

ANTIOCHIAN LEGACY FOR TODAY

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

YEAR TWO

- Antioch and the different churches of the East.
- Arab Christianity in the pre-Islamic period.
- Antioch under Islam.
- Christian-Muslim Apology.
- Contribution of the Arab Christians in the Arabic culture and civilization.
- Antioch during the great schism.
- Antioch and the Frankish Invasion.

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The Assyrian Church of the East

- After the third ecumenical Council the Nestorians gradually constituted themselves as a separate Nestorian Church. It established its center in Persia whose independence of Antioch had been announced since the Synod of Markabta (424). But the see of the Patriarchate was fixed near the Tigris and in 484 the Catholicos took the title of patriarch.
- The Liturgical language of the Church of the East is Syriac and three Anaphoras are employed, attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius and the apostles Addai and Mari (the traditional founder of the Church at Edessa).
- The church expanded through missionary activity into areas as far away as India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia. This continued even after the Mesopotamian homeland was conquered by the Muslim Arabs in the 7th century. It is believed that some of its members invited the Muslims to invade Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, and helped defeat Constantinople.
- The Patriarchate was moved to the new city of Baghdad after it became the capital in 766. By 1318 there were some 30 metropolitan sees and 200 dioceses. But during the invasions of Tamerlane in the late 14th century, these Christians were almost annihilated.

The Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch

- In the 6th century, Jacob Baradaeus, ordained many bishops and priests to carry on the non-Chalcedon tradition in the face of imperial opposition.
- This church is sometimes known as “Jacobite,” with its own liturgies. Some communities were also established outside the Empire in Persia and India.
- The conquest of the area by the Persians and later the Arabs ended Constantinople persecution, and helped them to develop their own Church. It is believed that some of its members invited the Muslims to invade Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, and helped defeat Constantinople.
- They contributed to both Syriac and Arabic scholarship, with flourishing schools of theology, philosophy, history, and science.
- At its height, the church included some twenty metropolitan sees and extending as far to the east as Afghanistan and India. There is also evidence of communities of Syriac Orthodox faithful without bishops as distant as Turkestan and Sinkiang.
- The Mongol invasions under Tamerlane in the late 14th century, during which most Syriac churches and monasteries were destroyed.

The Maronite Church of Antioch

- The Maronites trace their origin back to the late 4th century when a group of disciples gathered

- around St. Maron. They founded a monastery located between Aleppo and Antioch.
- It is believed that they accepted the “Typos” of Heraclios or ekthesis of 638 — prior to this, were Orthodox, not non-chalcedonians. They continued to uphold this doctrine even after it was officially condemned as heresy at the 6th Ecumenical Council.
 - By the 8th century, John Maron moved into Lebanon. It was also during this period that they began to elect a patriarch as their head, who took the title of Patriarch of Antioch and All the East.
 - They came into contact with the Latin Church in the 12th century, when the Latin crusader principality of Antioch was founded.
 - In 1182 they became united with Rome. Patriarch Jeremias II Al-Amshitti (1199-1230) visited Rome and attended the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

The Armenian Apostolic Church

- Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity when St. Gregory the Illuminator converted the nation at the beginning of the 4th century into Christianity.
- St. Mesrob invented the Armenian alphabet around the year 404, making it possible for the Bible to be translated into the native language of Armenia.
- They accepted the 4th Ecumenical Council, Their anathematization of Severos patriarch of Antioch

- proves that the Armenian Church was not non-chalcedonian at that time.
- In the late six century there were two Armenian catholicoi; one in Armenia and one Persia. The first was chacedonian and the other was non-chalcedonian. The Chalcedonian Catholicos John III was taken as prisoner and died in captivity. Then the Church became non-chalcedonian.
 - Negotiations between Constantinople and Armenian representatives took place in the 12th. C for reconciliation.
 - Being a buffer zone between the hostile Roman and Persian empires, the Armenian state was destroyed in the 11th century. Many then fled to Cilicia, where a new state was established. Here the Armenians had extensive contacts with the Latin Crusaders.
 - Since the end of the 5th century, their Liturgy is based upon the work of St. Gregory Nazianzen and St. Basil. The Liturgy afterwards was developed with the inclusion of some Chalcedonian elements during the VIII-X and XIII centuries, bearing the name of St. John Chrysostom.

