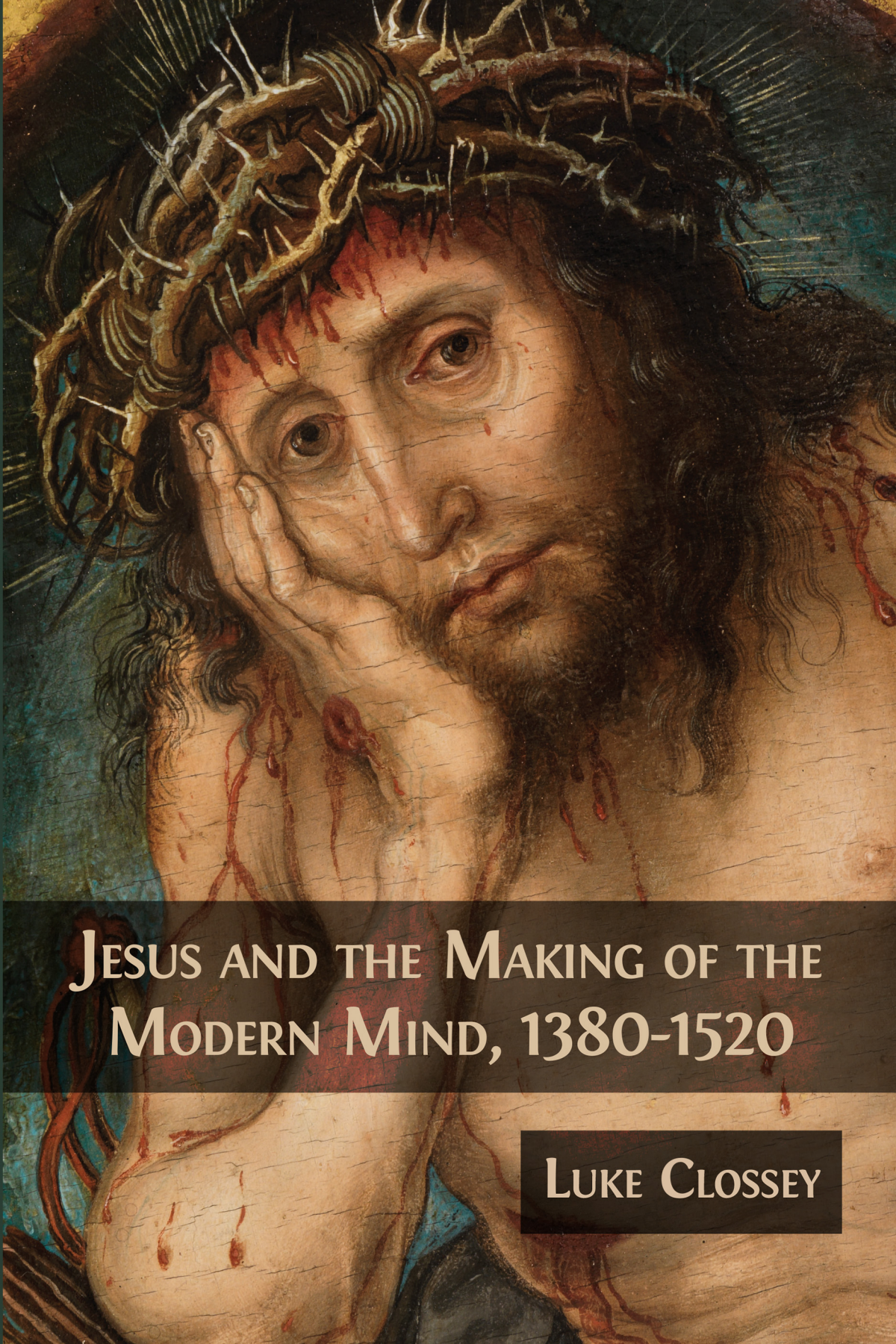

Jesus and the Making of the Modern Mind, 1380-1520

Luke Clossey

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6. Internal Frontiers between Jews, Christians, Muslims

Christopher Columbus's (1451–1506) world was not especially interested in voyages of discovery. Unevangelized Indigenous peoples at the margins of the Christian Far West were also at the margins of its attention. Rather, it was Muslims' and Jews' attitudes towards Jesus that provoked their fears and hopes. Christian efforts against the Muslims recur throughout Columbus's biography. He was a child in Genoa as that republic launched ships in response to Pope Pius II's (1405–64) call in 1460 for a crusade against the Ottomans, a largely futile effort attracting little additional support beyond that of Vlad the Impaler, Voivode of Wallachia (1428/31–76/77). Thirty years later, Columbus was present as Isabella I of Castile (1451–1504) wrested Iberia from Muslim rule. He was at her court in 1489 when an ultimatum arrived from the Mamluk Sultan Qaitbay (ca. 1416–96), that Christians in his realms would face persecution if she did not cease the reconquest in Iberia. Isabella explained that her reconquest was just, and sent a rich funeral cloth for the Holy Sepulchre. Columbus also witnessed the Queen's siege of Granada, the last holdout of Muslim Iberia.[1] For many, the expansion of the Jesus cult to a New World (see Chapter 7) was an accident and an afterthought.

This chapter looks at two "internal" frontiers of the Jesus cult. The first is the border between the Muslim and Christian subcults mingling in Anatolia and the Balkans, under the growing Ottoman Empire; this border is "internal" in that it runs between these two subcults. The second is the border between Jews and Christians in Spain; that border is "internal" in the sense that it occurs *within* a predominantly Christian society, between that subcult and a group mostly outside of the Jesus cult.

1 Carol Lowery Delaney, *Columbus and the Quest for Jerusalem* (New York: Free Press, 2011), 25, 63, 65.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0371.06

Explaining Religious Frontiers

In my brain, perhaps implicitly reflected on the page, is an understanding of religious expansion that differs from the models dominant in historiography; it is closer, I think, to what was done and understood at the time.

A century ago, scholars wrote about the expansion of religion as a kind of "Conquest," by which missionaries brought the new faith, struggled heroically, and eventually converted the local peoples into model Christians. Despite the simplicity and oversights of the "conquest" model, the historians who used it often wrote in much more nuanced terms than its critics later allowed.

A couple generations ago, this was replaced by a "Negotiation" model, in which missionaries and potential-converts were equal players in a dialogue process by which a new religion, nominally "Christian" but adapted to the new environment, was jointly created.

