theophanes, 329. See Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*, 135–45, on the differences between Chalcedonians and Monophysites as reflected in their hagiography.

³⁶Kennedy, "Abū Nuwās, Samuel and Levi," 112–13, citing a wine-poem of Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 813). A variant has *ju'ilat* instead of *khuliqat*, which suggests that the *kunya* was imposed on the taverner, though it is possible that he adopted it in the hope of some social benefit.

³⁷This is the so-called Shu'ubiyya controversy, which was largely concerned with the cultural orientation of Islamic civilisation. For some examples of this debate see Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 1.101–76.

³⁸Constantelos, "The Moslem Conquests of the Near East as Revealed by the Greek Sources," 356.

³⁹Moorhead, "The Earliest Christian Theological Response to Islam," 269; thus also Suermann, "Orientalische Christen und der Islam," 133–34.

⁴⁰Moorhead, "The Monophysite Response to the Arab Invasions," argues against this, but the view is still commonly voiced; e.g. Suermann, "Orientalische Christen und der Islam," 122, 133–34, and Sahas, "The Seventh Century in Byzantine–Muslim Relations," 5.

⁴¹See the entries on the *Homily on the Child Saints of Babylon* and "John of Nikiu" in [Chapter 4](#), and on

“ps.-Shenute” in [Chapter 8](#) below (the latter two survive only in translation); cf. also the two Coptic papyri discussed in the “Dubia” section of [Chapters 3](#) and [4](#) below. Furthermore, whether in Coptic or Arabic, writings by Copts mostly remained hostile to Islam (see the entry on “Copto-Arabic Texts” in [Chapter 8](#) below, and note that after Isaac of Rakoti the entries in the *History of the Patriarchs* are largely hostile).

⁴²Preserved by Michael the Syrian II.III, 410/413, and *Chron. 1234*, 1.237. What is common to these two sources for the period 582–842 comes from Dionysius; see the entry on him in [Chapter 10](#) below.

⁴³Also by Dionysius (Michael the Syrian II.VI, 417/422; *Chron. 1234*, 2.260), here citing an earlier source rather than giving his own opinion.

⁴⁴Ṭabarī, 1.2390–91; Azdī, *Futūḥ*, 145–46.

⁴⁵Timothy I, *Syriac Apology*, 131/59.

⁴⁶Most recently see Jeffreys, “The Image of the Arabs in Byzantine Literature.”

⁴⁷Theophylact Simocatta, *History*, 3.XVII.7 (tr. Whitby, 100).

⁴⁸*Chron. 1234*, 1.237.

⁴⁹Monk of Beth Hale, *Disputation*, fol. 2a; cf. Leo-‘Umar, *Letter* (Armenian), 330: “You attribute to your religion the success with which heaven favours you.”

⁵⁰Nau, “Histoire de Mar Ahoudemmeh,” 21–26; Segal, “Arabs in Syriac Literature,” 106 (citing Isaac of Antioch’s account of the sack of Beth Ḥur). Arabs could, however, redeem themselves by becoming Christian, and there was much competition between Monophysite and Nestorian missionaries for Arab souls.

⁵¹See the entries on “Isho‘yahb III” and “Ḥnanisho” in [Chapter 5](#) below. However, though the official line was “the Arabs are good to us,” there are hints that there was regret among some at the passing of Sasanian rule. Isho‘yahb had sharply to rebuke one bishop who had been mourning for the “dead kingdom:”, “If you were at this time upholding reverence for God,” he chides, “you would not joyfully and lightly show such reverence for what is dead, what has no power and no life” (Isho‘yahb III, *Ep. C7*, 237).

⁵²See Cameron, “The Eastern Provinces in the Seventh Century.” Note that the numerous anti-Jewish tracts that we have from the seventh century, discussed in [Chapter 3](#) below, are all written in Greek. Hayman, *Disputation of Sergius against a Jew*, v, states that “no Syriac anti-Jewish literature has survived from the period between the sixth and the twelfth century A.D. except for Sergius’ Disputation,” though this could be in part due to misfortune (e.g. Assemani, *BO* 3.1, 194, assigns a “disputation against the Jews” to the mid-eighth-century author Abraham bar Dashandad).

⁵³See Thomson, “Muhammad and Islam in Armenian Literary Tradition,” and the entries on “Sebeos” and “Armenian Texts” in [Chapters 4](#) and [10](#) below.

