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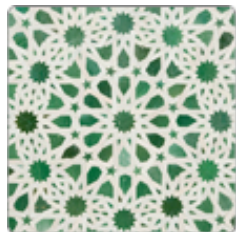
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## Christians and Christianity in Islamic Exegesis

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### Introduction

The Qur'an assumes its auditors' familiarity with Christianity—especially doctrines such as the Trinity and Incarnation—and has a range of terms for and estimations of Christians. In addition to **nasara** (Christians), People of the Book (**ahl al-kitab**), People of the Gospel (**ahl al-injil**), and Children of Israel (**bani isra'il**), Islamic tradition has identified other qur'anic concepts with Christians, ranging from pre-Islamic Arabian monotheists (the **hanif**) to idolaters (**mushrikun**) and those who are “astray” (e.g., Q 1:6–7). Accordingly, exegetical comments on Christians and Christianity are not restricted to those qur'anic passages that reference Jesus, his mother, or his followers. As the Qur'an does not have a uniform estimation of Christians or Christianity, Islamic tradition has attempted to reconcile qur'anic and later criticisms of Christian deviations from Christ's original teachings with the seemingly positive estimation of at least some aspects of Christianity in the qur'anic milieu. This reconciliation was often achieved by understanding the positive estimations as referencing those Christians who saw Muhammad as the final prophet, with the uncorrupted revelation confirming the previous scriptures. The Qur'an's allusive and sometimes polemical language makes certain knowledge of the precise nature of the Christians or Christianity in its milieu nearly impossible to determine—as attested to by the numerous exegetical opinions on any given verse. Some contemporary scholars, assuming qur'anic engagement with Late Antique trends (e.g., from c. 300–600 CE), have investigated qur'anic echoes of apocryphal Christian literature or Late Antique lore, and even otherwise unattested Judeo-Christian groups, in the hopes of better understanding the Christianity known to the Qur'an itself. The sheer volume of qur'anic commentaries (which are generally arranged as verse-by-verse expositions of the received 'Uthmanic codex of the qur'anic text) makes thematic studies a daunting task. Much of the scholarship on qur'anic exegesis, therefore, compares the exegesis of particular verses or themes in a variety of sources, from various perspectives (e.g., Sunni, Shi'i, Sufi), including a range of times (e.g., early, classical, or modern) and places (e.g., Egypt, Indonesia, etc.). Exegesis is also not restricted to the classical or modern commentaries on the Qur'an. Other genres of Islamic literature (e.g., jurisprudence) often reflect, or rely upon, exegesis (**tafsir**), and exegetes employed a range of disciplines in their exegesis (e.g., grammar, **hadith** [prophetic traditions], etc.). And exegetes could also produce other types of literature (e.g., history). Finally, as Christians were active participants in Islamic civilization, they, too, engaged in qur'anic exegesis—albeit often with an eye to their own theological agendas.

### General Overviews

Rippin 2009 gives an excellent overview of the range and contents of qur'anic commentaries. Although their sheer volume makes systematic studies such as Charfi 1980 a daunting task, there are a number of studies comparing the exegesis of particular verses or themes in a variety of sources (e.g., McAuliffe 1991 and Ayoub 1997). Much as the exegetes differed over the meaning of the qur'anic verses, scholars of **tafsir** hold varying opinions as to the value of exegesis for an understanding of the actual Christian communities in the exegete's milieu (let alone the Christians the Qur'an itself knew, on which see Griffith 2001). For, as the survey Wardenburg 1999 highlights, Muslims in different times and places had various encounters with, and estimations of, other religions, including Christianity. To what extent might exegesis draw us closer to the Qur'an's original meaning? Or, does exegesis provide “one of the best indicators of the ideological and religious moods of Muslim societies” (pace Ayoub 1997, p. 145–146)? Alternatively, following McAuliffe 1991, is exegesis an exercise in piety, best appreciated for its methodology? As classical and contemporary exegesis is studied more closely, a fuller picture of the value of qur'anic exegesis will emerge (as demonstrated with Shah 2013, a massive corpus on **tafsir**). And, since—as Gilliot 2009 amply demonstrates—exegetes often engage (and produce) other literary genres, the study of exegesis should not be done in isolation from other disciplines. Finally, as Islamic exegesis also evidences knowledge of non-Muslim traditions (thoroughly discussed by Gilliot 2009), it should not be studied in isolation from the works of non-Muslims.

**Ayoub, Mahmoud. "Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur'an and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8.2 (1997): 145–164.**

Close reading of modern exegesis of Q 2:62, 5:69, and 5:82–85. The exegetes represent Sunni (two Egyptians and two Syrians) and Shi'a views (one Lebanese, one Iraqi, two Iranian, and one Pakistani). Compares the qur'anic language to both modern and classical interpretations.

**Charfi, Abdelmajid. "Christianity in the Qur'an Commentary of Tabari." *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 105–148.**

Covers the discussion of a wide range of Christian-related qur'anic themes found in the extensive exegesis of al-Tabari (d. 310/923). Topics covered include the Gospels, John the Baptist, Mary, Jesus (including miracles), the Trinity, and Christian sects.

**Gilliot, Claude. "Christians and Christianity in Islamic Exegesis." In *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Vol. 1, (600–900)*. Edited by Juan Pedro Montferrer Sala, Barbara Roggema, and David Thomas, 31–56. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009.**

Extensive and comprehensive discussion of exegetes from, and studies on, the first three Islamic centuries (especially al-Tabari [d. 310/923]). Provides brief general overview of later exegetical trends. Also includes discussion of recent scholarship on the Qur'an in its Late Antique context (c. 300–600 CE). Extensive bibliography found in the footnotes. Mandatory resource for anyone interested in Islamic exegetical discussions of Christianity.

**Griffith, Sidney. "Christians and Christianity." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān. Vol. 1*. Edited by J. D. McAuliffe, 307–316. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2001.**

Overview of various Christian-themed qur'anic passages. Although not all relevant entries are listed here, the five-volume **Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān** is an excellent starting point for both qur'anic and later exegetical discussions of qur'anic themes. Recommended for undergraduates and graduate students, as well as for scholars of biblical or qur'anic studies.

**McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. *Qur'ānic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.**

Analysis of ten exegetes (six from the Sunni tradition and four from the Shi'i). Covers their exegesis of seven qur'anic passages (Q 2:62; 3:54–55; 3:199; 5:66; 5:82–83; 28:52–55; 57:27). More attention is paid to the contents of the exegesis than to speculation about the reasons behind a given reading.

**Rippin, Andrew. "Tafsir." *Oxford Bibliographies*, 2009.**

Comprehensive and concise overview of Sunni, Shi'i, Sufi, and contemporary qur'anic exegesis. Includes an overview of translations of classical works, as well as a section on biblical stories in **tafsir**. An excellent resource for students and scholars engaged in qur'anic, Islamic, and biblical studies. Available online by subscription.

**Shah, M., ed. *Tafsīr. Interpreting the Qur'ān*. 4 vols. Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013.**

Four-volume collection of essays published between 1967 and 2012, providing an overview of the current state of **tafsir** studies. The selection of articles showcases the range and variety of methodological approaches used in, and topics covered by, early, medieval, and modern **tafsir**. Recommended starting point for **tafsir** studies.

**Wardenburg, J., ed. *Muslim Perceptions of Other Religions: A Historical Survey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.**

Edited collection of a number of essays highlighting the various approaches to different religions by Muslims in different times and places, in a range of literary genres. Includes an essay by McAuliffe that summarizes her findings in McAuliffe 1991. Excellent resource for undergraduates.