Neither model, especially not the latter, treats religion seriously. The conquest model thinks a baptism makes a Christian, and ignores the religious reality behind and underneath that; that is, the model prioritizes nominal confessional membership. The negotiation model talks about a religion that is just a human construct.

Although historians have tended to embrace fully one model or the other on principle, in practice, some encounters were historically more like Conquest, and others like Negotiation. In his history of Christian expansion, David Lindenfeld "finds that terms such as 'syncretism' and 'hybridity'," the results of Negotiation, are "still too general" and instead "proposes a more variegated vocabulary of cultural encounter."[2] Drawing on a range of historical experiences, Lindenfeld offers eight basic ways that expansion could happen, which we can simplify by noticing that it tracks three variables. To classify an example of expansion, we look for a shift from the local and traditional to the foreign and new in terms of (1) how people formally identify themselves, (2) their religious beliefs and practices, and (3) the broader social and cultural values.

2 David Lindenfeld, *World Christianity and Indigenous Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2021), 7–30, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108917643

	FORMAL IDENTITY	BELIEF AND PRACTICE	SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT
Resistance and Rejection	very local	very local	very local
Selective Incorporation	local	mostly local, some foreign	local
Concentration of Spirituality	local	local transformed by foreign	local
Vernacular Translation	?	local and foreign transform each other (?)	?
Dual Religious Participation	local + foreign	local + foreign	local + foreign (?)
Conservation of Form	foreign	mostly foreign (local seen through foreign lens?)	local
Selective Acculturation	foreign	mostly foreign, some local	mostly local (?)
Acceptance and Commitment	very foreign	very foreign	very foreign

Table 6.1 Lindenfeld Typology of Religious Expansion.

Some Indigenous peoples responded to Christianity and Islam by converting *and* resisting, to the hurt bewilderment of the Christians and Muslims. Underneath the abstractions of religious identification ("Christian," "Muslim," "monotheist," "polytheist"), people's actual behaviours were diverse and difficult to contain. A new Christian could, and perhaps usually did, welcome Jesus as a new power broker into the local pantheon without forsaking the rest of the pantheon, and without seeing any need for exclusive loyalty. The Late Traditional World, especially beyond the Jesus cult, was largely "polytropic," seeking help from a multiplicity of spiritual resources.[3] Here *poly-* means "many," and *-tropos* means

3 Michael Carrithers, "On Polytropy: Or the Natural Condition of Spiritual Cosmopolitanism in India," *Modern Asian Studies* 34 (2000): 831–61, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X00003991; David N. Gellner, "The Emergence of Conversion in a Hindu-Buddhist Polytropy: the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, c. 1600–1995," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47 (2005): 755–80, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0010417505000344

"turning," used for the point where the sun "turns" around after reaching its most northern, hence the English word "tropics." This can occur even in officially monotheistic societies, perhaps to the outrage of authorities. In Thailand in this period, the traveller Niccolò de' Conti (ca. 1395–1469) marvelled at how everyone polytropically "worship idols" yet monotheistically "with their hands joined together say, 'God in Trinity and His law defend us'."[4] Polytropic peoples are similar to modern-day consumers who would go to a shopping centre and purchase bread from a bakery and then produce from a market, without any sense of betraying the baker. The monotropists, in contrast, would fulfill their shopping needs at a membership-only big-box store. This analogy is imperfect, as even the most comprehensive big-box empires today do not denounce disloyal shoppers as heretics.

One of the patterns revealed by this chart is that "religious" beliefs and practices change more easily than identity or society does. The descriptions of this chapter repeatedly confirm this observation: typically, polytropic peoples were happy to add a new possibility to the range of practices and beliefs, but were more reluctant, or even mystified by, any urgency to identify as "Christian" or "Muslim," let alone embark on broad social and cultural reforms.

The historical reality, of course, was always more complex than our models (I say with the plain ken). At Calicut, in 1498, Vasco da Gama (ca. 1469–1524) and his away team were lead into a "church" to be shown an image presented as depicting Mary. They prayed before it, although his clerk João de Sá (fl. 1497–1514) was uncertain enough to mutter a disclaimer: "If this is a devil, I worship the true God."[5] That is, de Sá sensed the confusion of religious practice, and found safety by reaffirming his formal identity. Further, the locals' desire to obscure their practices from Church observation also blocks historians' view, making it difficult to know what was actually happening.

This was neither conquest nor negotiation. For everyone, it was an unbundling of the two kens. Theologians and missionaries wanted to unbundle the religion's deep-ken essence from some of the plain-ken additives accumulated through time. Potential converts were keen on the deep-ken technology (which has power), but less keen on the plain-ken wrap it came in. Both sides had disagreements between and within themselves, but they both used a similar

4 Poggio Bracciolini, "The Travels of Niccolò Conti," trans. J. Winter Jones, in *India in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. H. Major (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), 11–13.

5 Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *Historia do descobrimento e conqvista da India pelos Portvgveses*, 8 vols. (Lisbon: Rollandiana, 1833), I, 57. See Damião de Góis, *Chronica do serenissimo senhor rei D. Emanuel*, 2 vols. (Coimbra: Universidade, 1790), I, 92 (c. 40); *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco Da Gama, 1497–1499*, trans. E. G. Ravenstein (London: Hakluyt, 1898), 53–54.

logic. Neither side was negotiating an imagined, or power-based, plain-deep relationship: both were trying to figure out how to solve a real plain-deep issue.

Blurry Borders on the Black Sea

Background

Anatolia

In the eleventh century, Anatolia was mostly Christian, under Byzantine rule (see Fig. 6.1). As the Byzantine state weakened, Muslim Turkic and Turkmen peoples moved in, further weakening it. The intermixing of Christian and Muslim ideas and peoples attended this process from its earliest days. In its origins, the Ottoman state united the *ghazi* warriors, from the various emirates of Anatolia, drawn to the western frontier of Islam by its religious and political opportunities. If Christian fighters were not part of the Ottoman movement at its inception, its rapid expansion and consequent need for trained soldiers meant they soon would be. Some sources remember Christian warriors joining their Muslim counterparts under the overlordship of Osman, the first Ottoman Sultan, to push against the crumbling Byzantine Empire. The Ottomans borrowed much of their governing apparatus from the Byzantines, so the change of rule had little consequence for the Christian peasants. In 1400, Trebizond, a tiny Christian empire, was so influenced by Persian and Muslim-Anatolian culture that historians have described it as a Greek "emirate." The Ottoman conquest of Aydin gave the growing state a strong naval potential, and, in the 1380s, Christopoulis fell.[6]