Iberia (later known as Georgia)

- It was established in the late 3rd or earls 4th century by a woman missionary — Saint Nina. This Church was in close spiritual and political relations with the Church in Armenia but was never dependent upon it: Missionary areas had not been listed when jurisdictional rights of the

Sees were defined (2nd Ecumenical Council, canon 2).

- The Church of Iberia was under the canonical jurisdiction of the See of Antioch. 12 bishoprics were under Antiochian jurisdiction while western Iberia came later under the jurisdiction of Constantinople.
- According to Theodore Balsamon the 12th century canonist and patriarch of Antioch, autocephaly was granted to the Iberian Church.
- The patriarch of Antioch, however, had to confirm the election. All the of the 12, 13

The Organization of Antioch in the pre-islamic period

- The Antiochian Patriarchate was composed of 12 metropolitan sees and more than 140 bishops were under its jurisdiction,
- Syria I Antioch 9 bishoprics
- Phoenicia I . Tyre 12
- Phoenicia II Damascus 13
- Arabia Bostra 14
- Cilicia I Tarsus 7
- Cilicia II Anazarbos 9
- Syria II Apamea 7
- Osrhoene Edessa 12
- Euphratisia Mabug 13
- Mesopotamia Amida 13
- Isauria Seleucia 29

ARABIC SPEAKING CHRISTIANS

- By this term we mean the Christians in the Arab peninsula in the pre-Islamic period, and the Arabized Christians in the Islamic period.
- It is important to mention here that, in order to fully understand and appreciate the contribution of the Arabic speaking Christians to Christian theology and heritage as well as to Arab civilization, we will have to outline the story of those Christians in both the pre-Islamic as well as the Islamic periods.

The Christian Arab heritage

- In using this expression, we refer to the heritage of the Arabic-speaking Christians, so as to cover all theological, philosophical and cultural works produced by them.
- Their life and activities since pre—Islamic times until the arrival of the Franks, will be faced with the following facts:
 - 1. That what is known today as the Arab world and which is an important part of the Muslim world was before Islam almost a Christian world.
 - 2. That after the spread of Islam in what became the Arab world, and during the first five or six centuries of the Islamic empire-or during the most glorious period of that empire — the society, which is usually described as a Muslim society, was in reality an essentially Christian—Muslim society, with the Christians dominating

in number and contributing to the Arabic civilization.

Contributions of Christians in the Arab culture

- The Christians under Muslim rule were the ones who insured the existence and the maintenance of what we may call “the infrastructure” of social life. In fact, three main pillars of that infrastructure were built by them.
- a) Crafts, trades and professions were almost exclusively in their hands for a long period of time.
- b) They were co-builders of Arabic civilization and philosophy and Christian-Muslim dialogue.
- c) In administration, they continued for a long time to play a role in consulting the Arabic leaders.
- They have participated in the rise & formation of the following disciplines:
 - a) Arabic writing,
 - b) Historiography
 - c) Jurisprudence.
 - e) Kalam or theology/ theological dialogue and Christian apology.
 - f) Philosophy
 - g) Sciences, mainly medicine
 - h) Arts, mainly architecture and mosaic.

Views of the historians towards Arabic-speaking Christians

- Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret described the progress of Christianity among the Arabs in

the pre-Islamic period. It is, however, Theodoret who has the most informative passages on the Arabs.

- 1. The passage on the Arab Abbas, who became the hegoumenos of the monastery of Teleda is mentioned by Theodert.
- 2. In his work, "The Cure of Pagan Maladies," Theodoret grants the Arabs "an intelligence, lively and penetrating . . . and a judgment capable of discerning truth and refuting falsehood."