## Christians in Classical Tafsir

While the Qur'an alludes to various beliefs and practices associated with Christianity, it mentions "Christians" (**nasara**, discussed by 'Ali, et al. 1998 and Griffith 2011) only thirteen times, eleven of which involve pairings with or distinctions from Jews. Exegetes were to read references to Christians in other qur'anic passages, such as the Qur'an's allusions to the People of the Gospel, the followers of Christ, the Children of Israel, the People of the Book, or, more polemically, the "misguided" (Q 1:7). Given the variety of these passages, a number of exegetical tropes can be identified, from the terminology used to identify Christians to the various activities and beliefs ascribed to them. And, as Christians were a significant—yet varied—demographic in and at the borders of the classical heartland of Islamic civilization, exegetes drew on socioeconomic and political factors in their own milieu (as Rubin 1993 argues with the exegesis of Q 9:29's **jizya**, or tax), as well as Islamic tradition, to interpret qur'anic passages they understood as implicitly or explicitly relating to Christians (see Nickel 2006). Exegetes glossed qur'anic allusions to "Christians" with a range of ethno-geographic and denominational terms. For example, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606/1210) glosses the **umma qa'ima** of the People of the Book (Q 3: 113–114) as from Najran, Habasha (Abyssinia), and Rum (Byzantium); the 2nd/8th century Muqatil glosses the "righteous" followers of Christ (of Q 57:27) as from Habasha and al-Sham (Syria). Similarly, in popular understandings, the glosses of **nasara** follow contemporary trends. For example, after exegetes' encounters with Europeans, in both Morocco and West Africa, the term **nasara** has come to denote white/European Christians, a gloss not found in classical works of **tafsir**. Likewise, classical exegetes gloss qur'anic allusions to Christian divisions through allusion to the denominational divisions of the Christians in their own milieu (Jacobites, Nestorians, and Melkites) and their accompanying doctrinal differences. There is a tension in exegetical discourse between understandings of qur'anic depictions of Christians as specific to the time of Jesus, particular to the time of Muhammad, as pronouncements on Christians known to the exegetes (see Ayoub 1997), or as general remarks on a generic Christianity as depicted by Islamic tradition. But close reading of classical exegetical allusions to Christians may prove to be an as yet under-examined source of information on Christians in classical Islamic society (see McAuliffe 2000, in which the author notes that the genre of legal-focused exegetical literature has not yet been systematically studied).

'Ali, 'A., H. Battush, 'A. Rashq, and Y. Khury. **Al-NaĀrā fī l-Qur'ān wa-l-tafāsīr**. Amman, Jordan: Dar al-Shuruq, 1998.

Discussion of qur'anic and exegetical allusions to **nasara** ("Christians"). In Arabic.

Ayoub, Mahmoud. "Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur'an and Contemporary Exegetical tradition." **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 8.2 (1997): 145–164**.

Close reading of modern (Sunni and Shi'i) exegesis of three qur'anic passages relating to Christians. Argues that modern exegetes, following established precedent, have a more rigid approach to other religions than do these qur'anic verses.

Griffith, Sidney. "Al-Nasara in the Qur'an: A Hermeneutical Reflection." In **New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context**. Edited by G. S. Reynolds, 301–322. London: Routledge, 2011.

Discusses recent and historical understandings of the qur'anic discussions of Christians (**al-nasara**). Argues that the qur'anic depictions of Christians and Christianity should be read with its own rhetoric (and polemics) in mind, rather than as an accurate representation of the Christians in its milieu.

McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. "Legal Exegesis: Christians as a Case Study." In **Islamic Interpretations of Christianity**. Edited by Lloyd Ridgeon, 54–77. New York: St. Martin's, 2000.

Presentation of the three most frequently cited representatives of this genre (al-Jassas [d. 370/981], Ilkiya al-Harrasi [d. 504/1110] and Ibn al-'Arabi [d. 543/1148]) together with Muqatil b. Sulayman and al-Miqdad al-Hilli (d. 826/1423). Gives examples of the treatment of Christians regarding purity, as associates/friends, and the status of their belief.

Nickel, Gordon. "'We Will Make Peace with You': The Christians of Najrān in Muqātil's Tafsīr." **Collectanea Christiana Orientalia (2006): 171–188**.

Discusses Muqatil's discussion of **tafsir** of the **mubahala** (mutual invocation of God's curse on the untruthful party) of Q 3:59–3:61 in the context of other early accounts of this passage, traditionally attributed to an encounter between Muhammad and a delegation of Christians from Najran.

**Rubin, Uri. "Qur'an and Tafsir: The Case of àan Yadin." *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients* 70 (1993): 133–144.**

Argues that Muslim **tafsir**, rather than preserving the original intent of the Qur'an, reads later legal practice into the interpretation of the qur'anic legal injunctions (like Q 9:29's instruction that the People of the Book should be fought until they pay the **jizya** "out of hand").

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## Contemporary Concerns

**Tafsir** has continued into the modern period with a variety of emphases. While modern and classical **tafsir** address some of the same themes (as Zebiri 2000 discusses), in other cases, modern exegetes address the realities of an increasingly interconnected global world. As Albayrak 2008 and Duderija 2015 discuss, part of the dynamic in modern readings of qur'anic verses addressing Christians or Christianity is the criticism leveled at a number of Muslim-majority societies, especially those that claim "Islamic law" as one of their governing principles, for the seemingly inferior position of non-Muslims. Sirry 2009 discusses how modern Muslim societies can go beyond mere "tolerance" of (religious) difference or the "protection" of its minorities (as long as they respect the rules of the majority), to one in which all religions are treated as social and political, if not theological, "equals," guaranteed the same rights, freedoms, and protections. This global discourse is complicated by postcolonial realities and, since the 19th century CE, the colonial history of the gradual global dominance of (mainly Christian) European powers over much of the world, including a number of historically "Muslim" areas. The complex history of these interactions and various internal Muslim dynamics, not least of which is the abolition of the caliphate in the early 20th century; the disruption of traditional educational, religious, political, and legal systems; and the relatively recent phenomenon of Muslims moving to, and settling in, historically non-Muslim-ruled areas of the world (Europe, North America, Australia) shapes some of the modern exegetical discourse. With the increasingly rapid movements of people and information (especially via the Internet), some argue for a return to "traditional" values, and the necessity of avoiding the pernicious effects of all the recent changes. Others argue that "Islam" has nothing to fear from these changes—from its position of inherent superiority to "infidel" systems, it can incorporate some elements and reject others. Yet others maintain that there is no inherent tension between "Islam" (rightly interpreted) and modern realities. Still others (e.g., Sachedina 1997) maintain that modern realities call for approaches that are different from those found in classical scholarship. In these narratives, recent colonial history, the situation of the individual scholar (in or from a Muslim-majority society, in a historically non-Muslim society), the intended audience and goal of the scholarship (e.g., inter-religious dialogue and cohabitation (Ayoub 1997 and Steenbrink 2002) all play a role.

**Albayrak, Ismail. "The People of the Book in the Qur'an." *Islamic Studies* (2008): 301–325.**

Survey of a wide range of western scholarship and classical and modern Islamic exegesis on qur'anic discussions of the "People of the Book." Claims that modern demands of secularism and pluralism conflict with the qur'anic and classical notions, which accept cultural pluralism while claiming dogmatic exclusivity and reject religious relativism.

**Ayoub, Mahmoud. "Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur'an and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8.2 (1997): 145–164.**

Close reading of modern Sunni and Shi'i exegesis of Q 2:62, 5:69, and 5:82–85. Argues that modern exegetes, in Arab and non-Arab contexts (Egypt, Syria, the Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan), have a more rigid approach to other religions than the Qur'an itself.

**Duderija, Adis. "The Question of Salvation of Non-Muslims: The Exegesis of Muhammad Asad." *Dialog* 54.3 (2015): 289–297.**

Examination of the thought of a modern Austrian convert to Islam on "exclusivist" and "inclusivist" verses. In Asad's reading, Q 2:62 is the "fundamental doctrine" of Islam.

**Sachedina, Abdulaziz. "Islamic Theology of Christian-Muslim Relations." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8.1 (1997): 27–38.**

Discusses al-Tabari's comments on **jizya** in Q 9:29, as well as the same exegete's discussion of **jihad** and **jizya** in his **Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā'** (book of juridical difference). Argues that the classical juridical texts are not suited to contemporary circumstances.