⁵⁴McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 64, citing Pope Gregory I’s letter of 601 to the English king Ethelbert. See also Hillgarth, “Eschatological and Political Concepts in the Seventh Century.”

⁵⁵I use apocalypticism in its broadest sense, as argued for by McGinn, *Visions of the End*, esp. 28–36.

⁵⁶For the information in this paragraph see the entries on “ps.-Methodius” and the *Bahman yasht* in [Chapter 8](#), and on the “Tool of God’s Wrath” and the “Age of Adversity” in [Chapter 12](#) below.

⁵⁷For the information in this paragraph see the entry on “Muslim Arabic Apocalypses” in [Chapter 8](#) below.

⁵⁸*Chron. Khuzistan*, 33.

⁵⁹*Chron. Zuqnin*, 173. On this pretender, named Severus, see Starr, “Le mouvement messianique au début du VIIIe siècle.” Note that he is the subject of an enquiry put to Naṭronai ben Nehemiah, gaon of Pumbedita (719–30), as to whether and on what conditions those Jews who had followed him might be received back into the orthodox fold (*Gaonic Responsa* [Moda’i], 3.V.10).

⁶⁰Nemoy, "Al-Qirqisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects," 328. There is some confusion as to whether this pretender appeared during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik or Marwān II (744–50). For discussion and bibliography see Wasserstrom, "The 'Īsāwīyya Revisited;" *Elr*, s.v. "Abū 'Īsā Eṣfahānī" Erder, "The Doctrine of Abū 'Īsā al-Ṣfahānī."

⁶¹For Jewish apocalyptic writings of this time see the entry thereon in [Chapter 8](#) below. More generally see Baron, *SRHJ*, 5.XXV; Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*, 47–89 ("The Jewish Messiahs of Early Islam").

⁶²On millenarianism see in particular Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*; Worsley, *The Trumpet shall Sound*, esp. 221–56.

⁶³Thus sunbadh, who is a typical example of what must have been a common phenomenon. In the later stages of the revolution the Abbasids had recruited Zoroastrian villagers in their armies, probably with promises of social advancement, and superficially converted and trained them, only to disband them once they had achieved power. These peasant soldiers, resentful and to some degree experienced in arms, would have been disposed to rebellion. The governor of Rayy had attempted to arrest Sunbadh who, after the death of Abū Muslim, was returning to his home in Khurasan. "Sunbadh killed him, took control of Rayy and returned to Zoroastrianism. Whenever a Zoroastrian came to him making a claim against a Muslim, he (Sunbadh) would judge in favour of him in that....He would kill the Arabs with the wooden club and he wrote to the king of Daylam that the rule of the Arabs was at an end" (Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 3.246–47); "he called himself Fayrūz Isbahbadh" (Ṭabarī, 3.119). Medieval writers tended to view all these Iranian prophetic movements as inspired by Mazdakism or extreme Shi'ism, but from this and other accounts (esp. see Maqdisī, *Bad'*, s.v. "Khurramī") it is clear that their basis was Zoroastrianism, here revealing its syncretic potential (there are certainly some elements of gnosticism and Mazdakism).

⁶⁴Maqdisī, *Bad'*, 6.95; Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 6.186. It was Abū Muslim who had recruited Iranian villagers, and his execution by the caliph Manṣūr made him a martyr in their eyes and confirmed to them the iniquity of Muslim rule.

⁶⁵Cf. Michael the Syrian II.XXV, 475/522–23 (increased taxes reported in conjunction with an uprising in Iran). Probably also important were such factors as increased Muslim land ownership and acceleration of conversion to Islam. Note that in this same period peasant revolts were frequent in Egypt and rural banditry endemic in Sistan (Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 71 and notes thereto).

⁶⁶Many also claimed prophethood, unnecessary for those already endowed with authority by virtue of office or birth. Note especially Ustādhsīs (Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikh*, 2.457–58) and Muqanna', who was originally a bleacher (Narshakhī, *History of Bukhara*, 65–67).

⁶⁷Most of these revolts are described by Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens*. Some comment on them is made by Omar, "The Nature of the Iranian Revolts;" Daniel, *khurasan under Abbasid Rule*, 125–56; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid Caliphate*, 183–86; Amoretti, "Sects and Heresies." Scholars tend, however, to reduce the role of religion, inflate the social status of the leaders and explain the syncretic nature of their teachings as an attempt to appeal to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Patricia Crone seems to be the only one who has perceived their true significance, namely a nativist reaction to intrusive alien rule, and it is to her that I owe most of my ideas on this subject.

