The Rowman & Littlefield Handbook of Christianity in the Middle East

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Recently at the Anglican Cathedral of the Redeemer, here in Madrid, I
gave a talk on the Anglican Communion. After summarizing the his-
torical background of the Communion, I talked about its present orga-
nization as a community of forty provinces scattered around the world. I pointed out
that as the third-largest communion in the world (after the Catholics and the Ortho-
dox), we have some presence in nearly every country. There were a few exceptions:
a handful of countries in Saharan Africa, China, Afghanistan, and Saudi Arabia. The
bishop of Cyprus and the Gulf States has oversight over Iraq, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman,
Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The bishop of Egypt, North Africa, and
the Horn of Africa has oversight over Egypt and Somalia. The Anglican bishop in
Jerusalem oversees Jordan. As far as the official map of the Communion goes, though,
Saudi Arabia is a blank space.

This single example from one Christian tradition is indeed the norm. Poring through
tables of contents and indices of books on Christianity in the Middle East or Arab Chris-
tianity yields little to nothing. Consider the substantial 1990 volume Conversion and
Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands, Eighth to Eighteenth Centu-
ries. This twenty-six-chapter book has material from Spain, the Maghreb, Iraq, Egypt,
Lebanon, Armenia, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, but not a single chapter regarding
Christianity in the Arabian Peninsula itself.¹

Or consider Antonie Wessels’s 1995 Arab and Christian? Christians in the Middle East.
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia appears nine times in the index, and we learn that while
there used to be some Christians there, “[u]nder Muhammad’s successors the Jews and
the Christians disappeared from central Arabia. […]” To this very day, non-Muslims
[sic] (Arab and non-Arab) may not enter the cities of Mecca and Medina. In present-
day Saudi Arabia churches are not allowed. Christian worship services are not openly
admitted and priests and pastors are not allowed into the country in any official capac-
ity.”² The other references are to political realities like the Gulf War. There is no hint of
Saudi Christians at all.
Or consider Kenneth Cragg’s rightly celebrated *The Arab Christian: A History in the Middle East.* The word Saudi appears only twice—once in reference to nationalism and again in relation to a conference related to the Lebanese peace process that was hosted there. Again, there is no hint of Saudi Christians at all.

Examples could be multiplied, but the point is that a survey of the literature on Arab Christians and Christianity in the Middle East would seem to indicate that after, say, 1000 CE, there were no Christians in what is today Saudi Arabia, and whatever Christians are there today are foreigners and apparently without clergy.

This chapter argues that Christianity has something of a cloaked history in that part of Arabia that is today under the sovereignty of the House of Saud. First, we will examine what little is known of the arrival of Christianity to the region, and then we will look at what is by far the best-known example of ancient Christianity there—Najran. We will then examine Christianity at the birth of Islam and the subsequent centuries when there were supposedly no Christians present. Finally, we will look at Christianity in contemporary Saudi Arabia, not only among the large foreign population but also among the small but growing number of Saudis who have chosen to convert to Christianity.

**CHRISTIANITY IN ARABIA PRIOR TO THE BIRTH OF ISLAM**

Arabia is far larger than what is today the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is our region of interest. The word *Arabia* appears twice in the New Testament, both times in Galatians. The first instance is when Paul, in an unusually lengthy autobiographical section, relates that after his vision of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, he did not go to Jerusalem, where the apostles were. “but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.” It is, however, extremely unlikely that Paul went to what is today Saudi Arabia, with southern Syria or the Transjordan being the likely candidates. The second mention of Arabia is likewise in Galatians, when Paul notes that Mount Sinai is located there. In Acts 2, we read that at the birth of the Christian Church at Pentecost “Arabs” were present, but this likely refers to Arabized Jews who were nomadic or Jews and proselytes from Arabia Petrea, not the deserts of Arabia Felix.