**Sirry, Mun'im. "Compete with One Another in Good Works': Exegesis of Qur'an Verse 5.48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20.4 (2009): 423–438.**

Survey of classical exegesis on Q 5:48. Critiques the varying approaches to the classical tradition of three contemporary Muslim readings: Nurcholish Madjid (Indonesia), Ashgar Ali Engineer (India), and Abdulaziz Sachedina (United States, Tanzanian-born). Argues for new exegetical approaches if modern Muslims want to build tolerant pluralistic societies based on qur'anic teachings.

**Steenbrink, Karel. "Muslims and the Christian Other: Nasara in Qur'anic Readings." *Church and Theology in Context* 40.1 (2002): 200–222.**

Comparison of two modern Indonesian Muslim interpretations of qur'anic occurrences of "nasara." Discusses the ambiguity both of terminology and of Muslim perceptions of Christianity.

**Zebiri, Kate. "Contemporary Muslim Understanding of the Miracles of Jesus." *Muslim World* 90.1–2 (2000): 71–90.**

Primarily focused on modern Egyptian exegesis of Q 3:49 and 5:110, as well as Pakistani popular writings on Christianity. Examines trends of continuity and change from classical exegesis. Miracles are generally affirmed, affirming Jesus' prophethood and God's power. If miracles are denied, it is not out of a rationalizing tendency.

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## Christianity in Islamic Exegesis

Muslim theological discussions rarely depict Christianity as a unified set of beliefs and practices—reflecting both the qur'anic discourse and the milieu in which Islam emerged. For, from southern Spain to India, Muslims encountered Christians of different ethnic, linguistic, ritual, and doctrinal persuasions. Although the Qur'an does not depict Christianity as a monolith of beliefs and practices, it frequently references aspects of Christian belief, especially Christian doctrinal disputes (e.g., Q 19:34). In fact, Islamic tradition is well aware of Christian sectarian divisions stemming from the Christological controversies of the 4th and 5th centuries (compare Ibn Kathir's comments at the beginning of Q 30 and Sheikh Qaradwi's remarks about Egyptian opposition to the Byzantines in his sermon in Tahrir Square in 2011, found online). And, following the Qur'an, exegetical discussions of Christian beliefs encompass highly philosophical as well as popular topics, ranging from critiques of intricate Christian doctrines (e.g., the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth) to the miracles of Jesus (as discussed by Robinson 1989). The Qur'an also knows of Christian scripture (the **Injil**), monasteries and churches (Q 22:40), and monks and priests (Q 5:82; 57:27). Among the topics that have interested scholars of the Qur'an and its exegesis are the critiques of Christian doctrines, discussions of monks and monasticism (Beck 1946 and Sara 1989), and depictions of Christian sectarian divisions. From the late 20th century onward, there has been particular attention to the place of Christianity in qur'anic discussions of "believers" (Donner 2010) and "polytheists" (Hawting 1999). Partly because of the allusive nature of the qur'anic text, exegetes glossed both the qur'anic vocabulary and its descriptions with a range of interpretations—often reflecting the Christianity of their own milieux, rather than that known to the Qur'an itself. While there are some studies of Christianity in individual works of exegesis (e.g., Charfi 1980 and Robinson 2001), partly because of the verse-by-verse (rather than thematic) arrangement of **tafsir** (critiqued by Reynolds 2009), there are no fully comprehensive thematic studies of Christian beliefs and practice in Islamic exegesis. As with all discussions of Christians and Christianity in Islamic exegesis (or in the Qur'an), the extent to which the exegetical discussions might illuminate our understanding of the Christians known to the Qur'an or to the milieux of the exegetes themselves is in need of further research. Further scholarship on the vast and rich body of exegetical literature, as well as the communities of Christians who, for centuries, lived with Muslims, is therefore a desideratum.

**Beck, Edmund. "Das christliche Mönchtum im Koran." *Studia Orientalia* 13 (1946): 3–29.**

Uses classical Muslim exegesis to read Q 57:27's allusion to monasticism as indicating Muhammad's favorable impression of monasticism during the Medinan period—but as not compatible with human weakness, and therefore not mandated by divine decree. Attempts to reconcile Q 57:27 with Q 5:82–83's favorable representation of monks (and priests).

**Charfi, Abdelmajid. "Christianity in the Qur'an Commentary of Tabari." *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 105–148.**

Covers al-Tabari's discussion of a wide range of Christian-related qur'anic themes. Argues that the exegetical arguments should be subject to modern historical critical methods, correcting the misrepresentations of Christianity.

**Donner, Fred M. *Muhammad and the Believers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.**

Argues that Islam began as a strict monotheistic reform movement that, initially, could have included Jews and Christians.

**Hawting, G. R. *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999.**

Argues that the qur'anic **mushrikun**—commonly translated as polytheists—are better understood as monotheists, polemically labeled as "idolaters" by the Qur'an for falling short of pure monotheistic practice.

**Reynolds, Gabriel Said. "The Muslim Jesus: Dead or Alive?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72.02 (2009): 237–258.**

Survey of a range of classical exegesis and modern scholarship on Q 4:157–158, read in conjunction with other qur'anic passages, which imply a natural death for Jesus. Argues for a holistic reading of qur'anic passages in the light of earlier (Jewish and Christian) traditions, rather than through later Muslim exegesis.

**Robinson, Neal. "Creating Birds from Clay: A Miracle of Jesus in the Qur'ān and in Classical Muslim Exegesis." *The Muslim World* 79.1 (1989): 1–13.**

Presents Q 3:49 and 5:110 in five classical qur'anic commentaries. Concludes that the exegetes evince little familiarity with Christian tradition.

**Robinson, Neal. "Sayyid Qutb's Attitude towards Christianity: Sura 9.29–35 in *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*." In *Islamic Interpretations of Christianity*. Edited by Lloyd Ridgeon, 159–177. London: Routledge, 2001.**

Summary and critique of the discussion of these verses in Qutb's major qur'anic commentary. Highlights Qutb's continuation of, and breaks from, traditional exegesis. Some discussion of Qutb's life and the implications of his thinking in the context of contemporary geopolitics (of 1998).

**Sara, Sviri. "Wa-Rahbānīyatan Ibtada' ūhū: An Analysis of Traditions Concerning the Origin and Evolution of Christian Monasticism." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1989): 195–208.**

Presents Muqatil b. Sulayman and al-Tabari as reconciling competing qur'anic estimations of monasticism (Q 57:27 versus 5:82–83): the corrupt "Christian" practices versus the "true" monasticism of hermits (who were the true followers of Christ—and who also acknowledged Muhammad's prophethood). Includes discussion of western scholarship on monasticism in the Qur'an.

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## The Bible and Biblical Figures

The Qur'an references the Torah, Gospel, and Psalms and even exhorts its addressee to "ask those who were reading scripture (**al-kitāb**) before you" if in doubt about the revelation (Q 10:94). Although (as highlighted by Berg 1995), Islamic tradition is not agreed upon the identity or nature of this **kitāb**, both Jews and Christians have been identified by exegetes as among the communities to whom a

book was revealed, and a number of figures familiar from the Bible appear in the Qur'anic narrative, albeit with details that differ from the biblical accounts. In addition to a number of individuals from the Hebrew Bible (see Hawting 2010 for discussion of Abraham), the Qur'an also mentions figures familiar from the Christian New Testament: Zechariah and John the Baptist, Jesus and Mary, the "family of Imran." Additionally, Jesus' apostles (the **hawariyyun**) are mentioned, as are his "helpers." Although the Qur'an names no individual apostle/disciple, Islamic tradition has elaborated on the Qur'anic narratives through allusion to Christian tradition, paying particular attention to the figure and role of Paul (as discussed by Anthony 2009 and van Koningsveld 1996). This is just one example of how, despite accusations of "tampering" with the original revelation (see Scriptural Corruption [Tahrif] and Abrogation [Naskh]) that have been leveled at both Jews and Christians, works of exegesis and other traditional Islamic literary genres have made use of Jewish and Christian traditions in their elaborations of Qur'anic references to biblical figures (as Pauliny 1999 mentions and the translation in Wheeler 2002 demonstrates). For (as discussed by Gilliot 2009), a number of figures from early Islamic history, particularly Christian (or Jewish) converts to Islam, are known for having transmitted traditions with biblical or Judeo-Christian roots. Although not exegetes in the classical sense, many of their traditions are preserved in classical works of exegesis, which also preserve traditions ascribed to Jews and Christians, as well as to popular story tellers (the reception and use of the so-called Isra'iliyyat are discussed by McAuliffe 1998). Finally, although western scholarly attention has been drawn to the Qur'anic portrayals of biblical figures, it was traditionally due to an interest in finding the "sources" for or "influences" on the Qur'an—rather than a desire to know how later Islamic tradition has understood these figures.

