

includes discussion of bodily parts linked with the eye, namely, the heart and tongue. Most significant is his exposition of the ubiquitous belief once held that the eye is an aggressive organ, potentially causing harm and ruin on what it sees (cf. he looked daggers at him). The documentation of each aspect of the Eye belief and practice is as full as even the pickiest scholar could want. Nothing seems to have escaped his notice. One can see how an idea here led to research there; the fabric of the belief and practice is shown to be complete, comprehensive, and utterly persuasive.

The bulk of volume 2 on Greece and Rome contains an extended treatment of envy and its relationship to the Evil Eye. A more Germanic presentation of “envy” (highly to be praised) exposes the linguistic basis for distinguishing “envy,” “jealousy,” and “zeal.” No assertion is ever made without exhaustive documentary support. Midway through the central chapter, Elliott provides a summary of the material up to that point (113–18), where he returns to “Key Features of Evil Eye Belief and Practice” (47) and encapsulates his data up to this point. Such summaries would have been welcome throughout the books. “Protection through Word and Expressions” continues the survey of Evil Eye practice and belief, but with a focus on apotropaics to ward off the danger of amulets, chants, and the like (163–266). The final part of the book argues that “kai sou” (και σου) says that the person harming someone should himself be harmed similarly. Evidence for this, which is completely persuasive, derives of numerous mosaics excavated from Galilee to Antioch. But someone may also protect oneself by sticking out one’s tongue and spitting (a grand exposition of “spitting” and healing is found here), or by lifting up one’s hand, and especially by closing one or another fingers to express a phallus, which is also protection. Male and female genitals appear on charms and lamps, but especially on doorposts. The Roman *bullā* contained a diminutive phallus for the protection of a young boy.

This study is comprehensive, exhaustive, and completely persuasive. There is no doubt about the ubiquity of the Evil Eye in belief and practice. The payoff will come with volume 3, where the author will examine the topic in Scripture and the early church. Students of ancient Greece and Rome will devour this, less so college professors and their students. But this is significant scholarship on an important topic.

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*Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christianity and the Early Muslim World.* By Michael Philip Penn. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2015. Pp. 294. \$59.95.

Following upon the widespread use of Syriac sources by Patricia Crone and Michael Cook in their 1977 work, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, and the publication in 1997 of Robert Hoyland’s magisterial *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*, there has been a renewed interest in the Syriac writings of early Christian authors concerning Islam and Muslim–Christian relations. The broader availability of Latin and Greek

writings in previous years has given way in recent decades to great interest in the views of seventh- to tenth-century Christian authors living in the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates of Greater Syria. Unlike their Byzantine and European counterparts, these writers saw Muslims not so much as the threatening enemy on the borders as the local governors, fellow scholars, and, generally speaking, the subjects of daily interaction. Hence, these Christian authors were often able to arrive at perceptions of greater subtlety and complexity than could those who lived in Christian realms and wrote from a geographical and cultural distance.

This perceptiveness is the focus of Penn's volume, in which he studies Syriac manuscripts composed between the years 635, the time of the Arab conquest, and 860, after which Christian authors under Muslim rule no longer wrote in Syriac, but rather in Arabic. P. notes a distinctive characteristic of this Syriac Christian literature. Whereas history is typically written by and from the viewpoint of the victors, in this case it was the conquered Syriac Christian community that produced the vast majority of chronicles, biographical hagiographies, and theological reflections on the Arab conquest and the life of the Christian communities as subjects of the caliphates.

The initial reactions of Christians to the conquests expressed the common view that this was God's way of punishing the sins of Christians. While many early commentators regarded the Arab invasion as a temporary scourge that would have to be endured for a limited period before the normalcy of Christian rule returned to the region, some Christian observers, such as the author of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, regarded the rule of the "invaders from the south" as a divine scourge inaugurating the last days. Others, like the Monophysite *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Ephrem*, were convinced that the invasions were meant to punish Byzantine despotism and its Chalcedonian transgressions and ultimately vindicate the true Christian faith.

As the decades and centuries passed, it became apparent that Muslim rule was no passing phenomenon, and the Christian authors gradually became more interested in and knowledgeable about the religious identity of their Arab rulers. By Abbasid times, after 750, many Syriac Christians were bilingual and able to engage in intellectual debate in Arabic with Muslim counterparts. Better informed about the content of Islamic faith, they were increasingly conscious of Islam as an independent religious tradition, rather than an eccentric variant on Christian belief and practice. Some Christian authors engaged in apologetics in an effort to reassure fellow Christians that their faith was in no way inferior to that of the rulers, and that God's granting sovereignty to the Muslims was no indication of divine favor to the followers of what eventually came to be known as Islam.

Many writers sought to minimize the differences between the two traditions, holding, for example, that Muhammad really believed in the Trinity, that Muslims based their law not only on the Qur'an but also on the Torah and gospels, and some, such as the *Bet Hale Disputation*, went so far as to posit a type of "Muslim limbo" where "the Sons of Hagar . . . will live in grace, in abodes far from torment." The legendary figure of the monk Sergius afforded Christian writers the opportunity of suggesting that Muhammad learned much of his laudable teaching from his having been instructed by a Christian holy man.

The author notes that “Islam’s greatest challenge to Syriac Christianity was not its alterity but its similarity” (100). Sharing a similar prophetic lineage and partially coinciding scriptural tradition, coupled with the social interactions of daily living, the two spiritual paths could seem almost indistinguishable, so that conversion to the community of power and influence presented itself as an attractive possibility. The Syriac writers thus endeavored to present Islam as an inferior derivative of the ancient, normative Christianity.

The Christian literature in Syriac presents many instances of indistinct boundaries. For example, the recently excavated Church of the Kathisma contains in its ambulatory the remnants of a *mihrab* that was apparently still in use for Islamic prayer in the same period when Christians were using the same church for worship. Boundary questions are recorded in catechetical texts such as, “If the emir invites an abbot to dinner, should he accept?” “Should a priest teach Muslim children if their parents have the authority to punish him if he refuses?”

In their efforts to define boundaries, the Syriac writers reflect a social system in which Christians are in a constant effort of adjustment to the realities of life under Islamic rule. In this volume, P. has done the scholarly world a service in making the challenges faced by this Christian society available to modern readers.

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*The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology.* By Thomas O. White. Thomistic Resource Series, 5. Washington: Catholic University of America, 2015. Pp. xvi + 534. \$65.

As the subtitle indicates, the present book is a Thomistic study in Christology. It is an excellent contribution to recent work on the person and work of Christ, written in a clear, accessible style—something not to be taken for granted. White defends the continuing relevance and vitality of Aquinas’s doctrine of the person of Christ in conversation with pivotal developments in the discipline, Catholic and Protestant. The exegesis of Aquinas’s Christology, however, is not an end in itself here. Rather, W. puts forward a constructive case for a modern Christology that is, indeed, heavily indebted to the Angelic Doctor, with whose work W. is masterfully familiar. Modern and contemporary Christology, both Catholic and Protestant, strayed away from a Chalcedonian metaphysic. Jesus’s divinity now tends to be expressed through other means, allegedly more conducive to a full appreciation of his authentic humanity. Such a turn is partly motivated by Kant’s critique of natural theology and metaphysics, partly by a Barthian-like suspicion of any mode of natural knowledge of God. For the former, speaking of a divine substance present and active in an incarnate Christ is a confusion of categories. For the latter, it is conceptual idolatry since it enlists God under a genus (nature), thus making God naturally knowable to us. In the wake of these critiques several new forms of Christology were articulated. Of those, W. is