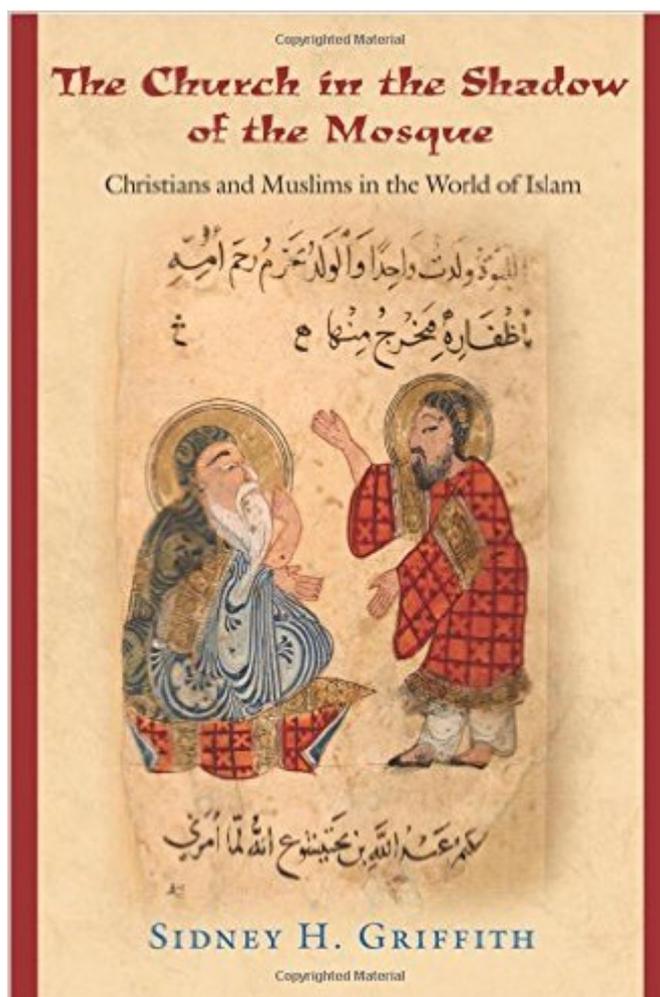


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The Church In The Shadow Of The Mosque: Christians And Muslims In The World Of Islam



Synopsis

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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been studying Syriac with Sidney Griffith for two years now. I will be getting into another specialty of his this coming year: Christian-Muslim relations in the early centuries of Islam. That is why I decided to read this book. As it happens, there was more hidden treasure in this subject than I had suspected. Christians did not just live silently under Muslim domination; they interacted with Muslims at the highest levels. There was a very fruitful mutual exchange of ideas for several

centuries. Each community helped shape the way in which the other expressed itself, and even the topics each chose to address. In view of the rancorous relations currently prevailing between certain segments of the Muslim and Christian/Western communities, both sides would benefit from doing as Dr. Griffith suggests toward the end of this book and re-examining the records of these interactions. Many of them show that it is possible for Muslims and Christians to have intelligent conversations about theological matters without the constant bitterness and recriminations that now poison the atmosphere between the two sides.

Griffith's excellent introduction to the world of those Christian Churches--namely, the Nestorian, Jacobite, and Melkite Churches--that grew into their mature form after the Arab invasions of the 7th century, is an outstanding introduction to a topic that needs more attention. Moreover, it is the only introductory work of its kind in English, and so will of necessity be the starting point for anyone wishing to learn more about how Christians in the Arabic speaking world dealt with Islam. And contrary to what some reviewers have inexplicably written on here and other places, the book is very easy to read, and provides a very fine introduction to a fascinating topic. It gives a window into a particular brand of Christianity (Arabic speaking) which most people who consider themselves Christians in the west know nothing about. Many assume, wrongly, that Arabic is only the language of Islam exclusively, and Griffith's book shows how Christians under Muslim rule not only appropriated Arabic in order to counter Muslim apologists in order to defend their faith, but even the language of the Qur'an itself. Given the state of Muslim-Christian relations in the world today, as well as the emphasis on "enculturation" in many ecumenical circles, Griffith's book is a must read for anyone wishing to consider such topics. Highly recommended.

Dr. Sidney Griffith successfully depicts how the eastern church interacted with Islamic counterparts, sometimes reasonably, at other times strugglingly. This book is invaluable in research for Muslim - Christian relations during the early Islamic age, and highly recommended.

It is written in clear easy to understand layman language and gives insight in the history of the Church in its dealings with the rise of Islam to today. Excellent read.

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