**Anthony, Sean W. "The Composition of Sayf b. 'Umar's Account of King Paul and His Corruption of Ancient Christianity." *Der Islam* 85.1 (2009): 164–202.**

Translation and analysis of Sayf b. 'Umar's account of Christian origins. Parallels Sayf's account of Paul to early Islamic concerns about divisions within the umma, especially the activities of a Jewish convert, Ibn Saba'. Demonstrates elements of Sayf's narratives in al-Tabari's **tafsir** (ad Q 61:14; 57:27).

**Berg, Herbert. "Ṭabarī's Exegesis of the Qur'ānic Term al-Kitāb." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63.4 (1995): 761–774.**

Non-exhaustive survey of various and variable glosses of "book" by al-Tabari. Shows how, even after the codification and circulation of the normative 'Uthmanic codex, there was no consensus as to what the Qur'an intends when it speaks of scripture/book. Attributes the disagreements to controversies in the early Islamic centuries.

**Gilliot, Claude. "Christians and Christianity in Islamic Exegesis." In *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*. Vol. 1, (600–900). Edited by Juan Pedro Montferrer Sala, Barbara Roggema, and David Thomas, 31–56. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2009.**

Extensive and comprehensive discussion of exegetes from, and studies on, the first three Islamic centuries (especially al-Tabari [d. 310/923]). Includes discussion of transmitters of Jewish and Christian lore (e.g., Ibn 'Abbas, Ka'b al-Ahbar, Wahb b. Munabbih, and Ibn Ishaq, all discussed by Gilliot). Extensive bibliography found in the footnotes.

**Hawting, Gerald. "The Religion of Abraham and Islam." In *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*. Edited by Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten, and Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, 475–502. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010.**

General overview of the Islamic and pre-Islamic understandings of the relationship of Abraham to Arabs, including discussion of the concepts **milla** (religious group), **umma** (community), and **hanif** (pre-Islamic Arabian monotheist) in Islamic tradition (including **hanifs** who became Christian). Discussion includes exegetical material—but is not distinguished from other genres of Islamic literature.

**McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. "Assessing the Isra'iliyyāt: An Exegetical Conundrum." In *Story-telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature*. Edited by S. Leder, 345–369. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1998.**

Examines a range of exegetical estimations of the value of Jewish and Christian lore (Isra'iliyyat) through a close reading of Ibn Taymiyya's, al-Tabari's, and other classical exegetes' discussions of Q 2:67–73.



**Pauliny, Jan. "Some Remarks on the Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' Works in Arabic Literature." In *The Qur'ān: Formative Interpretation*. Edited by Andrew Rippin, 313–326. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999.**

English translation of German article (originally published in 1969 as "Einige Bemerkungen zu den Werken 'Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā' in der arabischen Literatur," *Graecolatina et Orientalia* 1, pp. 111–123). Overview of various works that fall in the broad category of the "Stories of the Prophets" genre in Islamic literature. Includes discussion of theological disapproval of the genre, and its relationship to the Qur'an and *tafsir*.

**Reynolds, Gabriel Said. "The Quran and the Apostles of Jesus." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 76.02 (2013): 209–227.**

Agrees with Islamic tradition that the Qur'an intends to designate Jesus' disciples with the term *hawariyyun*. Argues that, although they are commended for believing in Jesus (a belief that distinguishes them from other Israelites), they are criticized for abandoning his message.

**van Koningsveld, P. S. "Islamic Image of Paul, and the Origin of the Gospel of Barnabas." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 20 (1996): 200–228.**

Attributes the relatively positive/neutral accounts of Paul in many eastern Islamic traditions, as compared to western accounts, to al-Tabari's cursory attention to the early history of Christianity in his *History*. Because of its relatively favorable depiction of Paul, posits an eastern, not western, Islamic origin for the Gospel of Barnabas.

**Wheeler, Brannon M., ed. *Prophets in the Quran: An Introduction to the Quran and Muslim Exegesis*. London and New York: Continuum, 2002.**

In addition to numerous figures from the Hebrew Bible, contains chapters on John the Baptist and Zechariah and on Jesus. Provides partial (English) translation of a selection of exegetical discussions of the qur'anic passages relating to these figures. Excellent resource for undergraduate courses.

## Jesus and Mary

Of the New Testament figures mentioned in the Qur'an, Mary and Jesus have received the greatest attention, reflecting both their prominence in the qur'anic and later exegetical literature (on which see Khuri 1996), as well as the interests of Christian scholars of the Qur'an. The only female named in the Qur'an, Mary also lends her name to the nineteenth chapter of the Qur'an. Stowasser 1994 and McAuliffe 1981 explain her significance in Islamic tradition, while Abboud 2005 highlights exegetical and theological debates over the possibility of Mary (a woman) being a prophet. Indicative of the importance of Christianity in the early Islamic milieu, Jesus figures prominently not just in exegesis, but also in *hadith* and other literature. As with other biblical figures that appear in the Qur'an, the details of his life sometimes differ from biblical accounts; e.g., narratives familiar from apocryphal, rather than canonical, gospels appear (see Q 5:110). And certain tenets central to Christian belief (his crucifixion and divine sonship) are explicitly rejected. As Robinson 1991 demonstrates, the similarities and differences between Christian and Islamic narratives of Jesus (and Mary) have intrigued classical and contemporary scholars of the Qur'an. For example, by terming Jesus the Son of Mary as the Messiah, is the Qur'an refuting Christian claims that Jesus was the Son, and Mary the Mother, of God (see Q 4:171)—especially when read in the light of verses such as Q 112:3, which claims that God neither begets nor is begotten? Or, by emphasizing Jesus' matrilineal rather than patrilineal designation, is it defending Mary's purity against (Jewish) polemics (see Q 4:156), as well as God's omnipotence (Q 19:34–35)? In spite of their use of terms familiar to Christian theology, qur'anic and later exegetical understandings often differ from Christian usage, although, as Haddad and Smith 2010 discusses, there is cross-fertilization with Christian tradition. The extent to which later Islamic understandings of Christ reflect the Qur'an's original intent has been the subject of relatively recent scholarship. For example, although not focusing on exegesis, Griffith 2007 explores the possibility of a qur'anic engagement with a Syriac typology for Christ, one that escaped later exegetes and polemicists alike. And, finally, although not focused on Islamic exegesis, but representative of another trend in modern scholarship, Neuwirth 2005 discusses possible qur'anic echoes of biblical passages, although it also notes qur'anic familiarity with Christian traditions "transmitted independently from the context of the New Testament stories" (p. 245).

**Abboud, Hosn. "Idhan Maryam Nabiyya (Hence Maryam is a Prophetess): Muslim Classical Exegetes and Women's Receptiveness to God's Verbal Inspiration." In *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother*. Edited by D. Good, 183–196. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.**

Discusses the differences between classical eastern exegetes (al-Tabari, al-Razi and al-Zamakhshari) and Andalusian (Ibn Hazm and al-Qurtubi) views on whether or not Mary could be a prophet (Andalusians said yes; eastern exegetes have a more androcentric understanding of prophethood).