⁶⁸McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 4.

⁶⁹Magdalino, "The History of the Future and its Uses," 5–6, citing the sixth-century writers Simplicius and Agathius.

BIBLIOGRAPHY I

PRIMARY SOURCES

Where more than one edition is given, the first cited is the one used in this book. The language in which a modern translation is published will not be noted unless it differs from that of the title. Any abbreviated references appear in full in Bibliography II below. Note that the following is meant to be helpful, not exhaustive; for further information consult the literature cited in the first footnote of each chapter/section in Part IIA above, or in the first footnote in each section of Part IIB.

As regards Muslim works, which are not the main concern of this book, there is no attempt made to list translations or alternative editions.

ALJAMIADO

‘Umar–Leo. *Letter* (Aljamiado) = Ms. Madrid Biblioteca Nacional 4944, fols. 84b–101a; D. Cardaillac, ed. *La polémique anti-chrétienne du manuscrit aljamiado no. 4944 de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Madrid* (Ph.D. thesis in 2 vols., Université de Paul Valéry; Montpellier, 1972), 2.194–267; Gaudeul, tr. “The Correspondence between Leo and ‘Umar,” 132–48. This text is a translation from Arabic, a partial version of which does survive (see the entry on “‘Umar–Leo” in the next section).

ARABIC (*Muslim*)

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- Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Isma'īl al- (d. 256/870). *Al-ṣaḥīḥ* (Bulaq, 1894).
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- _____. (TMD1 =) *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq*. vol. 1, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus, 1951).
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- ‘Umar–Leo. *Letter* (Arabic) = Sourdell, ed./tr. “Un pamphlet musulman anonyme,” 27–33/13–26; Gaudeul, tr. “The Correspondence between Leo and ‘Umar,” 144–56. The Armenian chronicler Levond presents what he claims is a summary of this letter, or at least of a letter from ‘Umar to Leo (translated by Jeffery, “Ghevond’s Text,” 277–78).
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ARABIC (*Christian*)

'Abd al-Masīḥ al-Najrānī. *Passion* = Griffith, ed/tr. "The Arabic Account of 'Abd al-Masīḥ," 361–70/370–74; Zayyat, ed. "Shuhadā' al-naṣrānīya fi 1–Islām," 463–65.

Abraham of Tiberias. *Dialogue* = Giacinto Bulus, ed./tr. *Le dialogue d' Abraham, de Tibériade avec 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hā'imī à Jérusalem vers 820* (Rome, 1986); Karl Vollers, tr. "Das Religionsgespräch von Jerusalem (um 800 AD) aus dem Arabischen übersetzt," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 29 (1908), 29–71, 197–221.

Abū Rā'īṭa. *Rasā'il* = Georg Graf, ed./tr. *Die Schriften des Jacobiten Ḥabīb ibn Hidma Abū Rā'īṭa* (CSCO 130–31 scr. arabici 14–15; Louvain, 1951).

Agapius = A.A. Vasiliev, ed./tr. "Kitab al-'Unvan, histoire universelle écrite par Agapius (Mahboub) de Menbidj," Part 2.2, *PO* 8 (1912), 399–547 (covers the years 380–761). The edition by Louis Cheikho, *Agapius episcopus Mabbugensis. Historia universalis/Kitāb al-'unwān* (CSCO 65 scr. arabici 10; Paris, 1912), contains the whole work, beginning with Creation.

'Ammār al-Baṣrī. *Kitāb al-burhān* = Michel Hayek, ed. *'Ammār al-Baṣrī; apologie et controverses* (Beirut, 1977), 21–90.

_____. *Kitāb al-masā'il wa-l-ajwiba* = Michel Hayek, ed. *'Ammār al-Baṣrī: apologie et controverses* (Beirut, 1977), 93–266.

'Amr ibn Mattā and Ṣalība ibn Yūḥannā. *Kitāb al-majdal* = Henry Gismondi, ed. *Maris Amri et Slibae De patriarchis nestorianorum commentaria, pars altera: Amri et Slibae textus* (Rome, 1896). This constitutes the historical section of the religious encyclopaedia usually attributed to Māri ibn Sulaymān (fl. 12th century), but actually by 'Amr ibn Mattā (fl. early 11th century). An edition of [Chapter 2](#) Section 1 of this work has been prepared by Bo Holmberg and I am grateful to him for letting me see this; for further information see his article: "A Reconsideration of the *Kitāb al-Magdal*."