The idea of Theodoret is supported by the two ecumenical councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, in 431 and 451 respectively. The number of Arab bishops who participated in the Synods is remarkable. Especially prominent in this expression was Petrus I, the bishop of the Palestinian Parembole (camps), who participated at Ephesus and was sent as one of the delegates to negotiate with Nestorius.

- Jerome and Augustine characterized them as unredeemed Ishamelites.
- Jerome lived in the desert of Chalcis and later at Bethlehem. Both were subject to Saracen raids.
- Rufinus, however, spoke in complimentary terms of the Arabs in his Ecclesiastical History.

Arab Christianity In the Pre-Islamic Period

Immediately upon the appearance of Islam, Christianity had already been the predominant religion in all the regions which are called today the Arab world.

This description of the Christian extension in the pre-Islamic era will remain incomplete, if we do not take into consideration very important historical facts, which was closely connected with the rise of Islam in the bosom of this Christian world. This led to the creation of a special type of Christianity.

A special type of Christianity

- The importance of this historical fact lies in the prevalence of a special type of Christianity in some parts of the Arabian peninsula.
- Mainly as a result of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the escape of the Jews and of the newly converted Judeo-Christians beyond the East-Western border of the Roman Empire.

Judeo-Christians

- Some Christians conformed to the religious doctrines and rites of the Jews of that age, to affect the manners and customs of the Jews. There were three possible groups:
- **First**, Jews who acknowledged Christ as a prophet only, and thus form a separate group half-way between the Jews and Christians.
- **Second**, Christians who were perfectly Orthodox, but remained attached to certain Jewish ways of life.,
- **Third**, When obliged to quit Jerusalem with the rest of the Jews, some Jewish Christians may have joined the Ebionites, others were assimilated by Hellenistic communities.

The Jewish Christians were called Nazarenes

- They received the title based on the interpretation of certain O.T. passages (e.g. Isa. 11:1) as referring to the Messiah. The Nazarenes were distinct from the Ebionites and prior to them.
- The sect seems to have been basically trinitarian. They accepted the virgin birth and affirmed the deity of Jesus.
- They also seem to have had an embryonic doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
- They did not reject the apostleship of Paul. They recognized his commission from God to preach to the gentiles
- The Nazarenes continued to observe certain aspects of Mosaic Law, including circumcision and the Sabbath.
- They kept up their knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic. They read the Old Testament and at least one gospel in Hebrew.
- They rejected halakah (the body of law regulating all aspects of life) as it was developing in rabbinic Judaism.
- Nazarenes may have conducted an active program of evangelism

The influence of the Christological debate on the Arabs

- In the Christological debate of that period the heretical factors exerted influence on Christianity in the Arabian peninsula, partly because they lived in remote areas, the authority of the Church and the genuine pattern of Christian theology was received differently among some Arab tribes. Because the

institutional Church was unable to follow all the tribes in meanderings, the most effective force in their life became the monks.

- Thus, the predominant theology accepted among some Arab tribes was influenced by all these heretical trends. With this kind of Christianity the Islamic religion had its interaction, through which the image of Christianity was portrayed in the eyes of the Islamic leader.

Christianity in South Arabia during the pre-Islamic era

- What we mean by the term South Arabia is the southern section of the Arabian Peninsula, which comprises Arabia Felix i.e., Yemen and the seaboard regions contiguous to it.
- The area was the site of ancient civilization, the kingdom of Saba (or Sheba) whose famous queen had visited Solomon of Jerusalem (1 Kings 10:1-13)
- In this region the Himayrites founded what is called " the Himayrites' kingdom," which held sovereignty from the year 115 A.D. to approximately 570 A.D.

Judaism in South Arabia

- The Jews started entering into this region from the end of the first Christian century, due to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor Titus in 70 A.D., and the dispersion of the Jews over all the world.

- Afterwards, it seemed that they grew numerous in number, to an extent that they exerted a great influence on the Himyarites' kingdom, the fact that led to judaize many South Arabians, and to judaize a number of Himayrites' Kings, in such a manner that South Arabia became, as it is assumed by many historians, one of the principal centers of Judaism in the world.

Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia

- The history of Christianity in the Arab South is connected with the history of Christianity in Ethiopia (Abyssinia); Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia by saints Frumentius and Edesius of Tyre. Frumentius gained the confidence of the Emperor of Aksum and converted his son, who later became Emperor Ezana. Ezana later introduced Christianity as the state religion around the year 330. Frumentius was ordained a bishop by St. Athanasius.
- In the year 340 the Ethiopians occupied South Arabia for a period of thirty years, i.e., until the year 370; its invasion is known in history as "the first Ethiopian occupation of south Arabia."

Christian mission in South Arabia

- It is uncertain whether the Ethiopian Negus, who occupied South Arabia, was Christian at that time; it is said that his name was Al-Amida. For this reason, nothing induces us to say that the motive of invasion was religious, but rather economical and political.

- The ***Negus Azana***, however, who succeeded him, was Christian; in 350 Azana declared Christianity to be an official religion of his Empire. It is assumed that the Christian mission started in the occupied land of South Arabia in the time of Azana, or probably in the time of his predecessor Al-Amida, at the hand of some Ethiopian missionaries.

Syriac missionaries to South Arabia

It is also said that Syriac missionaries were traveling at that time over South Arabia preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The letter of Jacob of Sarug (or more properly Serugh) to the Christians of Najran comes to affirm the Syrian (or Syriac) influence on this region, since this letter was written in the Syriac language.

Theophilus Indus

- ***Theophilus Indus*** the monk had been sent by the pro-Arian emperor Constantius as an envoy to the Himyarites' king. According to Philostorgius, he endeavored to convert the king of the Himyarites, whose name was probably Melki-Kerib, but he was unsuccessful, due to strong Jewish resistance. Nevertheless, he was allowed by the Himyarites' king to build three Churches:
 - - In Zafar, the capital of the Himyarites' kingdom, we had the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, the Church of Theotokos and the Church of the Holy Apostles.
 - - In Najran, the fortress of Christianity and the capital of martyrs, the Cathedral of the

Life-giving Resurrection of Christ, the Church of the Holy Theotokos and the Church of the Holy Martyrs.

- - In Qana, the principal haven of Yemen on the Indian ocean, we had the Church of Ascension, the Church of Saint John the Forerunner and the Church of Saint Thomas the apostle.
- Certainly, there were other cities which had been ornamented by newly erected or repaired churches, even though it is difficult to determine either the names of these Churches or their locations.

The conversion of the Himyarites' king

- South Arabia became a focal point to the emperor of Constantinople and a fortress to his empire. By it the religion of The Himyarites' king became a Christian one. Since the people used to follow the religion of their kings, the existence of the first Christian empire in South Arabia emerged mainly as a consequence of the conversion of the emperor.

Arianism in South Arabia

Inasmuch as Theophilus Indus was an Arian Christian, according to the Arian historian Philostorgius, Modern scholars pretend that this kind of Christianity, which was introduced into South Arabia, was influenced by Arianism.

Tritheists and Marionites

- The Trinitarian controversies had begotten a sect of Tritheists, led by a philosopher named John Philoponus of Alexandria.
- The worship of the Virgin Mary had also given rise to a religious controversy between two sects: One holds that the Virgin was not immaculate, and the other raises her to the position of a goddess.

Revival of Judaism

- This existence of Christianity did not persist for a long time, because the former Himyarites' dynasty recaptured the throne following the chase of the Ethiopians. According to the Arab sources, the Himyarites' king *Yarim Yahab Ibin Shmir Yarash* (270-310) who was persecuted by the Ethiopians during their invasion fled with his children to Yathrib, the center of Judaism in South Arabia, the fact which pointed out to the deep attachment between the Jews of Yathrib and the Jews of South Arabia.
- After becoming Jewish, Malki Kareb, one of Yarim's sons, and his son Abou Kareb Assad, liberated South Arabia from the Ethiopians, and started to preach Judaism.

The fall of Najran

- The first quarter of the sixth century is related to the Himyarites' king ***The-Nowas***.
- Nowas, after his revolution against the Ethiopians and his pursuit to them, ran against the Christians, for he presumed that there was a

religious junction between the Ethiopians and Christians.