**Griffith, Sidney H. "Syriacisms in the Arabic Qur'ān: Who Were 'Those Who Said "Allāh is Third of Three"' According to al-Mā'idah 73?" In *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān; Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*. Edited by Meir M. Bar-Asher, S. Hopkins, S. Stroumsa, and B. Chiesa, 83–110. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007.**

Understands the Qur'an (if not later exegetes) as familiar with Late Antique, particularly Syriac, Christological typologies. Highlights the importance of distinguishing the Qur'anic engagement with (and criticisms of) contemporary Christian doctrines from later Islamic (or other) interpretations of the text. Treats the Qur'an as familiar with, if polemically critical of, contemporaneous Christian understandings of Christ—rather than assuming the Qur'an knew otherwise unattested heretical forms of Christianity.

**Haddad, Yvonne Y., and Jane I. Smith. "The Anti-Christ and the End of Time in Christian and Muslim Eschatological Literature." *Muslim World* 100.4 (2010): 505–529.**

Survey of modern Muslim apocalypses, some of which reference Christian literature. Modern apocalypses reflect societal chaos, urging Muslims to arm themselves, fight injustice, and prepare the way for the return of Jesus. It aims to refute Christian supersessionist arguments, and often portrays Israel, the United States, and Zionism as the anti-Christ.

**Khuri, Yusuf. 'Īsā wa-Maryam fī l-Qur'ān wa-l-Tafsīr. Amman, Jordan: Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies, 1996.**

Compendium of Qur'anic verses relating to Jesus and Mary, presented together with a wide range of classical and modern commentary.

**McAuliffe, Jane D. "Chosen of All Women: Mary and Fatima in Qur'anic Exegesis." *Islamochristiana* 7 (1981): 19–28.**

Analyzes discussions of Mary (mother of Jesus) and Fatima (daughter of Muhammad) in classical exegesis (e.g., al-Tabari and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi). Also includes some discussion of Shi'i exegesis.

**Neuwirth, Angelika. "Mary and Jesus, Counterbalancing the Biblical Patriarchs: A Re-Reading of Surat Maryam in Surat al Imran (Q 3: 1–62)." *Parole de l'Orient* 30 (2005): 231–260.**

Builds on the author's earlier work on Meccan discussions of Jesus and Mary. Argues that Q 3 represents a Medinan rereading of the Jesus and Mary narratives to disempower Jewish scriptural authority. Provides examples of Qur'anic parallels to biblical passages.

**Robinson, Neal. *Christ in Islam and Christianity: The Representation of Jesus in the Qur'ān and the Classical Muslim Commentaries*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1991.**

Examines Sunni (five exegetes discussed in seven chapters) exegesis of Qur'anic verses addressing Jesus' second coming, crucifixion, miracles, and virginal conception. Two chapters are devoted to Sufi and Shi'i exegesis of these themes. Speculates that *tafsir* might shed light on the (Gnostic-influenced?) Christianity known to (and rejected by) the Qur'an.

**Stowasser, Barbara Freyer. *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.**

Overview of women mentioned in the Qur'an and those important for Islamic sacred history. Includes a chapter on Mary and one on modern Muslim interpretations. Discusses both classical and modern exegesis.

## Muslim Biblical Scholarship

The Qur'anic allusions to both the Torah (**tawrat**) and Gospel (**injl**), as well as the Psalms of David (**zabur**), have engaged both Muslim exegetes and other scholars of the Qur'an. For, in addition to Q 10:94's exhortation (to Muhammad) that he ask those who were reading the previous scriptures if there were doubts as to his revelations, Q 7:157 asserts that the **ummi** prophet (Muhammad) is written about in the Torah and Gospel, while Q 61:6 maintains that Jesus told the Children of Israel he was confirming the Torah and bringing good news of a messenger who would come after him, who would be named Ahmad. And, just as Christians mined the Hebrew Bible for proofs that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah, while rejecting Jewish interpretations that contradicted their (Christian) claims, Muslims mined the Bible for attestations to their claims, especially regarding Muhammad's prophethood, rejecting Jewish and Christian interpretations that contradicted Islamic theological assertions. McAuliffe 1996 highlights two major Muslim approaches to the Bible: its corruption, but also its prediction of Muhammad. Such biblical scholarship was not confined to demonstrating biblical attestations to Muhammad. As Thomas 1994 shows, the Bible was also used to counter Christian claims to Christ's divinity. Griffith 2013 addresses one of the major questions surrounding Muslim biblical scholarship—namely, the form(s) in which Muslims knew the Bible (Arabic translations? oral transmission? written manuscripts?)—and which books were available. Accad 2003 gives a sense of the range and variety of Gospel passages Muslim authors employed, while the classical studies of Adang 1996 and Lazarus-Yafeh 1992 detail important aspects of classical Muslim biblical criticism. Twenty-first-century scholarship (Saleh 2008 and Demiri 2013) has focused attention on some lesser-known aspects of Muslim biblical scholarship.

**Accad, Martin. "The Gospels in the Muslim Discourse of the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: An Exegetical Inventorial Table (Part 1)." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14.1 (2003): 67–91.**

Inventory list of over a thousand gospel verses used by twenty Muslim authors in twenty-three works from the 9th to 14th centuries. The use of the Gospel passages is classified into five major categories (relating to God, Christ, the Bible, the church, and Islam/Muhammad). Useful technical resource for scholars interested investigating the occurrence of particular Gospel passages in Islamic literature. Parts 2–4 of the article are continued in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 14.2: 205–220; 14.3: 337–352; and 14.4: 459–479.

**Adang, Camilla. *Muslim Writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: From Ibn Rabban to Ibn Hazm*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1996.**

Details the varying themes and approaches to Judaism and the Hebrew Bible in the work of nine Muslim writers representing a variety of literary genres. Extensive bibliography. Useful for comparison with Christian approaches to the Hebrew Bible and Muslim approaches to the New Testament.

**Demiri, Leijla. *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Dīn al-Ūfī's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures. A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation with an Introduction*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013.**

An example of Muslim exegesis of the Bible. Provides insight into the use of the Bible and Isra'iliyyat by some Muslims, contrary to trends advocating their rejection (as exemplified by Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Kathir) in the wake of the Mongol destruction of Baghdad.

**Griffith, Sidney H. *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.**

Argues that, although the Qur'an was the first Arabic book, the Bible was known to pre-Islamic Arabs through oral Arabic glosses on the texts by missionaries and others. Details the history of the translation of the Bible into Arabic and the varying Jewish and Christian approaches to the Bible. General resource for postgraduate and advanced undergraduate students, as well as specialists in Arabic or biblical studies.

**Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava. *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.**

Argues that the transmission of the Near Eastern intellectual heritage to Europe via Muslim scholarship, especially medieval polemics, led to later European biblical criticism. Focuses on Muslim questioning of the authority of the biblical text, especially the claims of the Pentateuch's corruption and abrogation. Although interconfessional polemics have a different set of premises than does modern biblical criticism, introduces approaches to the Bible not usually discussed in biblical studies programs.

**McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. "The Quranic Context of Muslim Biblical Scholarship." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 7.2 (1996): 141–158.**

Survey of a range of responses to the dual qur'anic estimation of previous scriptures: on the one hand, Jews and Christians are accused of corrupting and/or misinterpreting their scriptures; on the other hand, the previous scriptures are invoked for their predictive value (especially of Muhammad's prophethood). Good for undergraduates and more advanced students.

**Saleh, Walid. *In Defense of the Bible: A Critical Edition and Introduction to al-Biqā'ī's Bible Treatise*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008.**

In addition to a critical edition of *al-Aqwāl al-qawīma fī gukm al-naql min al-kutub al-qadīma*, Saleh provides an intellectual history of al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480), explaining both the controversy over, and the unique aspects of, this Mamluk scholar's use of the Bible in his *tafsir* (*Nauḥ al-durar fī tanāsub al-āyāt wa-l-suwar*).