In the histories of the early church, we find mentions of “Arab bishops” or “bishops of Arabs.” Lists of the bishops present at the Council of Nicaea refer to Arab bishops. While it is possible that some of the Arabs mentioned were in our area of interest, it does not seem probable. Of the two famous Arab Christian tribes, neither had their base in what is today Saudi Arabia:

The Lakhmids, with their centre at Hira near the southern Euphrates, were influenced by Christianity as early as the mid-fourth century, though since their allegiance was to the Persians their ruling house never followed the majority of the people into allegiance to the Church of the East. Ironically, under their pagan rule Hira became a town of churches and monasteries, and the home of well-known Christian poets.
The Ghassanids had their main centre at Jabiya in the Byzantine province of Arabia, and then a later establishment at the important nomad shrine of St Sergius (martyred under Diocletian) further north near the Euphrates at Sergiopolis (Rusafa), where their ruler al-Mundhir built an impressive audience hall in the later sixth century. They were staunch followers of Miaphysite teachings.\textsuperscript{8}

Hira is in present-day Iraq, while Jabiya is in present-day Syria near the Golan. All of this to say that while there are mentions of Arab Christians and bishops of Arabs, there is little evidence that an established Christian community was present in what is today Saudi Arabia until the birth of a church in Najran.

By far the best-known Christian center in what is today Saudi Arabia during the Patristic era was that of Najran. The ruins of ancient Najran are located near the southern border of Yemen and are no longer inhabited, though there is a modern city of the same name not far away.

Historically, Najran City was “the last station on the Yaman in the caravan route from the Yaman to Yamama and thence to Bahrain and Iraq. The Iraqi connection led to the introduction of monophysite Christianity into Najran, later enforced by monophysites who fled from the Byzantine empire.”\textsuperscript{9} Christianity was introduced into Najran in the mid-fifth century with the person of Hannan (or Hayyan), the first Najranite Christian. First documented conversions to Christianity took place ca. 450.\textsuperscript{10} There were various cycles of abuse against Christians before the great massacre: Azqir, a priest of Najran, was decapitated between 470–475; Paul I, bishop of Najran, was stoned between 490–500; Bishop Thomas denounced anti-Christian persecution.\textsuperscript{11} A great massacre of Aksumite Christians took place in November of 523 because the “Christians [were] suspected of having links with Byzantium.”\textsuperscript{12} King Yusuf sponsored the massacre of roughly two hundred Christian men and one hundred Christian women.

This massacre caused Emperor Justinian to request through the patriarch of Alexandria that the king of Aksum launch a military expedition against Himyar, the kingdom wherein Najran was located. The effort was successful, and the Aksumites exercised authority over the city afterward. A martyrium—a Christian shrine or church commemorating local martyrs and their relics—was built in Najran, and it became a popular center of pilgrimage. The Christianity of Najran was what we would today call Oriental Orthodox or, as it is called in much of the historical literature, Monophysite.

Worth noting is the fact that the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is not enthused to have this center of ancient Christianity in their lands. A 2010 book titled *Pathways of Arabia: Archeological Treasures of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*\textsuperscript{13} highlights the archeological riches of the country, and there are extensive photographs from Najran. However, there is not a single mention of Christianity—or Judaism, for that matter—in Najran. Among scores of photos of pottery and other archaelogical artifacts there is not a single Christian religious item. The book was jointly published with the Ministry of Tourism of the Kingdom.

But Najran was not the only ancient Christian community we know of. In 1986, the remains of a church dating back to the fourth century were found near Jubail, on the east coast of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{14} The Ministry of Antiquities was notified; a fence was built around the property, and to date no archeological excavation has been carried out.
reinforcing the sense that the Kingdom has little interest in learning about its pre-Islamic history. Indeed, in traditional Islamic historiography the entire period before the advent of Islam is called al jahiliya, meaning “the [time of] ignorance.” Beyond the fact that this community likely belonged to the Assyrian Church of the East, because of the prohibition on archeological research we can say almost nothing else. There are also indications of bishoprics and monasteries along the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula.\textsuperscript{15}

Up to this point, we have found Christian communities along the coasts and Najran, which is near the southern border with Yemen. Were there Christians beyond these trade cities? If there were, we have no reliable knowledge of them. Barring a change in the political context regarding archeological excavations of non-Islamic sites, it is not likely we ever will.

