

# Dar al Islam Teachers Institute

*Alumni Newsletter*



Issue # 6 Fall 2000

## Notes on the Qur'an

By Dr. Mohammad Shafi

### Justice and Equity in the Qur'an

The major themes of Qur'an include God-consciousness, fairness, equity, justice, equality and balance in all our dealings. It stresses the doing of what is right because it is the Truth and represents one of the ninety-nine "beautiful names" of God. As a reflection of His attributes of Al-'Adl (The Just One) and Al-Muqsit (The Upholder of Equity), we are urged to establish Justice and deal with all in a manner that assures Equity, fairness and balance among the various claimants in regard to rights, property, honor and dignity. God assures us that even though He is All-Powerful and none can challenge His Authority, He deals with all with truth, kindness, justice, and the rights of none will be transgressed on the Day of Judgment.

The narrow dictionary equivalents for Justice and Equity are the words Insaaf, 'Adl and Qist. The first of

these is commonly used in the meaning of Justice in Persian, Urdu, Turkish and other Muslim languages that have borrowed heavily from Arabic. But the word Insaaf has its root in the concept of dividing equally in halves. This is not generally Just or Equitable. The Qur'an, therefore does not use this word in the sense of Justice or Equity. The other two words of 'Adl and Qist are more comprehensive, represent two of God's ninety-nine Beautiful Names and are extensively used in the Qur'an.

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## What's New?

### Islamic Spain receiving more attention in our classrooms

Many educators are attempting to teach history with more focus on connections between cultures, rather than conflicts between cultures. A good example of this trend is the increased number of textbooks, videos and web sites that link Islamic Spain with the rest of Europe's history. They then take a look at Islam's lasting legacy in that region even though the final Muslim dynasty ended

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*"We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice."*

Surah 57, Ayah 25

### Editors

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**Curriculum Corner**  
*New Resources and Where to Find Them*

**Library**



For general information on the history of Islamic Spain, there are several good texts available. If you're specifically seeking information about the weaving together of Jewish, Christian and Islamic culture within Andalusian Spain, you might want to start with three new publications: "*Convivencia: Jews, Muslims and Christians in Medieval Spain*", edited by Vivian Mann. "*Early Medieval Spain. Unity in Diversity, 400-1000*" by Roger Collins. "*Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*" by Olivia Constable.

For a military/political history you can turn to "*Muslim Spain and Portugal: A Political History of Al-Andalus*" by Hugh Kennedy or Richard Fletcher's "*Moorish Spain*".

There is a wealth of information focusing on the cultural, religious and intellectual connections between Islamic Spain and Europe: "*The Islamic World and the West*" by Archibald Lewis, "*Islamic Surveys: The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*" by W. Montgomery Watt (a good general introduction to the subject), Titus Burckhardt's "*Moorish Culture in Spain*" and Seyyed Hossein Nasr's "*Science and Civilization in Islam*". Angus Macnab's "*Spain Under the Crescent Moon*" is a particularly interesting book. It's a publication of radio programs on Islamic Spain presented by Dr. Macnab as weekly broadcasts for the North American Service of the Spanish Radio. It's filled with true tales of intrigue, love, war, poetry and tragedy; just the kind of true-drama history that students love to read. (The Burckhardt and Macnab books are available from Fons Vitae Publishing at [www.fonsvitae.com](http://www.fonsvitae.com) or [grayh101@aol.com](mailto:grayh101@aol.com).) If you're interested in learning more about Islamic mysticism in Spain, also available at Fons Vitae is "*Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn Arabi*", translated by Peter Kingsley.