**Thomas, David. "The Miracles of Jesus in Early Islamic Polemic." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39.2 (1994): 221–243.**

Although not focused on classical works of *tafsir*, relevant for understanding Muslim biblical scholarship. Argues that polemicists believed Christians thought Christ's miracles were proofs of his divinity, so mined the Bible to prove Jesus was not unique even according to Christian scriptures. Eventually, more rational and philosophic arguments were employed.

### **Scriptural Corruption (Tahrif) and Abrogation (Naskh)**

Following the Qur'an, Islamic tradition has a complex estimation of the validity of the Bible in the possession of Christians (and Jews; while Nickel 2010 focuses on two early exegetical approaches, Accad 2003 highlights the nuances of Muslim estimations of the Bible throughout the classical period). On the one hand, Christians (and Jews) are termed among the "People of the Book" (**ahl al-kitāb**), peoples to whom God has revealed a scripture that contains the same message as that revealed to Muhammad. On the other hand, these communities are accused of not following the message that was given to them. Unlike the accusations against the Jews (as discussed by Reynolds 2010), qur'anic and later Islamic discussions of Christianity directly challenged central Christian doctrines like the Incarnation and the Trinity. For example, according to the Qur'an, Jesus performed his miracles by the power/permission of God—not by virtue of his divinity. Eventually, the linguistic miracle and purity of the qur'anic message (which, unlike the Bible, remained preserved in the language in which it was revealed) was contrasted with the multiple translations and books of the Bible, and Jewish and Christian disagreements over both the contents and their interpretation. Two points of the scriptural controversies deserve particular mention: Jewish and Christian persistence in denying any biblical prediction of Muhammad, and (as discussed by Peters 1997) the question of the continued relevance of the Bible, with its multiple books, translations, and interpretations after the revelation of the Qur'an in clear/clarifying Arabic (e.g., Q 16:103). For, although both Jews and Christians have been identified by exegetes as among the communities to whom a book was revealed, the relationship between the book(s) currently in their possession and the original revelation is often questioned. Of particular interest has been the charge of the corruption of, or tampering with, these earlier scriptures (see the classical discussions of Di Matteo 1922 and Gaudeul and Caspar 1980).

**Accad, Martin. "Corruption and/or Misinterpretation of the Bible: The Story of the Islamic Usage of Tahrif." *Theological Review* 24.2 (2003): 67–97.**

Survey of the range of approaches to the Bible found in Islamic tradition. Traces the evolution of the charge of *tahrif* in the context of interfaith encounter, which is the outcome of struggle, and not its starting point. Argues that the accusation of *tahrif* is a hermeneutical, not dogmatic, charge.

**Di Matteo, Ignazio. "Il 'tahrif' od alterazione della Bibbia secondo i musulmani." *Bessarione* 38 (1922): 64–111, 223–260.**

Classical piece on the charge of scriptural corruption leveled against Jews and Christians. In Italian.

**Gaudeul, J.-M., and Robert Caspar. "Textes de la tradition musulmane concernant le tahrif (falsification) des écritures." *Islamochristiana* 6 (1980): 61–104.**

Translation of a number of texts addressing the concept of scriptural falsification (**tahrif**).

**Nickel, Gordon. *Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur'ān*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2010.**

Overview of Muqatil b. Sulayman's and al-Tabari's approaches to the pre-qur'anic scriptures.

**Peters, Francis. "Alius or Alter: The Qur'anic Definition of Christians and Christianity." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8.2 (1997): 165–176.**

Discusses qur'anic estimations of Christians and Christianity, with some general remarks on classical exegesis of both approving and critical passages. Brief discussion of the abrogation of earlier scriptures.

**Reynolds, Gabriel Said. "On the Qur'anic Accusation of Scriptural Falsification (Tahrif) and Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 130.2 (2010): 189–202.**

Contextualizes qur'anic charges of scriptural corruption in Late Antique Christian-Jewish polemic. Contains an overview of the different understandings of **tahrif** in Islamic tradition. Accessible also for undergraduates.

## Christian Apocrypha and Late Antiquity

Since at least the turn of this century, there has been a surge of scholarship on the Qur'an as a product of, or engaged with, Late Antiquity (as evidenced by various online forums, such as Michael Pregill's Mizan Project, IQSA's Qur'ān Seminar under Mehdi Azaiez' leadership, and Angelika Neuwirth's *Corpus Coranicum*). For, in addition to the rather clear references to Christian doctrines and institutions (e.g., monasticism), it presumes a familiarity with themes familiar from Late Antiquity. For example, as Griffith 2008, Van Bladel 2008, and Wheeler 1998 demonstrate, qur'anic narratives share details with Late Antique Syriac (Christian) accounts of Alexander the Great (Q 18's Dhu al-Qarnayn) and the Sleepers of Ephesus (Q 18's **ashab al-kahf**). Another pre-Islamic account for which a qur'anic parallel has been adduced is that of the Martyrs of Najran, who have been linked to Q 85's People of the Ditch. In much of this literature, the Qur'an is mined for its knowledge of Christian lore, including apocrypha (as Horn 2006 demonstrates). A common thread in much of this scholarship is "what might the Qur'an tell us of Christianity in Late Antique Arabia or elsewhere?" As demonstrated by Mehdi, the publication of the Qur'ān Seminar of the International Qur'anic Studies Association, such revisionist readings of the Qur'an often do not include Islamic exegesis, on the grounds that Islamic exegesis reflects the milieu of the exegetes and later Islamic tradition—rather than the qur'anic milieu. But, due to the encyclopedic nature of classical exegesis, careful reading of classical **tafsir** may also contribute to this endeavor. For, although much of the scholarship highlighted here examines the Qur'an in the light of non-Arabic Late Antique literature, as Fudge 2007 notes, classical Muslim exegetes were also familiar with a number of the pre-Islamic accounts for which qur'anic parallels have been adduced. For example, the early exegete Muqatil b. Sulayman discusses Q 18's Companions of the Cave in conjunction with details of the Sleepers of Ephesus familiar from Christian tradition. As Wheeler 1998 argues, classical **tafsir**, therefore, merits inclusion in scholarly investigations into the Qur'an's engagement with Late Antiquity.

**Azaiez, M., G. Reynolds, T. Tesei, and H. Zafer. *The Qur'an Seminar Commentary/Le Qur'an Seminar*. Berlin: DeGruyter, 2016.**

Commentaries on 50 qur'anic passages by 25 scholars. Reflecting the Qur'an Seminar initiative, the selected passages are addressed by different scholars from a variety of perspectives. Showcases modern interdisciplinary approaches rather than the methods of classical exegetes. In English, French and Arabic.

## **Corpus Coranicum.**

German-based international project, online since 2011. Follows in the footsteps of G. Bergstrasser who, in 1929, hoped to provide a critical apparatus of the Qur'an akin to those that exist for the Bible. The Umwelttexte tab provides a range of possible parallels between the qur'anic and various Late Antique (or other) texts.

**Fudge, Bruce. "The Men of the Cave: Tafsir, Tragedy and Tawfiq al-Hakim." *Arabica* 54.1 (2007): 67–93.**

Overview of the approaches of four Muslim exegetes (al-Tabari [d. 310/923], al-Tabrisi [d. 548/1154], al-Qasimi [d. 332/1914], and Syed Qutb [d. 1386/1966]) and a 20th-century Egyptian author to the "Men of the Cave" of Q 18:9–26, commonly identified as the Sleepers of Ephesus.

**Griffith, Sidney. "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'ān: The "Companions of the Cave" in Sūrat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition." In *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*. Edited by G. Reynolds, 109–137. London: Routledge, 2008.**

Comprehensive reading of the qur'anic narrative in the light of various Syriac Christian accounts of the Sleepers of Ephesus. Argues that the Qur'an presumes its auditors' familiarity with the variety of Christian accounts and uses them for its own agenda.