Further east, the Muslim Aq Qoyunlu, the "White Sheep" Turkmen, ruled a largely Christian (Jacobite and Armenian) population around Diyar Bakr, to the north of the Black Sheep, south of Georgia, west of the Timurids, and east of the Ottomans. The "Black Sheep" Kara Qoyunlu, Turkmen with leanings towards Shi'ism, held the lands east of Lake Van until the last third of the fifteenth

6 Michael Angold, "Byzantium in Exile," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History V, c. 1198–c. 1300*, ed. David Abulafia (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999), 543–68 (547); Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996); Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003), 61, 136, https://doi.org/10.1353/book4635; Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantium between the Ottomans and the Latins: Politics and Society in the Late Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2009), 24–25, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511576720; Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Nomadization and Islamization in Asia Minor," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975): 41–71 (57–58).

century, when the Aq Qoyunlu defeated them to create a state that included all or parts of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and northwest Persia.[7]

Fig. 6.1 Anatolia Map, by Taf Richards, Arcane Atlas Cartography (@Arcane_Atlas), CC BY-NC.

Balkans

The Christian Balkans could present no consistently strong front against the Muslims. These principalities were disunited, and none had much of a state infrastructure on the ground. Some cities applied to Venice for membership in its empire, but Venice avoided opposing the Ottomans except when it made commercial sense. Many Balkan Christians saw no advantage in being ruled by Christian neighbours rather than being vassals to the Turks: sending troops, money, and hostages as tribute was well worth the protection, though imperfect, that the Ottomans would extend in exchange.

The Balkans had a relatively low number of priests, and what priests they had were often from different subsubcults, and in competition against each other. In Bosnia, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests had to compete with an indigenous Church of Bosnia. The Bosnian Church was mostly monastic, and probably neither sought nor had much influence on the population beyond

7 George Bournoutian, *Concise History of the Armenian Peoples* (Costa Meza: Mazda Publishers, 2002), 111–12; John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Minneapolis, MN: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976), 119.

the monasteries' walls. Franciscans accused the Bosnian Church of a variety of errors—rejecting the mass, the Old Testament, icons, and the cross—and it might have leaned towards Manichaean theology, but the most problematic difference was the Bosnians' refusal to accept papal authority. In 1459, King Stephen Tomašević (d. 1463), hoping to earn Roman support against the Ottomans, seized the Bosnian Church's lands and exiled any clergy who declined to convert to the Christianity of Rome. The paucity of priests and ecclesiastical plurality probably weakened local Christianity and quickened Islamization.[8]

The Conquest of Constantinople

The Ottoman victory at Kosovo in 1389 allowed for their rule over much of the Balkans, and in the next two decades they would besiege Constantinople a half dozen times. The population of Constantinople had mixed views on how to respond to the growing Ottoman power. Some, especially the social elites, preferred to seek help from the Latin West to resist the Ottomans. Others, especially the more socially modest, preferred to surrender. In that surrender they saw "freedom," freedom from the slavery that could come with defeat (Muslim law prevented the enslavement of a surrendered city), and even freedom from corrupt Byzantine government. In 1402, the Ottoman siege was lifted by the intervention of Mary, Jesus's mother, and proposals for encouraging her future participation in the city's defence were considered, including a focus on social welfare. Demetrios Chrysoloras (ca. 1360–1416) argued that "If we offer the proper things to the all-pure one [Mary], she will deliver us not only from our present misfortunes, but also from those expected in the future. And how will this happen? If those who possess do not revel in their possessions by themselves, but share them with those who do not possess."[9]

In 1393, the Ottomans took Nicopolis from the Bulgarians. To take it back, a coalition of western powers, led by Sigismund of Hungary (1368–1437) and Charles VI of France (1368–1422), joined forces under a papal call for crusade. Some of the participation, especially Venice's and Genoa's naval support, was motivated by commercial interests, and their rival Milan allegedly tipped off the

8 John Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 395, 484–85, 582; Georgi Minczew, "John the Water-Bearer (Иванъ Водоносьць): Once Again on Dualism in the Bosnian Church," *Studia Ceranea* 10 (2020): 415–24, https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140x.10.20; Andrew Wachtel, *The Balkans in World History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 62, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195158496.001.0001

9 Paul Gautier, "Un récit inédit sur le siège de Constantinople par les Turcs (1394–1402)," *Revue des études byzantines* 23 (1965): 100–17; Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 114, 146, 174, 182, 207, 285–86.

Ottomans about the crusaders' plans. The battle was witnessed by luminaries from both sides of the Jesus cult. Ibn al-Jazari (1350–1429) was there with the sultan, and Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376/77–1445) fought there. The results were disastrous for the Christians, although Sigismund escaped with his life, if not his dignity. Breaking with custom, Bayezid I (ca. 1360–1403) declined to require the prisoners, as a condition of their freedom, to swear oaths against taking arms against him again; the confident Sultan looked forward to renewed violence, as it would justify expansion of his empire.[10]

In 1453, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II (1432–81), armed with a particle from Jesus's seamless tunic, conquered Constantinople.

Churches that were, or could be, understood to have once been Muslim mosques were seized, although early in the next century the Ottomans pointedly left Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre and Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity in Christian hands. The Pammacaristos Church was given to the patriarch by the conquering Sultan Mehmed II. In 1490, his son Bayezid II (1447–1512) demanded the church, but backed off when its patriarch Dionysius I of Constantinople (d. 1492) proved Mehmed's earlier gift. Bayezid contented himself with merely removing the cross from the dome. The Christian decoration of the Hagia Sophia mostly survived, except for the disfiguration of the faces of Jesus and others. More offensive mosaics were covered by whitewash and plaster, which has allowed them to survive intact; others, less offensive, were allowed to stand visible, and were obliterated by time, dust and grime, or earthquakes.[11]

Some Christians felt the loss keenly. A number of locals saw the conquest as God's punishment for agreeing to unite with the Catholic Church at Florence. From Rome, Pius II wrote the Sultan to persuade him to convert to Christianity (ca. 1461–62): "The prophets predicted that Christ would die and that he would rise from the dead. The gospels affirm that he died on the cross, was buried, and arose on the third day. This is certain and there is no room for ambiguity; everything accords with the truth. The Lord rose again, ascended into heaven, and will come back again to pass judgment at the end of the world. Your religion does not accept this because it does not know about Christ what it should know." It is not certain the letter was ever sent.[12]

10 Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Metheun and Co., 1934), 13, 107.

