

Reading the Qur'an in light of a Jewish-Christian-Islamic tradition

Gabriel Said Reynolds (University of Notre Dame), a 2006–07 recipient of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology award, describes his project and shares photos he took while in Lebanon and Israel doing his research. An excerpt of his progress report appears here.



Tantur as seen from Bethlehem. Notice the Israeli wall at the edge of the town.



Rosh Hashanah



Gabriel Said Reynolds in front of a holy site.

I spent the month of September at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, a research center on a site between Bethlehem and Jerusalem originally settled by the Knights of St. John during the Crusades (see the tree covered hill in Tantur photo). There I was able to pursue research on the midrashic and Talmudic literature that is central to my project, with the help of a number of scholars at the Hebrew University. My hope for the Luce manuscript is to develop a solution to the current impasse in Qur'anic studies. On one hand, early Western scholars generally described the Qur'an as a patchwork of texts that Muhammad borrowed from Biblical literature, in reaction to his pagan environment. On the other hand, since World War II the question of Qur'anic origins has been largely avoided, as both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have chosen to ignore the Qur'an's relationship with the Bible, focusing instead on Muslim exegesis.

In the Luce project, I propose that the Qur'an might be fruitfully read as a homily on biblical literature. It is not a text that is simply borrowed from the Bible. It is a text that uses biblical literature as a reference work as it develops new religious messages. Therefore students of the Bible should study the Qur'an as a text fully within the Biblical tradition. So too students of the Qur'an should study the Bible as they seek to understand the Qur'an. ♦

Descriptions of research being done by other 2006–07 recipients of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology award can be found in the March/April 2006 issue of Colloquy (vol. 14, no. 4) on the ATS Web site under Resources > Publications.

Grants Deadlines

Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology
December 1, 2006

Lilly Theological Research Grants
January 5, 2007