**Horn, Cornelia M. "Intersections: The Reception History of the Protoevangelium of James in Sources from the Christian East and in the Qur'ān." *Apocrypha* 17 (2006): 113–150.**

Careful reading of Q 3 and Q 19, highlighting parallels with the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James. Points to directions for future research when one reads the Qur'an with earlier texts.

**Mizan Project.**

Collaborative online forum of twelve essays highlighting contemporary scholarship on the Qur'an as a participant in Late Antiquity. Although the focus is not on exegesis, some essays do extend their scope to early Islamic literature. Essays suitable for undergraduates or specialists.

**Qur'ān Seminar.**

Examines qur'anic passages based on knowledge of Arabic and Late Antiquity. Includes investigations based on the **rasm** (base consonantal text). Generally excludes classical exegetical discussions.

**Van Bladel, Kevin. "The Alexander Legend in the Qur'ān 18:83–102." In *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*. Edited by G. Reynolds, 175–202. London: Routledge, 2008.**

Using the qur'anic discussion of Dhu l-Qarnayn, argues that qur'anic studies would benefit from familiarity with Late Antique scholarship. Maintains that the Syriac Alexander Legend, written as religious and political propaganda for Heraclius, and the qur'anic narrative share many features, but served different purposes.

**Wheeler, Brannon M. "Moses or Alexander? Early Islamic Exegesis of Qur'ān 18: 60–65." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 57.3 (1998): 191–215.**

Discusses the evolution of various interpretations of the qur'anic Dhu l-Qarnayn in classical exegesis. Outlines connections between the Epic of Gilgamesh, Alexander stories, and the Qur'an. Argues that the conflation of Moses and Alexander indicates early exegetes' participation in Late Antiquity, and their intention to buttress claims for Muhammad's prophethood.

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**Syriac**

The 20th century saw a surge of scholarly investigations not just into the milieu in which the Qur'an arose, but also into the possible influences on the Qur'an. In these investigations, Syriac Christianity—both its language and its practices—received increasing attention throughout the 20th century. A northern dialect of Aramaic, Syriac was a liturgical and vernacular language in both Roman- and Persian-ruled areas prior to the rise of Islam. Recognized for its intricate monastic traditions, its rich literary tradition, its familiarity with Judaism, and the seemingly prominent role of women in ecclesiastical functions, Syriac Christianity has also attracted the attention of

qur'anic scholars (e.g., Mingana 1927, Andrae 1931, and Jeffery 1938). More recently (e.g., Griffith 2007, El-Badawi 2013, and Zellentin 2013), attention has been drawn to the "Syriacisms" in the qur'anic vocabulary, as well as to similarities between the Qur'an and Syriac biblical (and extra-biblical) traditions. But, as Rippin 2008 and Gilliot 2003 demonstrate, this is not only a modern phenomenon: from the early Islamic centuries, Muslims were familiar with Syriac. As Syriac Christians (who were found in each of the three Christian sects resulting from the Christological controversies of the 5th century) spanned the eastern shore of the Mediterranean as far east as China and south to India, many came under Arab, Muslim rule. And both the Qur'an and later exegetical elaborations evidence familiarity with various aspects of this tradition. Knowledge of classical exegetes' discussions of Syriac (as noted by Rippin 2008) may enhance this scholarship, rooting it in a longer tradition than is often recognized when the classical exegetical tradition is excluded from scholarly consideration.

**Andrae, Tor. "Zuhd und Monchtum." *Le Monde Oriental* 25 (1931): 296–327.**

Known for his systematic investigation into the influence of Syrian Christianity on early Islam, Andrae investigates the influence of Syrian monasticism on the eschatological piety of the Qur'an (and Muhammad).

**El-Badawi, Emran. *The Qur'an and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*. London: Routledge, 2013.**

Adduces evidence from discussions of prophets, clergy, apocalypse, and the divine to argue that the Qur'an engages in dogmatic rearticulation of the Aramaic Gospel tradition. Multiple indices indicate the range of material surveyed.

**Gilliot, Claude. "Language and Style of the Qur'ān." In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Vol. 3. Edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 109–135. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2003.**

Overview of qur'anic and post-qur'anic discussions of the linguistic merits (or lack thereof) of the Qur'an. Includes a discussion of inter-confessional linguistic polemics that occurred under Muslim rule. Contains an extensive bibliography.

**Griffith, Sidney H. "Syriacisms in the Arabic Qur'ān: Who Were "Those Who Said 'Allāh Is Third of Three'" According to al-Mā'idah 73?" In *A Word Fitly Spoken: Studies in Mediaeval Exegesis of the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān; Presented to Haggai Ben-Shammai*. Edited by Meir M. Bar-Asher, S. Hopkins, S. Stroumsa, and B. Chiesa, 83–110. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2007.**

Discusses Q 5:73 as a qur'anic attestation to familiarity—in an Arabic-speaking milieu—with Syriac Christological typologies, in which Christ was termed the "treble" one as, for example, he had spent three days in the grave.

**Jeffery, Arthur. *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Quran*. Baroda, India: Oriental Institute, 1938.**

Overview of qur'anic terms thought to be of non-Arabic origin. Argues that exegetical difficulties may have led to the classification of a term as "foreign" (i.e., non-Arabic) in origin.

**Mingana, Alphonse. "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Koran." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 11 (1927): 77–98.**

Classic study arguing for a Syriac influence on the Qur'an. Influenced subsequent scholarship, even into the 21st century.

**Rippin, Andrew. "Syriac in the Qur'ān: Classical Muslim Theories." In *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*. Edited by Gabriel Reynolds, 249–261. London: Routledge, 2008.**

Critique of recent attempts to explain qur'anic passages and vocabulary through claims of its foreign (especially Syriac) origins. Argues that classical exegetes were familiar with Syriac as a living language, but that they did not understand the presence of Syriac terminology in the Qur'an as signifying its "Christian" origins.

**Zellentin, Holger M. *The Qur'an's Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure*. Berlin: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.**

Based on lexical similarities and parallels with qur'anic attention to alms, prayer, and fasting, including dietary and marital regulations, argues that the Didascalia is the post-biblical document closest to the Qur'an's legal culture, particularly the Didascala's presumed "Judeo-Christian" group, although no such group is attested beyond the 4th century.

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## Subsidiary Disciplines

Exegesis is not confined to the major works of **tafsir**, however. To the extent that they rely on the Qur'an, various branches of the religious sciences, and different literary genres, even policies of the Islamic state (as Cohen 1999 shows with the Covenant of Umar) may be said to engage in exegesis. And, as Sinai 2014 demonstrates with Muqatil b. Sulayman, classical exegetes were often known (with varying degrees of approbation and criticism) for their engagement with **hadith** literature (prophetic traditions) as well as theology and grammar. Further complicating the situation is that many of the classical exegetes produced other literary genres (e.g., al-Tabari, who is known as a historian as well as an exegete). From heresiography (the **milal wa-nihal** genre: "religions and sects") to theology (often, but not always, including polemics), Muslim authors relied upon their own exegesis, or employed that of others, in their various literary outputs. Concerning Christianity, Ibn Taymiyya 1984 and 'Abd Al-Jabbar 2010 demonstrate the range of Muslim critiques of Christianity; Newman 1993 has collected translations of some early examples of Christian-Muslim engagement. Thomas 2008 emphasizes the early Muslim theological interest in the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation (which are seemingly refuted by the Qur'an) over and above an interest in Christianity as a set of beliefs and practices. This emphasis may reflect Muslim awareness of Christian sectarian divisions that defied discussion of "Christianity" as a (single) set of beliefs and practices and/or the discourse in which Christians themselves were engaging (see Griffith 2012 for a comprehensive discussion of Christians under Muslim rule), the qur'anic emphasis on these doctrinal issues, exegetical methods and interests, or a combination of these factors. As Safran 2003 shows, the vast body of legal literature (**fiqh**) is particularly noteworthy for its incorporation of qur'anic exegesis, some of which may also be found in the classical works of **tafsir** (e.g., Q 5:5; 9:28).