A word of warning: It is very difficult to find short, readable works on Spain for the middle or secondary level reader. Some distributors have recommended Tariq Ali's "Shadows of the Pomegranate Tree". It is unfortunate that this novel, which follows the fortunes of a Muslim family during the fall of Andalusian Spain, takes a bit of a "soap opera" twist that

**Media Room**

makes it inappropriate for pre-collegiate readers. You may want to read it first, and then decide if you think it's appropriate for classroom use. It may be more interesting to have your students contrast and compare the two "classics" of literature on Spain; "*The Song of Roland*" and "*El Cid*". It won't take long for your students to note how these two historical novels present Muslims in a completely opposite light, depending upon when and why they were written. The "*Song of Roland*" was one of Europe's first "PR publications", meant to glorify King Charlemagne, who was being considered for Sainthood. The Muslims are the "bad guys" who are defeated by the good Christian King. In "*El Cid*", the Muslims are seen as honorable, chivalrous knights who at times even ally with the novel's hero. What a great teaching tool these two books would make together!

For a terrific resource on history, culture and student activities, try "A Medieval Banquet at the Alhambra Palace" from [awair@igc.apc.org](mailto:awair@igc.apc.org)

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**VIDEOS on ISLAMIC SPAIN**

Another "tough find" is good videos on Islamic Spain. One of the best is "*Granada: January 6, 1492*" in which a "contemporary newscaster" walks us through the events of the fall of Andalusia's final stronghold, Granada. Available at [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com).

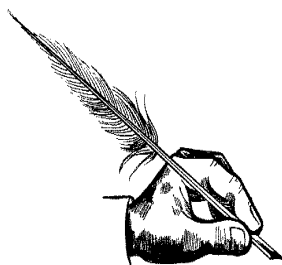
"Spain: The Moorish Influence" is very popular with educators. It is available on loan from UNC at [www.lib.unc.edu/cdd/crs/foreign/meiw/films.html](http://www.lib.unc.edu/cdd/crs/foreign/meiw/films.html). It can be purchased at 1-800-554-9862.



***Resources for Teaching a Secondary School Level "Introduction to Islam" course***

I have the folks at Dar al Islam to thank for introducing me to my favorite book on Islam, the Council on Islamic Education's (CIE) Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom: a Handbook for Educators. The only drawback, for me, is the title: my students have to purchase the book (and they are not teachers). I have tried and reviewed a number of introductory texts on Islam (John Esposito's Islam: the Straight Path, John Sabini's Islam: a Primer, Frederick Denny's Islam, and Neal Robinson, Islam: a Concise Introduction) and none comes close to the CIE text for clarity, organization, and popularity among students.

The book is divided into five main sections: a short introduction to the meaning of Islam and a survey of the modern Muslim world; basic beliefs; religious obligations; Muslim society; and a section just for teachers, "Teaching with Sensitivity". Each section is organized thematically around basic but key questions (such as "How is God viewed in Islam?" or "How do Muslims view Angels?") which gives the text an elegant simplicity. Unlike most introductions to Islam, this one begins at home with an interesting introduction to the history of Islam in the Americas. Though the text stresses the links between Islam, on the one hand, and Judaism and Christianity, on the other, it does so by introducing students to the Arabic words for Islamic concepts and practices. I think this contributes to the book's ability to teach about Islam "from within" free of cumbersome analogies. My students and I always enjoy practicing the Arabic names for prophets many of the students are familiar with such as "Nuh" for "Noah", "Ibrahim" for Abraham" and "Issa" for "Jesus". In contrast to other introductions, this book describes religious obligations in full, giving students a concrete sense of what might otherwise seem abstract. Salah, (formal worship), is described step-by-step (with illustrations) as are the accompanying prayers. The section



**Ideas That Work**  
**Alumni share their ideas and experiences**

**By Steve Tamari**  
**Sidwell Friends School**

on social obligations deals frankly with relevant topics such as dating, birth control, homosexuality, suicide, human rights, and terrorism. This book is a must for teachers and students alike. (It is available through the Council on Islamic Education at [cie@info.com](mailto:cie@info.com) or (714) 839-2929 for \$11.00).

My unit on Islam usually lasts three weeks and I end it with a short discussion of the influence of Islamic science on the European Renaissance. I use a short text by George Saliba titled Rethinking the Roots of Modern Science (one in a series of occasional papers published by Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and available online at [www.ccasonline.com](http://www.ccasonline.com) for \$4.95). In some ways it is a difficult book and may not be appropriate for all high school students because it deals with many of the complexities of medieval and early modern astronomy and math. But I tell my students to ignore the technical details and focus on the historical argument which is very elegant, succinctly presented and full of implications for understanding the connections between Islam and the West and between medieval and modern history. It is also the summation of a great deal of detective work by Saliba that I use to turn students on to the creative aspects of history-writing.