- As a result he organized a military attack against their fortress in **Najran**. Recognizing that they were well protected by their fortifications, he used a plot against them by promising them safety and security in place of surrender. Immediately upon his entrance into the city peacefully, however, he violated his treaty, giving them a choice between apostasy and death. Just as soon as they chose death, he dug ditches and set fire in them throwing the Christians in their flames.

The Surah of the Elephant

- This event is mentioned in the Koran in the surah of the Elephant:
- In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
- **[1]** Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant?
• ألم تر كيف فعل ربك بأصحاب الفيل؟
- **[2]** Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray?
• ألم يجعل كيدهم في تضليلٍ
- **[3]** And He sent against them flights of Birds,
• وأرسل عليهم طيرا أبابيل
- **[4]** Striking them with stones of baked clay.
• ترميهم بحجارة من سجيلٍ
- **[5]** Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up.
• فجعلهم كعصف مأكول

Harith and Ruhayma

- Many of them chose Christianity and were thus killed, including the chief of the city, **al-Harith ibn-Ka'b**, known to the Greek speaking world as **Arethas**, and also **Ruhayma/Ruhm**, the leading woman in Najran.

The speeches of the two chief martyrs

- The Syriac sources have preserved the actual speeches of the two chief martyrs, and it was believed that these two speeches have been "retouched" by hagiographers.

celebration of the Feast Day On the 24th of October

- Najran became a city of martyrs, a true martyropolis. In it was built the famous martyrion, called **Ka'bat Najrān**. This city became a pilgrimage center for the Peninsula Arabs.

The Ethiopians defeated Yūsuf

- The Ethiopians defeated the Himyarites, avenged the martyrdoms of the Christians of South Arabia, and made of it an Ethiopian dependency.
- This led to the evangelization of South Arabia, and the country remained Christian until the advent of Islam.

The role of New Rome in the plan of religious renaissance

- The role of New Rome was evident in delegating the bishop Theophilus to the Himyarites' king, who converted to Christianity in the wake of this delegation. We have to consider the following facts:
 - 1- The commitment of this empire to defend and protect Christianity.
 - 2-The fight between New Rome and Persian to dominate the East.
 - 3-The political and economical importance of Ethiopia and South Arabia.
 - All these considerations go along with the policy of New Rome to undertake its religious mission and to spread its political sway and to secure the way to India.
 - For the purpose of resisting this policy the Persian empire pursued the aim of driving Christianity away from South Arabia and weakening the power of New Rome in it by means of strengthening of the anti-Christian religions and of anti-New Rome movements.

The Arab Foederati

- Some Arab tribes were allied with Constantinople, others with Persia. They were used as buffer zones to protect the borders.
- By this system Christians converted into militant groups as they were supporting the two major Empires of that period: Constantinople and Persia.

Hira on the Euphrates

- It was the capital of the **Lakhmid** dynasty. Although they converted to Christianity officially only towards A.D. 590, their city had been for a center of Arab Christianity before the rise of Islam.
- Hira was full of churches and monasteries, and it was hence that the Christian mission reached out to the Arabs of the Persian Gulf and Eastern Arabia.

Role of the Lakhmid Tribe

- Monitoring the Arab tribes which had a confederacy with the Persian Empire such as the tribe of Lakhmids, driving back their military expedition and preventing them to cross the frontier.
- Military sharing with the troops of Constantinople in fighting the Persian troops.

Pro-Constantinople = Tanukhids (4C), Salihids (5C), Ghassanids (6-7C)

The Emirate of the Tanukhids on the Syrian border. Beginning from the fourth century an Arabian Christian buffer zone emerges on the Syrian border toward the Arabian peninsula; it was allied with Constantinople.

Tanukhids

- 1- The Tanukhids were known by their mastery of reading and writing in the Arabic language.
- 2- They developed an early Arabic poetry.