**'Abd Al-Jabbar. *Critique of Christian Origins*. Edited, translated, and annotated by Gabriel Said Reynolds and Samir Khalil Samir. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2010.**

Fourth/tenth-century text of a notable Mutazilite scholar. English translation and annotation parallels the Arabic edition. Includes an extensive introduction contextualizing the work in early Islamic critiques of Christianity. Discussion of Paul and Constantine are of particular interest for the portrayal of figures important in Christian history.

**Cohen, Mark. "What Was the Pact of 'Umar? A Literary-Historical Study." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999): 100–157.**

Study of a number of aspects and recensions of the "Covenant (or Pact) of 'Umar," which set forth the regulations for **dhimmis** living under Muslim rule, often phrased as though written by Christians. The term for the subordination of **dhimmis** comes from the last word of Q 9:29.

**Griffith, Sidney H. *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.**

Overview of the various Christian groups who came under classical Muslim rule. Argues that the widespread use of Arabic encouraged intra-Christian doctrinal debates. Includes detailed discussion of the range of intellectual exchanges in which Christians and Muslims engaged (philosophy, theology, etc.). Excellent resource for undergraduates, graduate students, scholars, and those with a general interest in the history of Christianity, Islam, and their interactions.

**Ibn Taymiyya. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Sahih*. Translated by Thomas Michel. Delmar, NY: Caravan, 1984.**

Translation of key passages from Ibn Taymiyya's work, amounting to about a third of the whole.



**Newman, N. A., ed. *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries, 632–900 AD: Translations with Commentary. Interdisciplinary Biblical research, 1993.***

English translations of a number of key early Christian-Muslim “dialogue” texts. Of particular interest, despite being composed in Arabic, is ‘Abd al-Masih al-Kindi’s account for its highly polemical nature. Useful resource for undergraduate and graduate courses.

**Safran, Janina M. “Rules of Purity and Confessional Boundaries: Maliki Debates about the Pollution of the Christian.” *History of Religions* 42.3 (2003): 197–212.**

Discusses the effects of sociopolitical realities (e.g., Muslims living as a minority in the majority Christian population of al-Andalus) on the legal interpretations of the (im)purity of non-Muslims. Includes comparison of al-Tabari’s *tafsir* of Q 9:28 with that of the later al-Qurtubi.

**Sinai, Nicolai. “The Qur’anic Commentary of Muqātil b. Sulaymān and the Evolution of Early Tafsīr Literature.” In *Tafsīr and Islamic Intellectual History: Exploring the Boundaries of a Genre*. Edited by Andreas Görke and Johanna Pink, 113–143. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.**

Contextualizes Muqatil b. Sulayman’s *tafsir* in a general overview of early Islamic exegesis and other aspects of Islamic intellectual history. Includes an English translation of Muqatil’s commentary on Q 84. Footnotes contain extensive bibliography of scholarship on Muqatil and early Muslim exegesis. Published in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies.

**Thomas, David Richard. *Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008.**

Overview of four early Muslims’ (al-Nashi al-Akbar, al-Maturidi, al-Baqillani, and Abd al-Jabbar) theological discussions of the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation.

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## Christians as Exegetes?

Finally, although not producing *tafsir* per se, Christians who encountered Islam also tried their hand at exegesis in their own apologetic and polemic literature. John of Damascus’s *Heresy of the Ishmaelites* (presented by Sahas 1972) famously demonstrates knowledge of Qur’anic contents, including passages that proved challenging for later Islamic exegesis (Q 108). Christians who lived under Arab and Muslim rule and who came to speak Arabic demonstrate not only knowledge of the Qur’an (possibly leading to the Covenant of ‘Umar’s prohibition on Christians teaching the Qur’an to their children), but also of the Islamic exegetical tradition. Al-Khuri 2002 highlights major themes in this Christian *tafsir*. Using three Christian Arabic texts (one of which, Theodore Abu Qurra’s debate in the *majlis* of al-Ma’mun, is discussed by Griffith 1999 and translated by Nasry 2008), and building on the work of Swanson 1988, Wilde 2014 demonstrates how Arabophone Christians went beyond passages with explicit allusions to Christianity to others that they or Muslims interpreted as referencing Christianity (e.g., Q 1:6–7; 2:1; 49:14; 61:14). Much as Christians evince familiarity with Islamic tradition, Wilde argues that Muslim exegetes also demonstrate familiarity with Christian critiques. As Burman 1998 shows, Latin Christians also, eventually, became familiar with classical Muslim exegesis of the Qur’an, in contrast to much of the early Greek polemics against Islam (as discussed by Versteegh 1991). Further study of classical works of *tafsir* for evidence for the dialectical engagement of Christians and Muslims in the exegesis of the Qur’an therefore promises to be an exciting field of future research.

**al-Khuri, Bulus. *Al-Tafsīr al-masīgī lil-Qur’ān min al-qarn al-thāmin gatā l-qarn al-thānī ‘ashar Juneyye: Al-Maktaba al-Būliyya. Christianity and Islam in Dialogue and Cooperation* 18. Harisa, Lebanon: Center for Christian-Muslim Dialogue Research, 2002.**

Overview of four major themes (with subdivisions) covered by Christian Arab authors (seven Melkite, four Nestorian, and two Jacobite). The Islamic theological positions to which the Christian authors responded are taken from four classical works of *tafsir* (al-Zamakhshari, al-Tabari, Jalalayn, and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi).

**Burman, Thomas E. "Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo." *Speculum* 73.03 (1998): 703–732.**

Highlights the use of classical Muslim **tafsir** (for both Christian- and non-Christian-themed qur'anic passages) in two medieval Latin translations of the Qur'an, nuancing traditional arguments that Robert of Ketton merely paraphrased the Arabic Qur'an and used "Christian" language to translate "Islamic" terms.

**Griffith, Sidney H. "The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Islamic Period." In *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*. Edited by H. Lazarus-Yafeh, M. Cohen, S. Stroumsa, and S. Griffith, 13–65. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 1999.**

Overview of a number of works and common themes in this genre of Christian Arabic literature, which often employs the Qur'an to demonstrate the truth of Christian doctrines.

**Nasry, Wafik. *The Caliph and the Bishop: A 9th Century Muslim-Christian Debate; al-Ma'mūn and Abū Qurrah*. Beirut, Lebanon: CEDRAC, 2008.**

English translation and study of a debate attributed to Theodore Abu Qurra and a number of Muslim notables before al-Ma'mun.

**Sahas, Daniel J. *John of Damascus on Islam: The "Heresy of the Ishmaelites."* Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1972.**

Study and English translation (from the Greek) of John of Damascus's estimation of Islam (as the heresy of the Ishmaelites). Classic resource. Contextualizes the text in John's life and events in Syria in response to the Arab Muslim conquest.

**Swanson, Mark. "Beyond Prooftexting: Approaches to the Qur'ān in Some Early Arabic Christian Apologies." *Muslim World* 88 (1988): 297–319.**

Discusses various ways in which Arabophone Christians employed the Qur'an in their apologetic agenda. Argues that they went beyond selective (and disingenuous) readings of the Islamic revelation to prove their own theological points.

**Versteegh, Kees. "Greek Translations of the Qur'ān in Christian Polemics (9th Century AD)." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 141.1 (1991): 52–68.**

Contrasts John of Damascus's knowledge of an Arabic Qur'an with the later Nicetas's reliance on a literal Greek translation. Notes the lack of familiarity with Muslim exegesis. Speculates about the native language of the translator. Discusses the motivations for Christian translations of the Qur'an.

**Wilde, Clare. *Approaches to the Qur'ān in Early Christian Arabic Texts*. Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press, 2014.**

Examines the use of the Qur'an in three texts attributed to early Melkite authors. Argues that Christians prooftexted the Qur'an, employed qur'anic (and Islamic) anti-Jewish rhetoric to prove the truth of Christian doctrines, and also accused Muslims of **tahrif** (corruption) of the Qur'an.

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