Anthony Rawli. *Passion* = Dick, ed./tr. "La Passion arabe de S. Antoine," 119–27/127–33. For the Ethiopie and Georgian versions (derived from the Arabic), as well as a late Arabic abridgement, see Peeters, "S. Antoine le néo-martyr,"

and *idem*, “L’autobiographie de S. Antoine.”

Bahira (Arabic) = Gottheil, ed./tr. “A Christian Bahira Legend,” 252–68 and 56–102/125–66. There is a summary of the version found in Ms. Paris arab 215 by Baron Carra de Vaux, “La légende de Bahira ou un moine chrétien auteur du Coran,” *ROC* 2 (1897), 439–54.

Bar Hebraeus. *Ta’rīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*. ed. A. Salihani (Beirut, 1890); ed./tr. Edward Pocock as *Historia compendiosa dynastiarum* (Oxford, 1663). This is an Arabic recension of Bar Hebraeus’ Syriac chronography (see the section on Syriac sources below), which he undertook at the request of a Muslim acquaintance.

Christian Arabic Disputation (PSR 438) = Papyrus Schott Reinhard no. 438. ed./tr. Graf, “Christlich-arabische Texte,” 8–24.

Chron. Siirt = Addai Scher, ed./tr. “Histoire nestorienne. Chronique de Séert,” *PO* 4 (1908), 215–312; 5 (1910), 221–334; 7 (1911), 99–201; 13 (1919), 437–636. An index to the second part is provided by Jean Maurice Fiey in *Mélanges de l’Université Saint Joseph* 42 (1966), 205–18.

Coptic Synaxary = René Basset, ed./tr. “Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte),” *PO* 1 (1907), 223–379; 3 (1909), 245–545; 11 (1915), 507–859; 16 (1922), 187–424; 17 (1923), 527–782; 20 (1979), 742–80; I. Forget, ed/tr. *Synaxarium Alexandrinum (CSCO 47–49, 67, 78 scr. arabici 3–5, 11–12; Paris and Louvain, 1905–32)*; Hegumenos Philotheus and al-Qiss Michael, eds. *Kitāb al-sādiq al-amīn fī akhbār al-qiddīsīn*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1912); S.C. Malan, tr. *Original Documents of the Coptic Church, II. The Calendar of the Coptic Church Translated from an Arabic Manuscript* (London, 1873), 3–39; F. Wüstenfeld, tr. (of first half of the year only) *Synaxarium, das ist Heiligen-Kalender der coptischen Christen* (Gotha, 1879); R. and L. Suter, tr. *Das Synaxarium. Das koptische Heiligenbuch mit dem Heiligen zu jedem Tag des Jahres* (Waldsolms-Kröffelbach, 1994).

Eutychius. *Annales* = Louis Cheikho, ed. *Eutychie patriarchae Alexandrini Annales*, 2 parts in 1 vol. (CSCO 50–51 *scr. arabici* 6–7; Beirut, 1906–1909); Edward Pocock, tr. *Contextio gemmarum sive Eutychie patriarchae Alexandrini Annales* (Oxford, 1658), which is reprinted in *PG* 111, 889–1156, and is still worth consulting for its detailed indices; Bartolomeo Pirone, tr. *Eutichio patriarca di Alessandria (877–940), Gli Annali* (Franciscan Centre of Christian Oriental Studies; Cairo, 1987). This is the so-called Antiochene recension, found in numerous manuscripts; the original Alexandrian recension is

preserved only in Ms. Sinai arab 582, partially edited and translated by Breydy, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios*. For the quotations in this book Breydy's edition hardly differs at all, so I cite only Cheikho's edition.

Fī tathlīth Allāh al-wāḥid = Ms. Sinai arab 154, fols. 99–139; Margaret Dunlop Gibson, ed./tr. *An Arabic Version of the Acts of the Apostles and the Seven Catholic Epistles, from a Eighth or Ninth Century MS in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, with a Treatise On the Triune Nature of God* (Studia Sinaitica 7; Cambridge, 1899), 74–107/2–36. A new edition is being prepared by Samir Khalil Samir.

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In the arrangement adopted here, the Arabic definite article (*al-*) at the beginning of an entry, the transliteration symbols for the Arabic letters *hamza* (') and '*ayn* ('), and distinctions between different letters transliterated by the same Latin character (e.g. *d* and *ḍ*) are ignored for purposes of alphabetization.

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