\section*{AT THE BIRTH OF ISLAM}

Presently the study of Islamic origins is in a state of upheaval. Many of the first scholars of the Orient more or less took for granted the core of Islamic historiography, rooted as much of it is in the collections of “authentic” or sahih hadiths, the Prophet’s biography, and other sources. But the last decades—and years, indeed—have seen much of this historiography called into question.\textsuperscript{16}

Some have revisited the question of whether Muhammad was a historical person at all;\textsuperscript{17} others have pointed out that there is no evidence for the traditional view that what we today call Mecca during the seventh century was an important commercial city, so Islam must have originated somewhere else.\textsuperscript{18} Still others have pointed out many of the earliest mosques have Petra, in Jordan, as their qibla—not Mecca.\textsuperscript{19} Attention has been called to the lack of early biographical material regarding Muhammad;\textsuperscript{20} questions have been asked regarding the fact that Muhammad’s name is almost entirely absent from the Qur’an in comparison to other prophetic figures like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Still others have pointed out that some of the more rarified grammatical constructs in the Qur’an make sense when read as a type of Syro-Aramaic, thus casting doubt on the Qur’an’s claim that it contains “clear Arabic.”\textsuperscript{21} Finally, an ancient text with portions of the Qur’an surfaced at Birmingham University in 2015. At first glance, the antiquity of the text seemed to bolster the orthodox historiography, but carbon testing revealed that the materials may be too old, implying that the Qur’an contains at least some recycled or repurposed pre-Islamic verse.\textsuperscript{22}

Finally, the traditional doctrine that the Qur’anic text we have today is the same one produced by Muhammad has also been called into question, as detailed investigations of the earliest existing manuscripts reveal thousands of additions and adjustments—many quite minor but some that might imply substantial doctrinal questions.\textsuperscript{23}

It is possible that scholars defending the orthodox, Islamic historiography will emerge unscathed. But at the end of the day, what affects the quotidian life and religious fabric of the Middle East are not the scholarly articles published in journals or papers discussed at symposia. What matters is what the people believe to be true. So let us consider the previous paragraphs as a preface. We will now
explore the traditional, orthodox event of Muhammad’s seminal meeting with the Christian delegation from Najran—with the knowledge that it is important because people believe it is true, though it may well not be. Fred Farrokh provides a helpful synopsis:

As Muhammad and the Muslims gained political hegemony over Arabia, various tribes came to seek terms of peace with the Prophet of Islam. The town of Najran sent a Christian delegation to seek such a peace agreement. The Najranis, who were accompanied by their bishop, spent three days in theological discourse with Muhammad in Medina. This episode is referred to in Sura 3 (al-Imran). […]

The Najrani Christians offered to pledge their political allegiance to Muhammad if he would embrace their belief in the divinity of Jesus. This Sura recounts their testimony to the Annunciation (3:42–46), the Virgin Birth (3:47), Jesus’s miracles (3:49, including some apocryphal miracles).24

The Sura then continues to present a vision of the person of Jesus that breaks from the Christian understanding. Jesus goes on to say that he is not Lord and should not be worshipped (3:51), and then his disciples state that they, too, are Muslims (3:52). Later in the Sura we read that Allah does not love those who do wrong (3:57), which is another departure from the Christian understanding that God loves all people, even those who do evil (cf. Ephesians 2:4, 5; Romans 5:10). The theologies represented here are dissonant. What, then, is the response of Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets and the ideal man?

Because of this theological impasse, Muhammad insisted on a mutual cursing ceremony with these Najrani Christians. Though the Najranis declined to curse Muhammad, Muhammad gathered his daughter Fatima, his son-in-law Ali, and his two grandsons under his cloak, and cursed the Najranis. The incident is known in Islamic history as “The Cursing” (al-Mubahala) with Muhammad’s indictment stated in Sura 3:61: “May God’s curse be upon those who lie!” […] Thus, Muhammad’s single notable encounter with a Christian community ended with him cursing that community because of their biblical beliefs regarding the Lord Jesus Christ.25

It is helpful here to recall that in Islamic jurisprudence and theology every act of Muhammad is in fact a divine revelation. He is the ideal human being, and his life is the template for success and happiness. This conviction—that Muhammad’s life is to be a template for imitation—is in fact the origin of the word: “The noun sunna means habitual practice, customary procedure or action, norm, or usage sanctioned by tradition.”26 The word sunna is, in turn, the origin of our adjective Sunni, as in Sunni Islam. That Muhammad’s sunna is foundational for Islamic ethics and jurisprudence means that one cannot simply discard this event as something that fit a certain context but has no relevance today.