11 Oded Peri, "Islamic Law and Christian Holy Sites: Jerusalem and its Vicinity in Early Ottoman Times," *Islamic Law and Society* 6 (1999): 97–111; Steve Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1988), 188–89.

12 Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Epistola Ad Mahomatem II* (Epistle to Mohammad II), ed. and trans. Albert R. Baca (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 59–60. See Necipoğlu, *Byzantium*, 221.

Mehmed did not convert. He did, however, enjoy religious discussion. Once he hosted a theological debate between Christian theologians, who discussed, for example, whether Jesus wore a beard. A more innovative idea came from the enterprising Greek scholar George Amiroutzes (1400–70), who had been invited to the Sultan's court as a reward for persuading the emperor of Trebizond to surrender. Amiroutzes proposed a plan for synthesizing Christianity and Islam into a single religion. He argued with the plain ken: religious differences were a result of faulty translations of both subcults' canons, exacerbated by the treacherous Jews. His proposal fell on deaf ears on both sides: the Muslims were uninspired, and the Greeks considered him a traitor, given a long history of questionable behaviour. Mehmed decided to stay with traditional Islam.[13]

Converting to(wards) Islam

The Ottomans never developed a systematic program for conversion. The Sufis were valuable for expanding and deepening the presence of Islam, but religious dialogue and conversion happened incidentally in the course of their work on infrastructure, on building roads and hospices. Conversion to Islam involved ablutions, circumcision for the men, the declaration of the *shahada*, and taking up a new name. To signal their rejection of Christianity, converts were forced to stamp on girdles that had been cut and re-assembled in the form of a cross. Conversion was mostly voluntary, although facilitated by social and economic encouragements. Some conversions happened through the enslavement of children to form the janissary infantry corps. Established before 1400, janissaries were reformed by Murad II (1404–51) as a way to transform male Christian peasants into Muslim warriors.[14]

One fourteenth-century historian bemoaned the post-conquest collapse of Christianity: "What a frightful decline! […] Fifty-one metropolitanates, eighteen archbishoprics, and four hundred and seventy-eight bishoprics are desolate […] Christ's peoples, that is the Christians, have been utterly destroyed." Today, historians' views are more nuanced and moderate. Christianity survived 1453, despite hostile locals, exiled bishops, seized churches, and restricted income. By the 1520s, Istanbul's population was some 60% Muslim, 30% Christian, and

13 Vatican, Archivio della Sacra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, SC Servia II, fol. 242v–43r. See Runciman, *Great Church*, 183.

14 Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schiltberger*, trans. J. Buchan Telfer (London: Hakluyt, 1879), 74–77. See Selim Deringil, "'There Is No Compulsion in Religion': On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire: 1839–1856," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42 (2000): 547–75 (554–55), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500002930; Lowry, *Nature*, 139.

10% Jews; Anatolia was 93% Muslim and 7% Christian, with merely hundreds of Jewish households. Rural Christian populations were particularly slow to give up their religion, and their language; some modern Turkish words for agricultural vocabulary have Greek origins from this period.[15]

Conversion was slower and more superficial in the Balkans than in Anatolia. The Balkans saw little conversion in the first century of Ottoman rule. In the 1520s, Ottoman Europe was only 18% Muslim. A typical city in the Balkans might reach 50% Muslim around 1550. In the early sixteenth century, perhaps a quarter or a third of Balkan Muslims were converts from Christianity. Albania and Bosnia had the fewest Christian priests per capita, and saw the greatest percentage of conversions: two thirds of Albanians and half of Bosnians would become Muslim during the seventeenth century. The Christian nobility of the Balkans steadily converted from the beginning of our period until the middle of the sixteenth century, when almost all the Albanian, Serbian, and Bulgarian elites had become Muslim.[16]

Polytropism

Slow conversion, popular religious practices unlikely to impress the authorities, and the dramatic political and economic shifts of the time all promoted circumstances right for polytropic practices. Already in 1400 we can see, around concentrations of ostensibly pure Islam and Christianity in the urban centres, a hybridity that drew from both subcults. In the fourteenth century, the initiation ceremony at Ankara into the Muslim Ahi "Brethren" included a tonsure suggestive of Christian monks, and three-legged candlesticks suggestive of the

15 Calculations are based on data from Ömer Lutfi Barkan, "Essai sur les données statistiques des registres de recensement dans l'Empire ottoman aux XVe et XVIe siècles," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1 (1957): 9–36 (20), https://doi.org/10.1163/156852057X00038. See Evgeni Radushev, "Conversion to Islam as a Social Process," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 36 (2008): 3–20; Speros Vryonis, Jr., "The Byzantine Legacy and Ottoman Forms," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23 (1969–70): 279–80, 297; Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 307; Vryonis, "Nomadization," 57–58; Rıza Yıldırım, "Sunni Orthodox vs Shi'ite Heterodox?: A Reappraisal of Islamic Piety in Medieval Anatolia," in *Islam and Christianity in Medieval Anatolia*, ed. A. C. S. Peacock, Bruno De Nicola, and Sara Nur Yıldız (Farnham: Routledge, 2015), 287–307.

16 Barkan, "Essai," 20; Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 484–85; Vryonis, "Byzantine Legacy," 306; Wachtel, *Balkans*, 63.

Trinity.[17] We might view both Christianity and Islam here as subcult overlays draping a polytropic religious reality unconcerned about who believed what.

Even with conversion, there was still a great deal of overlap, with individuals participating in both subcults. In the early fifteenth century, the visiting Johann Schiltberger (1380–ca. 1440), whom the Ottomans had enslaved after Nicopolis, noted that new converts to Islam made an expanded declaration of faith, not only in the one God and Muhammad his chief prophet, but also in "the Messiah [Jesus] his servant, [and] Mary his maid." In the 1430s, a Burgundian pilgrim reported that Muslim princes in southern Anatolia used baptism as a deodorant. This hybrid Islamochristianity declined, but did not disappear, during Mehmed II's reign.[18]