Saliba argues that there is strong (if not completely conclusive) evidence that Copernicus was aware of the work of two Arabic-writing astronomer-mathematicians of the 13th century which was central to the development of the heliocentric view of the universe. He then traces the transfer of scientific knowledge from East to West through the medium of early modern Italian Orientalists and Lebanese clerics resident in Rome. The key clues are library catalogs and colophons (notations which sometimes indicate ownership) on manuscripts which demonstrate when the critical Arabic works were collected, who owned them, and how they ended up in the Italian libraries. In the course of uncovering this evidence, Saliba breaks down two barriers that continue to obscure our understanding of world and

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in 1492. Muslim soldiers entered the Iberian peninsula from north Africa in 711 when one side of a conflict in Spain asked for assistance. Led by Tarik ibn Ziyad, they landed on the rocky shore which still carries Tarik's name: Gibraltar, which comes from the Arabic "Jabal al-Tarik", or the Rock of Tarik.

Roderick, the last Visigoth king of Spain wasn't difficult to defeat since his own nobles weren't terribly enthusiastic about coming to his assistance. Several broke rank, allowing for a Muslim victory. Little did they know that this would be the beginning of 8 centuries of Islamic rule in Spain.

By 756 Abdur Rahman I planted the seeds of the Cordoba Caliphate that would gain independence from the Abbasids in Baghdad and reinstate Umayyad rule on the western edge of the Islamic region. The Cordoban court was soon luring musicians, poets, scholars, scientists and translators to their glorious palace and mosque complex. Advances were made in fields as broad as agricultural technology, mathematics, biology, astronomy, optics, medicine, metallurgy and glassware.

The Christians slowly and methodically reclaimed Spain from Muslim rule by taking the major cities of Toledo (1085), Cordoba (1236), and Seville (1248). The "final flowering" of Islamic rule lasted in Granada until 1492 when the city fell to Isabella and Ferdinand, the most determined leaders of the

"Reconquista".

With the fall of each Muslim city, European scholars flocked to the newly discovered libraries and poured over texts on Islamic law, faith, science and technology. Manuscripts by such Spanish-Muslim luminaries as Al-Zahrawi, Ibn Haitham, Ibn Zuhr, al-Idrisi, and Ibn Khaldun made their way to European universities after being translated into Latin by Christian scholars. Of course, the most famous of all the Spanish Muslim scholars was Ibn Rushd, (Averroes in Latin) a philosopher, judge



Court of the Lions at the Alhambra Palace

and physician. He is known in the west for his commentaries on Aristotle and the strong influence these had on St. Thomas Aquinas. The works of Ibn Rushd were used as standard text books in Europe until the sixteenth century, when his works were replaced by texts on modern experimental sciences.

For information on these and other Islamic scientists, visit the web at <http://salam.muslimsonline.com>.

Youssef Chahine has produced an exciting video "Destiny" about the life of Ibn Rushd. This Egyptian epic film is available at Amazon.com.

## In Profile

### *Astrolabe Pictures: Presenting Islamic Media for Educators*

As American Muslim students in the early eighties, Mehmood Kazmi and Suhaib Barzinji had a difficult time explaining Islam to their friends and teachers. "Movies and TV portrayed Muslims as violent and backward," said Barzinji. "I tried to explain what Islam was really about and live it. Some people understood, but what struck me was the awesome power of the media in forming opinion." Kazmi also realized that "if media can be used for those negative purposes, it can also be used to inspire people to do great things, and explain Islam." Explaining Islam and the richness of Muslim civilization through media became a lifelong goal for the two. In 1995, while still in their twenties, they formed Astrolabe Pictures, espousing 'American quality media productions with Islamic values.' They chose the name Astrolabe because of its significance, a navigational tool optimized by Muslims during the golden era of Islamic civilization that was both a guide to safe passage and a work of art.

