



# Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500-700 (Oxford History of Medieval Europe)

By Peter Sarris

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Drawing upon the latest historical and archaeological research, Dr Peter Sarris provides a panoramic account of the history of Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Near East from the fall of Rome to the rise of Islam. The formation of a new social and economic order in western Europe in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, and the ascendancy across the West of a new culture of military lordship, are placed firmly in the context of on-going connections and influence radiating outwards from the surviving Eastern Roman Empire, ruled from the great imperial capital of Constantinople. The East Roman (or "Byzantine") Emperor Justinian's attempts to revive imperial fortunes, restore the empire's power in the West, and face down Constantinople's great superpower rival, the Sasanian Empire of Persia, are charted, as too are the ways in which the escalating warfare between Rome and Persia paved the way for the development of new concepts of "holy war," the emergence of Islam, and the Arab conquests of the Near East. Processes of religious and cultural change are explained through examination of social, economic, and military upheavals, and the formation of early medieval European society is placed in a broader context of changes that swept across the world of Eurasia from Manchuria to the Rhine.

Warfare and plague, holy men and kings, emperors, shahs, caliphs, and peasants all play their part in a compelling narrative suited to specialist, student, and general readership alike.

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**By Peter Sarris Bibliography**

- Sales Rank: #1357682 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Oxford University Press, USA
- Published on: 2013-07-24
- Released on: 2013-07-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.10" h x .90" w x 9.10" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 448 pages



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Review from previous edition: "Peter Sarris' splendid new book is a defiant act of intellectual imperialism. Under the triumphant banner of 'The Oxford History of Medieval Europe' it annexes four academic kingdoms: Rome, the early Middle Ages, Byzantium and early Islam...It is easy to forget that this is hard-fought territory, disputed by fractious experts and partitioned between different university departments...Peter Sarris' signal achievement is to impose an academic unity on the period."

--Christopher Kelly, *The Literary Review*

"An epic, sweeping and ferociously clever history of the age of Justinian and Mohammed."

--Dominic Sandbrook, *Evening Standard*

"This is the first volume to appear in the 'Oxford History of Medieval Europe'. Its general editors express the hope in their preface that they have liberated their authors 'from the need to produce a standard authoritative account'. Thankfully Peter Sarris has refused to be liberated and has done exactly that. I don't think it is too fanciful to see points of similarity between *Empires of Faith* and Stenton's Anglo-Saxon England. Both display a mastery of the relevant sources and scholarship; both provide very clear guides to complicated situations; both are very sensitive to the shaping of history by economic, social and religious forces. This is a very good book indeed."

--Michael Angold, *History*

"This is an impressive book. Sarris has succeeded in covering both western and eastern developments and tying them convincingly together ... *Empires of Faith* is a lucid and confident expression of Sarris's developed view of materialist history, and at the same time a coherent and highly readable book."

--Averil Cameron, *English Historical Review* 11/10/2012

### About the Author

**Peter Sarris** was born in St Albans and educated at St. Albans School and Balliol College, Oxford, where he specialized in Medieval and Byzantine history. After Balliol, he was elected to a Prize Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford, and is currently Senior Lecturer in Late Roman, Early Medieval, and Byzantine History at the University of Cambridge, where he is a Fellow of Trinity College. He has lectured and published widely on early medieval and Byzantine history both in the UK and abroad, and has appeared on historical programmes on television and radio and written on archaeological matters for *The Times*.

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