Similarly, conversion rates in the Balkans conceal a partially polytropic world in which conversion was rarely deep and total. After the conquest, some supporters of the Bosnian Church, long opposed by Catholic and Orthodox Churches alike, became early adopters of Islam, perhaps with an intention to reconvert to Christianity if the Christian rulers returned. Only ever lightly Christianized, Albania was relatively easily, but lightly, Islamized, with lots of mixing and hiding: nominal Muslims left ex-votos at Christian shrines, but neglected the Ramadan fast, circumcision, veiling, and daily prayer. The Albanian noble Skanderbeg (ca. 1405–68) thought the Islamization of Kroja superficial enough to attempt to convert the converts back to Christianity. The Albanians were described as *laramanë* [dappled], because of their semi-polytropism. Serbia saw similar trends, developing what has been described as a Muslim "crypto-christianity."[19]

Hurufism

Some Muslim movements in this milieu saw particularly Jesus-centric forms of belief and practice. Jesus returned to earth in Persia in the late fourteenth century in the form of a mystic named Fazlallah Astarabadi (1339/40–94), who

17 G. G. Arnakis, "Futuwwa Traditions in the Ottoman Empire: Akhis, Bektashi Dervishes, and Craftsmen," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 12 (1953): 232–47 (240), https://doi.org/10.1086/371156; Ibn-Baṭṭūṭa, *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah*, ed. Charles Defrémery, 4 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1877), III, 264; Lowry, *Nature*, 138.

18 Bertrandon de la Broquière, *Le voyage d'outre-mer*, ed. Charles Henri Auguste Schefer (Paris: Leroux, 1892), 90, 115; Schiltberger, *Bondage and Travels*, 74–75. Lowry, *Nature*, 142, argues for full disappearance.

19 Albert Doja, "A Political History of Bektashism in Albania," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7 (2006): 87–88, https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760500477919; Fine, *Late Medieval Balkans*, 556; William L. Langer and Robert P. Blake, "The Rise of the Ottoman Turks and its Historical Background," *American Historical Review* 37 (1932): 468–505 (497–99); Stavro Skendi, "Crypto-Christianity in the Balkan Area under the Ottomans," *Slavic Review* 26 (1967): 234–44.

also claimed to be the Mahdi, the redeemer expected to come before Judgment Day. The association made sense because the Qur'an (3:39 and 3:45) identified Jesus as a "word from God" and Fazlallah had penetrated the deep meaning of the thirty-two letters of the Perso-Arabic alphabet—this was not plain-ken linguistics, but a deep-ken reflection of truth, for the essence of the universe was combinations of letters. He realized that there was no mere coincidence involved in the fact that your mouth has thirty-two teeth, and that thirty-two, plus one (the number of unity), yielded thirty-three, the age of Jesus. Some of his knowledge came directly from Jesus, as a distinct person, who spoke with him in a bathhouse in a dream. Fazlallah's teachings became known as Hurufism, with *huruf* being the Arabic word for "letters," the basic units of his alphabetic Jesus mathematics. Jesus was a special prophet, resulting from the complete manifestation of the divine Word in Mary's womb. As the first motherly (*ummi*) prophet, Jesus's Incarnation is not unlike that of Eve, the first woman. Full revelation will come with Jesus's Second Coming, and at the end of time he will become the last motherly prophet as well.[20]

Hurufist ideas spread, and became dangerous. Fazlallah's son Amir Nurallah (fifteenth century) was arrested on suspicion of attempting to assassinate Shah Rukh (1377–1447), the Timurid emperor. During the interrogation, Amir Nurallah denied the apparently common rumour that Fazlallah, by then deceased, was in fact Jesus, and would descend from heaven in 1426–27. The authorities shipped Amir Nurallah off to the court of Ulugh Beg (1394–1449), where his Hurufism was carefully probed. One courtier corrected the idea of thirty-two letters, as the Chinese knew thirty-eight. The court accepted Amir Nurallah's rebuttal, that Rumi (1207–73) wrote of only thirty-two letters. Both sides of the debate were using a deep ken that found meaning in number of the true language's alphabet, without any sense that they disagreed over what the true language was. A parallel debate on the number of bodily orifices ended when some women present confirmed Amir Nurallah's inclusion of male nipples, which produced milk during infancy, and therefore counted. Thus, he was acquitted of the assassination charge, but was returned to Shah Rukh, who probably executed him anyway.[21]

20 Hamid Algar, "Horufism," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 16 vols. (New York: Encyclopedia Iranica Foundation, 2003), XII, fasc. 5, 483–90; Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2005), 9–11; Irene Mélikoff, *Sur les traces du Soufisme turc: recherches sur l'Islam populaire en Anatolie* (Istanbul: Isis, 1992), 169–80; Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, "Words of Power: ḥurūfī Teachings between Shi'ism and Sufism in Medieval Islam: The Original Doctrine of Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī," in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 221–46.

21 Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi*, 102–05.

The *Aşkname* [Book of Love], a ca. 1430 Turkish work claiming to be a translation of Fazlallah's Persian writings, described the return of Jesus, whom it quoted directly: "I came not to destroy the religion of God, but to fulfil it," an adaptation of Mt 5:17 ("Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them"). The *Aşkname*'s Jesus added that God the Father would send a "paraclete" (variously interpreted as a reference to Muhammad, or to Fazlallah himself), and explicitly cited Jn 14, which it described as the "most authentic" gospel.[22]

The poet Imadaddin Nesimi (ca. 1369/70–1418/19) spearheaded the movement of this Hurufism into Anatolia. In general, it thrived there, although Nesimi, who liked to quote the Persian martyr-poet al-Hallaj (ca. 858–922), shared his fate, and was flayed to death at Aleppo in 1404–05 for his incarnationalism, the idea that God could take up human appearance.[23]

Bektashism

In Anatolia, Hurufism survived in part by merging with an older order, the Bektashi, which proved to be even more influential. The order drew its name from the mystic Haji Bektash Veli (ca. 1209–71). His role in the creation of a Bektashi movement is not clear. Most scholars consider him to be not the actual founder, but a figurehead chosen later. Some identify the mystic Balım Sultan (1457–17) as the "real" founder of the Bektashi order, although a reasonably distinct Bektashi movement had existed for a century earlier.[24]

Although anachronistic, the conversions described in the *Vilayetname* [The Book of Sainthood] account of Haji Bektash's life reveal that at the time