From the release of their first production, a feature length animation called *Fatih – Sultan Muhammad*, they realized that distribution was an even greater challenge. "The product was good," Kazmi stated, "but there was no existing way to distribute it, so we had to do it ourselves." In the past five years, Astrolabe has grown from a one product company selling outside mosques to a leading Islamic media distributor worldwide, using an attractive direct mail catalog, web site, event marketing and reseller network. In addition to servicing thousands of Muslim households, Astrolabe carries quality products perfectly suited for public school educators. "We're sensitive of the rules behind presenting religious materials in public schools, and educators have been pleased with the selection we offer. "Their role is critical," Barzinji continued, "they can make a student's first impression of Islam a fair one, and help explain this great faith."

#### **Information about Astrolabe Pictures**

To Order Call or Request a Catalog, Call: 1-800-392-7876. Order online at: [www.astrolabepictures.com](http://www.astrolabepictures.com). School purchase orders may be sent to:

Astrolabe Pictures  
201 Davis Drive, Suite I  
Sterling, VA 20164  
Fax 703-404-6801

## In Profile

**10% discount to all Dar al Islam alumni, available by calling in or typing “daralislam” in the value code box, next to payment information on the Astrolabe web site.**

A selection of products for public school educators (Books unless otherwise indicated):

### Teacher Resources for Understanding Islam

Teaching About Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom

Strategies and Structures for Presenting World History: With Islam and Muslims as a Case Study

Understanding Islam by Abdal Hakim Murad (video series from Dar al Islam Institute)

Foundations of Islam by Hamza Yusuf (video series from Dar al Islam Institute)

### Exposing Children to Islam and Muslim Culture

Alif is for Asad, Discover the Arabic Alphabet (video)

Ramadan – Holidays for Children Series (video)

Id ul Fitr

Muslim Child

The Farmers Wife

Nadia’s Hands

Ramadan

What Do We Know About Islam

Introducing Muhammad

### Islam in America

Muslims in America, the Misunderstood Millions (video)

One American’s Pilgrimage (video)

Malcolm X Video Set

Daughters of Another Path, Experiences of American Women Choosing Islam

Servants of Allah, African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas

Islam in the USA

### Islam as Religion and Civilization

CNN Hajj 2000

Living Islam

The Crusades Through Arab Eyes

Jewels of Remembrance, A Daybook from the Wisdom of Rumi

Islam and the Discovery of Freedom

Science in Medieval Islam

Islam: The Alternative

## Faculty Focus

### Manar Darwish

Manar Darwish was born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1963. The youngest of five siblings, she always felt lucky to be endowed with the love and care of her parents and three older brothers and a sister. As they were college educated themselves, both her parents encouraged their children to excel and do well.

Being raised in Egypt, religion was always an integral part of her family life and education. Her parents and siblings followed the teachings of Islam closely, as far back as she remembers and she was naturally encouraged to follow in their path. When her sister, who is seven years older, reached her sophomore year in medical school, she began to wear a head-scarf and more modest clothes rather than following the dictates of the fashion industry. Manar was initially surprised. Later, though, her sister's action was an inspiration, and made her realize that in this modern time females follow the teachings of Islam out of conviction and not due to family pressure or governmental decree as is sometimes assumed in the west.

Manar graduated from the American University of Cairo

in 1985 with a major in Political Science and a minor in Islamic Art History. Her family was hoping that she would become a diplomat. Instead, she surprised them by introducing them to Khalid Blankinship, one of her former professors, who has also served as an Institute faculty.

The idea of their daughter marrying an American wasn't very palatable at first. After getting over their initial shock they decided that he may not be too bad, since he seemed to be a sincere Muslim.

Manar and Khalid moved to the United States shortly after their marriage, fourteen years ago. They currently reside in Philadelphia with their two daughters. They're both active in teaching about Islam and they feel that they complement each other well. Teachers in the Dar al Islam Institutes have enjoyed their joint presentations, in which Khalid dazzled people with the most minute details of history and Islamic law, while Manar simply got to the point in the simplest, funniest way. In the final evaluation of the Institute, one teacher even suggested that they “take the show on the road”.



