# Eastern Christianities

Prof. Lorenzo Perrone

COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

The general course offers an introduction to Christianities spread across a geographical area ranging from the Caucasus and the Near East to Egypt and the Horn of Africa, linked together by multiple traditions and common developments. In addition to the general historical picture and the panoramas of the individual national Christianities, in the single subject part, the course will explore more deeply the presence of the Bible in Ethiopian Christianity.

At the end of the course, students will possess an overall perspective on the historical and current history of an important and little known branch of the Christian tradition, inserted within political and cultural contexts profoundly different from Western Christianity and marked, in particular, by the confrontation with Islam. The knowledge acquired will lay the foundations for further study on a linguistic and cultural level, also in relation to the lively diaspora of many of these Christendoms in Italy and the contemporary situations of their mother Churches.

COURSE CONTENT

The course will be divided into two sections: a) general (20 hours), b) single subject (10 hours).

The first section will initially present an overview of Eastern Christianities aimed at illustrating the main features of this branch of the Christian tradition, distinguished not only from Catholicism and Protestantism but also from Byzantine-Slavic Orthodoxy. Together with the historical dynamics that have united many of these Churches since Late Antiquity, both the phenomena that have determined ecclesial fragmentation in different nations and ethnicities and the elements of a unifying nature will be brought to light. The second part of the general course will be dedicated to 'national' Christianities, starting with Syriac Christianity in its various historical and geographical expressions: from the Western Churches (Melkites, Jacobites and Maronites) to the Eastern Church (Assyrians and Chaldeans). The course will then move on to the Christianities of the Caucasus, with the Churches of Armenia and Georgia that have long gravitated towards the two important ecclesial centres of Antioch and Jerusalem. A presentation of African Christianities will conclude this section, covering the Churches of Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia in the wake of the missionary irradiation of the Church of Alexandria.

The single subject section will be dedicated to the unique role that the Bible has played in Ethiopian Christianity, starting from the biblical versions and the formation of the scriptural canon. It will then reconstruct the impact of the Old Testament on the liturgical and disciplinary practice of the Abyssinian Church and the elaboration of the legend of the Queen of Sheba with the establishment of the imperial dynasty of Solomonic origin.

READING LIST

Reference texts and recommended readings

a) General section

P. Buzi, *La Chiesa copta. Egitto, Etiopia, Nubia*, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2014.

F. Carcione, *Le Chiese d’Oriente. Identità, patrimonio e quadro storico generale*, SanPaolo, Cinisello Balsamo 1998.

A. Ferrari (Ed.), *Popoli e Chiese dell’Oriente cristiano*, Edizioni Lavoro, Rome 2008.

B. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens d 'Orient*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 20202.

A. Pacini (Ed.), *Comunità cristiane nell’islam arabo. La sfida del futuro*, Edizioni della Fondazione Agnelli, Turin 1996.

R. Pane, *La Chiesa armena. Storia, spiritualità, istituzioni*, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2011.

V. Poggi, *L’Oriente cristiano*. Vol. 1: *Panorama storico delle Chiese cristiane in Asia e in Africa*, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2005.

P. Siniscalco, *Le antiche chiese orientali. Storia e letteratura*, Città Nuova, Rome 2005.

P. Siniscalco, *Le antiche Chiese cristiane d'Oriente. Un cammino millenario*, Città Nuova, Rome 2016.

b) Single-subject section

E. Cerulli, *La letteratura etiopica.* Third expanded edition, Sansoni, Florence-Milan 1968.

R. Cowley, *The Traditional Interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John in Ethiopian Orthodox Church*, Cambridge UP, Cambridge 1983.

M.A. Knibb, *Translating the Bible. The Ethiopic Version of the Old Testament*, The British Academy – Oxford UP, London 1999.

E. Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, The British Academy – Oxford UP, London 1968.

TEACHING METHOD

The course will be conducted mainly with lectures, but will also include seminar meetings, with the reading and discussion of texts.

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

An oral exam. This will focus on the course contents of the teaching materials provided during lectures, the reading of a monograph and two short essays, chosen from those indicated in the detailed reading list and made available at the beginning of the course. Lecturer approval is required for the exam, but a separate syllabus can also be agreed in relation to specific and appropriately motivated interests.

NOTES AND PREREQUISITES

Course attendance is strongly recommended to adequately explore in-depth the topics covered.

Erasmus students are kindly requested to contact the lecturer.

Given the introductory nature of the course, no particular prerequisite is required, other than a curiosity to learn about generally little-known religious and cultural horizons.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=Eng or on the Faculty notice board.