22 John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac, 1937), 152, 216.

23 Algar, "Horufism," 483–90.

24 Hamid Algar, "The Ḥurūfī Influence on Bektashism," in *Bektachiyya: études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, ed. Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (Istanbul: Isis, 1995), 39–54; Irène Beldiceanu-Steinherr, "Les Bektašī à la lumière des recensements ottomans (XVe—XVIe siècles)," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 81 (1991): 21–79; Birge, *Bektashi Order*; Fahimeh Mokhber Dezfouli, "Alevism-Bektashism From Seljuks to Ottomans and Safavids," *Alevilik-Bektaşilik Araştırmaları Dergisi* 17 (2018): 33–50, https://doi.org/10.24082/2018.abked.70; Albert Doja, "A Political History of Bektashism from Ottoman Anatolia to Contemporary Turkey," *Journal of Church and State* 48 (2006): 423–50 (423), https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/48.2.423; Suraiya Faroqhi, "Conflict, Accommodation and Long-term Survival: The Bektashi Order and the Ottoman State," in *Bektachiyya*, ed. Popovic and Veinstein, 171–84; Suraiya Faroqhi, *Der Bektaschi-Orden in Anatolien* (Vienna: Institutes für Orientalistik, 1981); Langer and Blake, "The Rise of the Ottoman Turks," 498; Mélikoff, *Sur les traces*, 51–78, 121–32; Irène Mélikoff, *Hadji Bektach: Un mythe et ses avatars* (Brill: Leiden, 1998).

they were added, perhaps around 1400, people associated Haji Bektash with conversion and proselytism. Similarly, Haji Bektash's contemporary Rumi also did missionary work, and the Mevlevi Order that traces its origins back to him did conversion work in cities. At least one Christian monk became Mevlevi while maintaining his Christian faith.[25]

The Ottomans used the Bektashi to assimilate their subject peoples, both to Islam and to Turkic culture, and to pray for the dynasty. The Bektashi were financially supported by the Ottoman state in the late fifteenth century. Their conversion approach was accommodationist and unusually open to non-normative beliefs. The Bektashi were sent by the religious authorities to make the Islamochristian tribesmen and rural Christians more orthodox—with success, although the open-minded teachers sometimes came to accept the very beliefs they had been sent to snuff out.[26]

The result was an astonishing mixture of the esoteric and the indigenous, a polytropic paradise of the pre-Islamic Turkic beliefs, indigenous Anatolian practices with roots in ancient paganism, Sufism, Buddhism, Christianity—Armenian and otherwise—and Manichaeism. Especially in the sixteenth century a Shi'ist influence developed so intensely as to deify 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin. The Bektashi pointed out parallels spanning the two major subcults: The twelve imams of local Shi'ism echoed the twelve disciples of Jesus, the virgin birth of Balım Sultan echoed the virgin birth of Jesus, and the God-Muhammad-'Ali combination echoed the Trinity. Some evidence even indicates beliefs in reincarnation and the transmigration of souls.[27]

Jesus stood amidst this whirlwind of beliefs. The *Vilayetname* relates a tradition of Jesus encountering a mountain that was suffering because in ancient times, the period of the Jewish Torah, a young man had prayed there. In some Bektashi interpretations, that young man was 'Ali. The suffering manifested itself in earthquakes and stream water turned bitter. Jesus prayed, and because his prayer always pleased God, the mountain calmed and the stream sweetened. The *Vilayetname* nearly quotes Jesus's "I am with you always" (Mt 28:20), by

25 Erich Gross, ed., *Das Vilâjet-nâme des Hâğği Bektash: ein türkisches Derwischevangelium* (Leipzig: Mayer and Müller, 1927); Vryonis, "Nomadization," 64–66.

26 Doja, "Bektashism from Ottoman Anatolia," 429–30; Vryonis, "Nomadization," 64.

27 Birge, *Bektashi Order*, 217–18; Doja, "Bektashism in Albania," 85; Doja, "Bektashism from Ottoman Anatolia," 423–24; F. W. Hasluck, "Heterodox Tribes of Asia Minor," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 51 (1921): 310–42 (341), https://doi.org/10.2307/2843453; Langer and Blake, "The Rise of the Ottoman Turks," 498; Vryonis, *Decline*, 372.

saying, "Wherever you are we will be a companion to you."[28] The *Vilayetname* also mentions that one of Bektash's disciples, when going out as a missionary, was recognized by Christians as Jesus himself.[29] Some Christians, unsurprisingly, recognized Bektash as a Christian saint.

With the Bektashi poet Kaygusuz Abdal (1341–1444) we move towards a universalism rooted in his vernacular and unpretentious vision. In one poem, Kaygusuz Abdal claimed to be twenty-eight different things ("I am the rememberer and what is remembered [...] the hidden and the seen") and insisted that twenty more were within him ("The spirit and the body, the proof and the evidence, / both profit and loss— / the whole marketplace is in me.") The poem was exactly these forty-eight assertions. In it, Kaygusuz Abdal claimed membership in both subcults ("I am the Muslim. I am the Christian.") and identity with Jesus ("I am the crucified saviour"). This goes far beyond inter-religious ecumenicism, as immediately after "saviour" he included "the good and the evil," as either a possession or an identification; later he stipulated that "faith and faithlessness are in me." In his cosmic vision, at once transcendent and immanent, "Truth satiates the world / The world is suffused with truth."[30]

Parallel Movements

Just after 1400, a preacher in Bursa, citing Qur'an 2:285 "We make no distinction between any of His messengers," argued that Jesus and Muhammad were equal. Locals approved his message, but a visiting Arab overheard and was horrified. Regional support for the preacher's assertion was so strong that the Arab had to travel all the way to Syria before he could find a legal authority to share his horror. In one account, the Arab finally settled the matter personally, and "slaughtered" the preacher "as a butcher doth a sheep." When word reached the poet Süleyman Çelebi (1351–1422), he pointedly penned verses praising Muhammad's birth, but even this orthodox defence proved popular in this

28 Birge, *Bektashi Order*, 44, 217.

29 This is Sari Ismail. See Gross, ed., *Das Vilâjet-nâme*, 163–68.

30 Jennifer Ferraro, ed. and trans., *Quarreling with God: Mystic Rebel Poems of the Dervishes of Turkey* (Ashland: White Cloud, 2007), 23–24, 100–01; Annemarie Schimmel, A*us dem goldenen Becher: Türkische Gedichte aus sieben Jahrhunderten* (Cologne: Önel, 1993), 59–63; Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 335–36; Ahmet T. Karamustafa, "Kaygusuz Abdal: A Medieval Turkish Saint and the Formation of Vernacular Islam in Anatolia," in *Unity in Diversity: Mysticism, Messianism and the Construction of Religious Authority in Islam*, ed. Orkhan Mir-Kasimov (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 329–42 (334), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004262805_014

complex environment, all the way into the crypto-Christian Balkans. Even more bold, other Muslim theologians at the time asserted that Jesus was himself the greatest prophet.[31]