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The words 'Adl and Qist, in their various forms, are used in the Qur'an about twenty seven times each. The root of 'Adl includes the meanings of Justice, Equity, Fairness, Non-Discrimination, Counter-Balance, to Rectify, Put in Order, Even-ness, Proportion and the like. When Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said "help the oppressor and the oppressed", he was stressing this same concept. The Companions responded that they understood what "helping the oppressed" meant, but what did he mean by "helping the oppressor"? He replied, "by preventing the oppressor from oppressing others". The meanings of the root of the word Qist include Equity, Fairness, Justice, Fair Distribution, Correctness, Balance, and Scale.

Below are some examples of the use of these two words in the Qur'an. The examples are the English rendering of the Ayahs by Yusuf Ali. The reader must refer to the original Arabic for the exact Arabic words and the real flavor of the profound depth of the meaning.

1. Surah 5 (Al-Ma'idah) that starts with "O you who believe! Fulfill (all) your obligations", says in Ayah 8:

"O you who believe! Stand out

firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety; and fear God. For God is well acquainted with all that ye do."

2. God says in Surah 4 (Al-Nisa'), Ayah 135:

"O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor; for God can best protect both. Follow not the lust (of your hearts) or decline to do justice, verily God is well acquainted with all that ye do."

3. Prophet Shu'aib tells his people, according to Surah 26 (As-shu'ara'), Ayahs 181 through 184:

"Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud). And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men. Nor do evil in the land, working mischief. And fear Him Who created you and (Who created) the generations before (you)." (For more on Prophet Shu'aib and his people, read Ayahs 83 through 93 of Surah 7 (Al-A'raaf)).

4. Ayah 90 of Surah 16( Al-Nahl) says:

"God commands justice, the doing of good and liberality to kith and kin, and

He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition. "

5. God says, in the formal plural, in Surah 21 ( Al-Anbia'), Ayah 47:

"We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, we will bring it (to account); and enough are We to take account."

6. God instructs Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in Surah 42 (Al-Shurah), Ayah 15:

"Now then, for that (reason), call (them to the Faith), and stand steadfast, as thou are commanded, nor follow thou their vain desires; but say "I believe in the Book which God has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. God is our Lord and your Lord; for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is (our) final goal."

The above are some of the examples of the use of the two words 'Adl and Qist. For more on these concepts and other questions, refer to your Qur'an or contact us.

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modern history: the divide between East and West and between medieval and modern. The link he makes between medieval Islamic and modern European science can be a lively topic for debate.

I conclude my unit with Michael Wolfe's "Nightline" segment on the hajj. It has all the advantages of a short documentary hosted by a familiar face (Ted Koppel) and none of the disadvantages of so many mainstream discussions of Islam. The hajj is also a nice way to conclude my class's short journey through Islam. Michael Wolfe is an American convert to Islam (and a reporter for "Nightline"). As he takes us with him on the hajj, so much of what may have seemed distant to students comes alive. As he points to the Ka'bah, the Well of Zamzam, and the pillars at Mina, he demonstrates that the hajj celebrates Abraham as much as it does Muhammad, thus solidifying the idea of a Judeo-Christian-Muslim tradition. The idea that the hajj brings the believer "back to the basics" of Islam comes to life through his own spiritual reflections and those of his fellow pilgrims who--as Arabs, Bengalis, Japanese, Indonesians, Nigerians, South Africans, Americans, and others--demonstrate the universal appeal of Islam. ("The Hajj" is available through [www.abcnewsstore.com](http://www.abcnewsstore.com) for \$39.95)

***Please share a successful lesson plan with your fellow Institute alumni. Mail it (600 - 800 words) to Karima at [kdalavi@cybermesa.com](mailto:kdalavi@cybermesa.com)***

# Alumni News

**Helen Genitsky** ('00) was interviewed by her local newspaper upon her return from Abiquiu to Texas. The article so impressed area Muslims that they invited Helen to a gathering where they could get to know her better. She now has a new group of friends in town.