This is all the truer in a kingdom like Saudi Arabia, where the dynasty has wed itself to a particularly conservative vision of reformed Islam, but more on that subject later.
What was the outcome for the Christians indigenous to the region in question? As we have seen, Najran itself is on the border of the present-day country. There is archeological evidence of continuing Christian communities in Najran for some centuries after the beginning of the Islamic calendar in 622. Remains of Christian churches have also been found in nearby Kuwait and the UAE, as well as the east coast of Arabia. So what was the fate of the Christians of Najran? Bernard Lewis answers: “The classical Arabic historians tell us that in [...] the Caliph Umar decreed that Jews and Christians should be removed from Arabia to fulfill an injunction Muhammad uttered on his deathbed: ‘Let there not be two religions in Arabia.’ The people in question were the Jews of the oasis of Khaybar in the north and the Christians of Najran in the south.”

The exiles settled in Syria and southern Iraq. Nor was their evacuation necessarily sudden or rapid as we hear of Muslim reports that there were at least some Christians with a bishop in Najran as late as the tenth century. But regardless of the pace of the resettlement, it was ultimately successful and, given its source, irreversible. Since then we know of no permanent, indigenous Christian population until our own contemporary context and the birth of a church of converts.

INVISIBLE CHRISTIANS: SLAVES, RENEGADES, SHIPWRECKS, AND MESSENGERS

But there were still Christians in the region. During the late Middle Ages and the early modern period, Christianity in Saudi Arabia was mostly characterized by slaves and concubines (whose stories have not been preserved for us) and European explorers. Some claim to have visited the holy city of Mecca. While some accounts do appear authentic, others appear spurious. Von Harff, traveling at the end of the sixteenth century, claims to have seen some Syriac and Ethiopic villages in Arabia, but Beckingham regards these reports with suspicion since Von Harff’s description of Mecca is so inaccurate.

In any case, “[n]early all the Europeans known to have penetrated Arabia during this period can be classified as being renegades, invaders, messengers in disguise taking important news to Europe, survivors from shipwreck, or captives. There were many renegades, but their adventures cannot be said to belong to the history of exploration. As for invaders, no Portuguese army ever tried to go far into Arabia.”

The route from Portugal to India by sea was arduous and slow. We hear reports of Christians and Jews used as overland messengers passing through Arabia, sometimes in disguise. There were also Portuguese prisoners taken by Arabs and Turks; in accordance with the sharia, these would be enslaved. There must have been hundreds of these Christian slaves living in the region over the centuries, but, as is so often the case with slaves, their stories were not passed on.

One fascinating exception is the story of Gregorio da Quadra, who lived in the early sixteenth century. He became a possession of a king in southern Arabia and, having feigned conversion to Islam, later traveled with his owner to Medina, where he saw the Prophet’s grave. It is only because he was later able to return to Europe that his story survives.
Such are the precious few hints that exist regarding the Christians of Saudi Arabia approaching the twentieth century. What would their lived religion have looked like? Without access to the Bible, Christian congregations, or clergy to administer sacraments, it would likely have consisted of whatever prayers, hymns, biblical passages, or creeds the person had memorized prior to becoming the property of the Muslim owner.

What is clear, though, is that they existed, and that the region always had some Christian presence, though eventually without the visible apparatus of church buildings and clergy.

THE BIRTH OF THE KINGDOM

The Ottoman era in Arabia lasted from 1517 to 1918. The dynasty of Saud ruled Riyadh and the regions surrounding that city. That dynasty, founded by Muhammad bin Saud (d. 1765), allied with the great conservative reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), gradually gained control over more and more territory. The conclusion of World War I—so aptly called the “peace to end all peace” by historian and journalist David Fromkin—witnessed the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the remaining assemblage of nation-states and failed nation-states that compose much of what is today called MENA: the Middle East and North Africa. In 1926, Abdulaziz ibn Saud declared himself king of the Hejaz and, a year later, of the Nejd as well. On September 23, 1932, the two regions were united into what is today the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. That day is recognized as Saudi National Day.

The Kingdom has experienced dramatic changes and developments since that time. According to the United Nations, the population has increased from four million in 1960 to twenty-seven million in 2010. One estimate of the population as of 2017 is slightly more than thirty-three million. Estimates today propose that Christians represent from 3 to 4.5 percent of the population. Those Christians are all foreigners who are working in the country or dependents of such a worker. There is also a small number of indigenous Saudis who have converted from Islam to Christianity, though their existence is very precarious.