- 3- The Arabic formula of the Nicene creed was put into circulation.
- 4- The Namra inscription was written on the tomb of a king inside the church.
- They probably used the Arabic liturgy, without excluding the possibility of using Syriac as well.

Minor Arabic Tribes

- 1- The subdivision of Tanukhids and Lakhmids tribes are the following tribes:
 - - Judam and Amila. Banu-al-Qayn. Balqayn. Banu-Bali, Banu- Salih Banu-Thamud. Banu-Kalb. There was a great number of Arabs, who were living within the limits of the empire as citizens in three great centers :
 - -Elusa : the capital of Palestina III.
 - -Rhaithou : the center of an eremitic community.,
 - -Pharan : A city which converted to Christianity in the fourth century under the influence of Rhaithou.

The Ghassanid Arabs

- They were allies of Constantinople in the sixth century. They were situated in the Jawlan, and Houran. The Ghassanids, were zealous Christians who promoted the spread of that faith both in Bilad al-Sham and in the Arabian Desert.

Adoption of Christianity

- First; They adopted Christianity and renounced paganism.
- Second; Their Churches were numerous.
- Third; They should have known a great number of clergy of Arab clergy, whose mother tongue was Arabic. It is most likely that the Arabic language has been used in their Churches along with the Syriac and Greek languages
- Fourth; They played a great role in different synods.

Contributions of Arab Christians in the Pre-Islamic period

- Christianity introduced new human types unknown to the pagan Arabs.
- The priesthood created a new form of spiritual authority and discipline to which they had not been accustomed.

They were represented in the ecumenical and local synods

- **Pamphilus** the first bishop of nomad Arabs, whose name appears in the list of the first ecumenical council.
- **Moses** was the most important bishops among the Arabs.
- They built churches and monasteries despite the strenuous conditions of their life in the desert. Church history preserves to us the names of some churches which have been built, but cease to exist in our days.

The literary life

Christianity influenced the literary life of the Arabs in the fifth century as it had done in the fourth.

Monasticism

- The most potent influence of Christianity on the Arabs was the monastic life.

Buffer Zone

- For centuries the Arab tribes had been important as a buffer between New Rome and the Persians, but they had generally been outside the civilized circles of both powers.

Christians and Arabic civilization

- Christians played an important role in the formation of Arabic civilization in the pre-Islamic period, particularly with regard to:
 - the spread of writing.
 - of medical knowledge.
 - as transmitters of Greco (Roman)-Syriac tradition

Monasticism

- The most potent influence of Christianity on the Arabs was the monastic life. The monk who renounced the world and came to live in what the Arabs considered their natural homeland, the desert, especially appealed to the Arabs and was the object of much veneration.

The Translation of the bible

The Christian mission to the Arabs, especially if it entailed the translation of some books of the Bible such as the Pentateuch, must have acquainted the Arabs with the biblical concept of their descent from Ishmael.

Arabic Bible

The two German scholars Anton Baumstark and George Graf, and Alfred Guillaume, 'The Version of the Gospels Used in Medina circa 700 AD.', in: *Al-Andalus* 15 (1950), pp. 289—296; Arthur Voobus, *Early Versions of the New Testament. Manuscript Studies*, Stockholm 1954, pp. 274—276. and C. Rabin claim that the Gospel was translated into Arabic in the pre-Islamic period

Arabic liturgy

- The rise of a simple Arabic liturgy in the fourth century.
- There were liturgical odes composed to celebrate the victories of Mawia the Arabic queen who fought against the Emperor Valens.

Arabic-speaking episcopate

- The rise of an Arab church in the fourth century has to be related to an Arabic-speaking episcopate.
- There were also Arab monastic center of Rhaithou and the two episcopal sees of Elusa and Pharan.

Conclusion

- An Arabic-speaking church did come into existence in the fourth century, forming one component within the Patriarchate of Antioch.
- Their Christianization represents a spiritualization of their ethos that led to a new identity. It gave rise to the monk, the martyr, and the saint. All the old secular ideals such as courage, hospitality, and devotion were baptized.
- The Christianization of the Arabs was tarnished by the rise of many heresies.