Such thinking sparked social unrest. In 1415 and 1416, revolts led by Badr al-Din (d. 1416) and Bürklüdje Mustafa (late fourteenth to early fifteenth century) broke out in Anatolia and Rumelia. They fired up their followers, poor Christians and Muslims, by calling for the communal holding of property and for the equality of both religions. In fact, they went beyond teaching equality: a true Muslim, worthy of salvation, was in harmony with Christianity and recognized it as a way to salvation. In their eyes, acceptance of Christianity became a part of Muslim doctrine. Badr al-Din's family included Christians, such as his wife, daughter-in-law, and mother—who later converted to Islam. Once, Badr al-Din stood on the Wallachian coast watching his ship being wrecked by hostile Christians. His captain was captured, but later released when Badr al-Din and Jesus jointly appeared in local ecclesiastical authorities' dreams to make an appeal. Badr al-Din was hailed as a new messiah. The Ottoman state, alarmed, suppressed the movement violently.[32]

These trends continued through the century. Around 1444, a Persian Muslim preacher was executed in Edirne for preaching Jesus. In 1495, reports, unreliable in their optimism, reached Rome that one or two dozen *qadis* had preached Christianity in mosques in Istanbul, amidst panic over a possible invasion by Charles VIII of France (1470–98).[33]

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31 Süleyman Çelebi, *The Mevlidi Sherif*, trans. F. Lyman MacCallum (London: John Murray, 1943); E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 6 vols. (London: Luzac, 1900), I, 232–34; Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary,* trans. Benjamin Stolz (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1975), 17–25; Schiltberger, *Bondage and Travels*, 75–76.

32 H. I. Cotsonis, "Aus der Endzeit von Byzanz: Bürklüdsche Mustafa, ein Märtyrer für die Koexistenz zwischen Islam und Christentum," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 50 (1958): 397–404; Harry Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State UP, 1975), 120–21**;** Ernst Werner, "Häresie, Klassenkampf und religiöse Toleranz in einer islamisch-christilichen Kontaktzone," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 12 (1964): 255–76. For the dream, see Han Joachim Kissling, "Das Menāqybnāme Scheich Bedr ed-Dīn's, des Sohnes des Richters von Samāvnā," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 100 (1950): 112–76 (167–68).

33 Colin Imber, "A Note on 'Christian' Preachers in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Ottoman Studies* 10 (1990): 59–67 (59–60, 62–64). Kaygusuz Abdal also wrote several poems on—I mean, about—hashish, and was particularly keen to the limitations of language and rationality: "My speech is twisted nonsense, every word an unripe plum, and like a stork I'm always wandering far and wide."

Sultans against Polytropism

Political elites eventually decided to fight such polytropic practices that went beyond traditional Islam. Around 1500, the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (rl. 1481–1512) himself joined the Bektashi Order, and supported Balım Sultan's efforts to reform it into what they saw as greater orthodoxy. As the Ottoman state consolidated and sought a more robust commercial economy, it wanted a single law system—shariah law was especially attractive for its ability to incorporate local traditions—and religious eclecticism became unwelcome. Thus, in the 1510s, the collaborative relationship between the sultanate and the Bektashi ended. By then the Ottomans were also fighting the Shi'a Safavids, and the Bektashi's increasing enthusiasm for 'Ali made them suspect. Perhaps the Safavid Shah Ismail (1487–1524) himself had encouraged the Bektashi to include 'Ali in their unified Trinity. Ottoman financial support of the order came to an abrupt halt.[34]

East of the Ottomans, the Turkomen also became less willing to allow mixed religious views among their subjects. The Aq Qoyunlyu ruler Uzun Hasan (1423–78) ended a traditional policy of toleration when a need to win the support of the *ulama* scholars motivated him to limit the public Christian celebration of feast days, to increase taxes on Christians, and to require that they wear clothing that made their affiliation clear. To avoid confiscation of their estates, some Christian nobles took advantage of a Muslim legal mechanism, the *waqf*, to donate land to the Church, leading to a decline in the wealth of the Christian aristocracy alongside an upswing in the wealth of the Church. This prosecution would intensify under Uzun Hasan's successors.[35]

Iberia

In terms of religious demography, Iberia was far from Anatolia. Instead of Muslim elites gaining influence in a majority Christian society, Iberia saw Christian elites ruling a majority Christian society, a dangerous power differential poised at the throat of the Jewish minority. Instead of promoting a conventional, "pure" form of Islam on a society accustomed to using multiple religious traditions, it saw

34 Doja, "Bektashism from Ottoman Anatolia," 430–36; Imber, "Note on 'Christian,'" 59–67; Mélikoff, *Sur les traces*, 17–50.

35 Bournoutian, *Concise History*, 112; Razmik Panoissian, *The Armenians: From Kings and Priests to Merchants and Commissars* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 66–73; Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 168.

rulers promoting a pure form of Christianity that had no space for the Jewish tradition that had fathered it.

In the Far West, increased interest in Jesus's suffering directed attention to the Jews' role in his execution. Christian attitudes towards Jews were mixed. The Jews' failure to accept Jesus as the Messiah was sometimes tolerated, perhaps especially when the Christians were unaware of the Jewish perspective that the suffering servant of Isaiah 52–53 represented not Jesus, but the Jews themselves.[36] One early-fourteenth-century medical text, repeatedly published in the late fifteenth century, explained that Jews particularly had hemorrhoids because of excess anxiety, a lack of exercise, and the divine curse cited in Ps 78:66: "He beat back his enemies; he put them to everlasting shame."[37] Typically, Christians felt both a respect for the Jews' witness to the authority of the Old Testament, as well as a fear of the possibility of blasphemy and pollution by associating with them. Pope Innocent III (1161–1216), for example, reported rumours that Jews advised wet nurses to reroute their milk into the latrine for the three days after taking Communion.[38]

Jews were often under royal protection, and usually under papal protection, excepting of course those Jews who "presumed to machinate to disgrace the faith."[39] Theological hostility was getting worse: Denis the Carthusian (1402–71) explicitly specified that God did not intend for the Jews to murder Jesus; He only allowed it to happen, but the intention to murder—and the guilt for it—was theirs alone. Alonso de Espina (ca. 1410–64) divided the typical wrongdoings of Jewish converts to Christianity into three groups: the immoral, the Jewish, and the anti-Christian—the last category included especially crimes against the host.[40]

In 1400, the medieval story of the Wandering Jew remained current throughout Europe. Beyond many variations, the core story remembered a Jewish shoemaker mocking Jesus as he carried the cross to his Crucifixion; Jesus

36 Robert Chazan, *Fashioning Jewish Identity in Medieval Western Christendom* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2003), 162–78, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511496431; Samuel R. Driver and Adolf Neubauer, ed., *The "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters* (New York: Hermon Press, 1877).