Regarding the expatriate Christians, there are no churches in the country, though groups sometimes gather together in embassies, homes, or cultural centers for worship, prayer, or Bible study. While these meetings are “largely tolerated,” they are sometimes broken up by the religious police. Anecdotes indicate that Bibles, crosses, and crucifixes may be confiscated upon entry to the country. The legal rights of Christians qua Christians are practically null:

According to the 1992 Basic Law of Governance, the country’s official religion is Islam and the constitution is the Quran and Sunna (traditions and practices based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad). The legal system is based on sharia as interpreted within the Hanbali School of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence. Freedom of religion is not provided under the law. The government does not allow the public practice of any non-Muslim religion. The [...] 2014 counterterrorism
law [..] criminalizes “anyone who challenges, either directly or indirectly, the religion or justice of the King or Crown Prince.”

The reforming activities of the controversial Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman (commonly called MBS by the media) have caused some to guardedly hope for positive changes. After a 2018 visit to the Kingdom, Johnnie Moore, who is commissioner of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, said, “I was surprised by the pace of change in the country. [..] It was the first time I have ever thought to myself, Wow, we could actually see religious freedom in Saudi. This is possible.” Other encouraging signs were the crown prince’s meeting with the archbishop of Canterbury in England (March 2018) and a visit from the Maronite patriarch to King Salman in Riyadh (November 2017), though the later visit appears to have been more about politics than religion. Finally, Markos of Shubra, a bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church, not only made a visit to Riyadh but also celebrated the Holy Liturgy with Eucharist there (December 2018). Despite these visible and interesting developments, no concrete actions have taken place to better secure rights for expatriate Christians in the Kingdom, much less Saudi Christians. One Christian leader expressed his opinion, first, that these events are about publicity and image and, second, that the situation for actual Christians in the Kingdom has not improved.

But there is another group of Christians in the Kingdom. Just as we found slaves, concubines, renegades, and traders having a largely unnoticed presence in the land for centuries, today there are indigenous subjects of the House of Saud who are Christians. By Saudi law, all subjects are Muslims—full stop—even though several Saudis have declared quite openly that they are not Muslims. The primary destinations for apostates are two: atheism and Christianity.

How many Saudi Christians exist? The number is extremely hard to discern because the sharia is quite clear on the point that the apostate must be executed, so there are strong incentives for the convert to either keep her new faith to herself or seek some other place to live where she will be free to live out her Christian faith. My most recent estimate for the number of Christians from a Muslim background (CMBs) in the country was five thousand. That number would include all CMBs in the country, the majority of whom would not be Saudis. How many Saudi Christians, living in the country, are there? I think a responsible number is somewhere between five hundred and one thousand, though my correspondence with ministers and Christians in the Kingdom did not yield anything close to a precise number.

But they do exist. An Egyptian Christian who has an online ministry based on one social media platform related this story regarding one recent convert:

The lady who contacted us through [social media platform redacted] first pretended that she was her husband. I think this is because women in Saudi Arabia feel uncomfortable talking to men they do not know. Her profile on [redacted] was that of a woman, though. She asked us first about our opinion regarding men marrying multiple women, and other women’s rights issues, still pretending to be the husband.
We wrote her the Biblical view on these things. I think this encouraged her to talk about Christ. She sent us pictures of a cross she has, and said that both—husband and wife—are reading the conversation, but then she sent a picture of herself only, and a picture of herself with her maid. It seemed that the maid is a [nationality redacted] Catholic and that she had struck up a friendship with this lady [...]. She asked to become Christian, so we prayed with her the prayer of salvation. She rejoiced greatly, and told us she was hugging her maid.

She chose the name [redacted] for herself. She then continued the conversation for a few days, and suddenly disappeared from [social media platform redacted]. I am afraid her husband may have discovered her new faith. Keep her in your prayers.⁴³

This is one report of one such convert. But studies have been done on large numbers of converts in order to discern their primary motives for leaving Islam for Christianity. While no study has been done on Saudi converts specifically, it is unlikely that the primary motives are substantially different. Drawing together various studies on conversion motives, I summarized the key motives for conversion as follows:

1. The personality of Jesus is attractive
2. Christianity answers questions that Islam did not
3. The Church provides a new family
4. Christianity promises the forgiveness of sins
5. Christianity provides a personal relationship with God
6. Dreams, visions and miracles⁴⁴

In addition to these factors that explain what attracted converts from Islam, we must remember that there is also a widespread sense of disappointment with Islam—this being a common factor for CMBs and ex-Muslim atheists as well.