**Betsy Kaiser** ('97) has become a student at the Vanderbilt School of Law. Her first research project is focusing on how text books teach about various faith traditions, and whether the lessons they teach are within the law.

And congratulations are due to the following people:

**Dixie Grupe** ('99) was selected to study in Egypt and Israel as a Fulbright scholar during the past summer. She said it was a wonderful experience.

**Phyllis Parker** ('99) was chosen by the U.S. State Department for two weeks of travel in Russia. Many participants in the program were Muslims from the former Soviet Republics. Phyllis noted that her studies at Dar al Islam gave her the confidence and knowledge she needed to connect with them during their travels. Upon her return to the U.S. Phyllis went to Washington, D.C. for a conference on "How to Teach World Peace".

**Thais da Rosa** ('94) received an Excellence in Teaching Award. She's also being sent to Uzbekistan this fall by the U.S. State Department. Perhaps she'll meet some of Phyllis' new acquaintances.

**Mary Furlong** ('94) coordinated a Teaching Asia Workshop at Gettysburg College. During the summer she went to Ghana and Guinea with the Fulbright Program on "Islam in West Africa". Mary is currently in Zambia where she's working in a teachers' training program for Zambia Open Community Schools.

*Remember to keep us posted and send news about yourself.*

## Calendar of Events

### Dar al Islam Teachers' Institutes on Understanding and Teaching About Islam

(July 8-21 and July 29-August 11, 2001)



### Annual conference of the National Council for the Social Studies.

#### "Honoring the Past Building the Future"

San Antonio, Texas  
(November 17-19, 2000)

Come visit the Dar al Islam booth (#423) and the Council on Islamic Education Booth (#421)



### Summer Workshop on Middle East Cultures

Columbus, Ohio

Contact Kim Schrieber  
(614) 688-3212  
Schrieber.38@osu.edu



### Model Arab League

Taking place in 19 cities across the nation. Students study an Arab nation and represent them in a mock meeting of the Arab League.

Call the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations for information on how your students can participate in your region. .

Contact John Vandenberg  
(202) 293-0801



### Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting

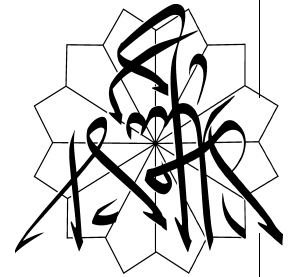
Orlando, Florida  
November 16-19

Call MESA at  
(520) 621-5850



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## Surfing the Web

### Discovering Sites to visit in the Classroom



For a different “take” on the events of 1492, check out Greg Noake’s article “Another 1492” on <http://users.erols.com/gmqm/greg.html>. The article looks at Christopher Columbus’ departure from Spain in light of what it meant to the peoples who were conquered in the name of Spain. This site also has links to Andalusian scholars and philosophers such as Ibn Rushd (Averroes), the commentator on Aristotle, al-Zahrawi the surgeon and Ibn Zuhr, the physician. The forcible conversion of Spanish Muslims to Christianity is contrasted with Isabella and Ferdinand’s “Treaty of 1492” in which Muslims and Jews were guaranteed rights to religious freedom. If your students want to view the document, it can be found at <http://www.erols.com/zenithco/treaty1492.html>

A wealth of public domain and copy-permitted texts from the Byzantine and Medieval era can be downloaded from the Medieval Source Book at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>. Many of these primary documents help students to understand what issues were being dealt with across cultures at that time. Click on the link called “Islamic Source Book” to find historic manuscripts on Faith and Theology, History, Math, Crusades and many other subjects. A particularly interesting document is Ibn al-Hakim’s 9th century essay on “The Islamic Conquest of Spain” which gives a contemporary Muslim viewpoint on the beginning of an important era.

Historic maps of Europe and Spain are also available to help understand the geo-political context of these documents. Just change “sbook” to “sbookmap” on the above address.