What is the religious life of these Christians like? Some who no longer reside in the country are quite vocal and energetic in calling their fellow Saudis to the Christian faith. One such example, living in the West, goes by the name Al Fadi. Using YouTube, Facebook, and a regular podcast titled Let Us Reason Together, Fadi challenges Christians to evangelize Muslims and invites Muslims to convert to Christianity.⁴⁵ His approach is a combination of polemics and apologetics. Such a ministry based within Saudi Arabia is inconceivable.

Fatima al Mutayri was a Saudi convert to Christianity. Fatima was martyred by her father and brother in 2008. She represents one of the very few voices of a contemporary Saudi believer within the country. She shared various poems and other writings on the worldwide web. She was twenty-six years old at the time of her death, and her writings provide some insights into the lived religion of one Saudi Christian.⁴⁶

First we find an affirmation that while she has left Islam, this act should not be construed as betraying her people or country.⁴⁷ This is a common theme in the writings of many CMBs from the Arab world because Islamic thought does not often divide religion and politics, so there is the perception that the person who rebels against
Muhammad for Jesus must likewise be rebelling against his people in favor of, presumably, Europe or the United States.

A second theme is the conviction that Islam is fundamentally violent. This, again, is a common theme among CMBs, who are incredulous when they hear the political voices of the occident proclaiming that Islam is a “religion of peace.” Fatima decrèes a fatwa (juridical ruling) sanctioning the execution of Druze as heretics. She states that “your swords don’t concern me at all.” This represents a repudiatory counternarrative to the overarching orthodoxy of occidentalist academia that “Islamic terrorism” is in reality the “hijacking of Islam.”

A third theme is the love of God. In Islam, God may love people or not. His love is conditional, as is his forgiveness. The Qur’an is clear that God loves some people and forgives some people, but one is never sure whether she is loved or forgiven. It appears that Fatima clearly understood that she was coming into contact with a different vision of the personality of God:

What really attracted me to the Bible was Jesus’ story; in my view, this is the greatest story in human history. This story sets before us a heroic example of sacrificial love and humility. [...] How can I believe in Jesus and invite the Holy Spirit to come and live in my heart and rule over it? How can I invite the Holy Spirit to fill my heart with faith, peace, and tranquility? How can I feel that God is close to me when I had lost hope in God because Islam had distorted God’s image? The cruel image of God created by Islam has been etched on my mind. Since you have sent me the Christian studies, I live in continuous anxiety. These studies encourage me to do additional study and research. I am moving from one Christian forum to another. I have devoted my time and effort to reading the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, and to watching Christian programs on the Internet as time permits.49

But these are the words of a single Saudi Christian. What are the other voices? There must be many, but for now they remain unheard, as are the voices of so many Christians of what is today Saudi Arabia throughout the centuries.

What is sure is that since the earliest centuries of the Common Era there have been Christians in Arabia Felix and, specifically, in what is today Saudi Arabia. Many forces—the prohibition on excavating Christian sites, the vigorous persecution of Saudi Christians—collude to erase the memory of their past existence and the reality of their present existence. Nonetheless, they were there, and they still are, both foreign and, yes, indigenous.

FOR FURTHER READING


NOTES


4. Galatians 1:17, NRSV.


17. Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren, Crossroads to Islam (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2003), 8, 347, 348. Nevo relies on Christian, instead of Muslim, literature, in addition to archeological excavations and rock inscriptions. He concludes that Arabs established hegemony and conquered lands while they were still pagans, and only after “establishing control, the new Arab elite adopted a simple monotheism influenced by Judeo-Christianity.”
23. Keith Small, Daniel Brubaker, Éléonore Cellard, and Alba Fedeli have all explored various facets of this topic.
25. Farrokhi, “The ‘Same God Question,’” 470.
38. Middle East Concern, Saudi Arabia: Freedom of Religion or Belief, 2017. For current information on Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region, see the Middle East Concern website, https://meconcern.org/.
41. The most widely cited hadith regarding apostates is Al Bukhari 9:84:57, wherein Muhammad states, “Whosoever changes his religion [from Islam], slay him.”
42. Duane Alexander Miller, “Christians from a Muslim Background in the Middle East,” in Routledge Handbook of Minorities in the Middle East, ed. Paul S. Rowe (New York: Routledge, 2019), 132–45. The estimate in question is on page 133.
43. Personal correspondence, March 2019. I have made minor changes to spelling and punctuation in order to enhance readability.
47. Way of Fatima, 8.
49. Way of Fatima, 12.