37 Bernard de Gordon, *Lilium medicinae* (Lyons: Rovillium, 1559), 519.

38 Robert Chazan, ed., *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (West Orange: Behrman, 1980), 27–36.

39 For example, Gregory IX, 6 April 1233, "…dummodo nichil machinari presumant in ignominiam fidei Christiane…" in Solomon Grayzel, ed., *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, rev. ed. (New York: Herman, 1966), 202.

40 Christopher Ocker, "Ritual Murder and the Subjectivity of Christ: A Choice in Medieval Christianity," *The Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998): 158–63; Nadia Zeldes, *"The Former Jews of this Kingdom": Sicilian Converts after the Expulsion, 1492–1516* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 222, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004476004

cursed him, that he must wander aimlessly until Jesus returned. Known variously as Cartaphilus or as Giovanni Votaddio ("Beats God"), this unfortunate soul was repeatedly seen across the Far West. The earliest recorded spotting was in Armenia in the thirteenth century, and in our period was witnessed at least twice in Italy, at Mugello in 1413 and at Florence in 1414–16.[41] He was called the "eternal Jew" in eastern and central Europe, and the "wandering Jew" in western and southern Europe.

In Iberia, Christians seeking to convert Jews stressed that the Bible proved that Jesus was the Messiah and that reason itself demonstrated the necessity for his Incarnation. They underlined their argument by pointing out the Jews' material poverty, consonant with their spiritual errors. A more recent argument—originating in thirteenth-century Barcelona—insisted that not only the Bible, but even the rabbinic writings known as the Haggadah, which Christians particularly disliked, showed that Jesus was the Messiah. This shifted the nature of the debates. The Christians were no longer arguing that Christianity was true: its truth was now obvious, and the new argument held that this obvious truth could be found in even the "worst" Jewish writings.

How did the medieval Jews respond? Some appealed to reason (the Trinity was illogical, and the Incarnation so irrational as to be obscene), and others attacked the morality of the supposedly superior Christians. Jews like the twelfth-century Jacob ben Reuben made their own translations of the New Testament, and underlined its contradictions. Many of their arguments were for the plain ken. The Vulgate Bible that the Christians used was a bad translation, they asserted. Furthermore, Christians ignored the historical context, and were quick to abandon the literal meaning for the figurative. The defenders of Judaism also evoked a plain-ken history in arguing that material success, the kind the Jews lacked, was no guarantee of truth.[42]

By 1392, the Catalan Christian scholar Francesc Eiximenis (d. 1409) had completed four books of a massive compendium of knowledge, planned in thirteen volumes to deep-ken echo the number of Jesus plus his twelve disciples. The first volume answered a rabbi's argument that Jesus could not have been sent from God, for he was born in a humble place and lived a humble life with humble associates. That is, in this Jewish perspective, anyone with divine

41 Salomone Morpurgo, *L'Ebreo Errante in Italia* (Florence: Dante, 1891), 28–40.

42 Robert Chazan, *The Jews of Medieval Western Christendom: 1000–1500* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2006), 255, https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511818325; David J. Viera, "The Evolution of Francesc Eiximenis's Attitudes toward Judaism," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Steven J. McMichael (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 147–59 (153), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789047400219_011; Joshua L. Levy, "'*Sefer Milhamot Hashem*', Chapter Eleven: The Earliest Jewish Critique of the New Testament" (PhD thesis, New York University, 2004).

origins, of deep-ken significance, could not have an insignificant origin. Note that this reversed the medieval Jewish plain-ken arguments.[43]

Eiximenis responded vigorously. Jesus himself said (e.g., Mt 13:57) that a prophet was not honoured in his home. Eiximenis appealed to Jesus's human intentions: Jesus chose Nazareth as his home as an expression of humility, and for its peaceful backwater atmosphere. "Nazareth" meant "sprout," allegorically suggesting its fruitfulness. Furthermore, history gave numerous examples of great people from modest origins, including Alexander the Great—evidently Eiximenis did not think much of Macedonia. Eiximenis admitted that Christianity's geography was limited, extending only as far as Hungary, but noted that truth was not determined by geographical extent. He did concede, and regret, that Christians had less respect for the mass than the Jews had for the Sabbath.

From the late 1370s, popular preachers across Spain whipped up crowds' passions into an anti-Semitic fury. In 1388, Ferran Martínez, accused by more moderate voices of being out to "avenge the blood of Christ," asked his audiences, "Had not Jesus said to his disciples when he sent them to preach the Gospel that anyone who would refuse Jesus's reign should be viewed as His enemy and as a son of the devil?"[44] The 1390 death of their royal protector John I of Castile (1358–90) exposed the Jews' precarious position: intellectual enthusiasm for secular philosophy had weakened the Jewish religious identity, and socio-economic poverty had weakened their will to resist. The summer of 1391 was apocalyptic for Jews across Castile and Aragon, as mobs raged. Synagogues were destroyed or converted into churches. Thousands of Jews were killed. Thousands more allowed themselves to be baptized as an alternative, with varying sincerity or belief in the validity of a rite conducted under such duress.[45]

The polemical exchanges continued. Around 1400, Eiximenis was composing a new work, a life of Christ with a less aggressive tone. He stipulated that he did not believe the Jews desecrated the consecrated Eucharistic host, although their murder of Jesus condemned them anyway. Perhaps his pen was moderated by the plain-ken defeat of the Jews, or by their approaching doom with the year 1400 and the deep-ken power of its divisibility by 100.[46] The Jew Astruc Remoch converted and was baptized in 1391, taking the name Francisco Dias-Carni ("God-flesh")

43 Francesc Eiximenis, *Primer del Crestià*, in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS 1790. See Viera, "Evolution," 149–55.

44 Paul of Burgos, *Scrutinium scripturarum* (Burgos: Philippum Iuntam, 1591), 521–26. This translation is from Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (New York: Random House, 1995), 135–36, 200.

45 Chazan, *The Jews*, 106–10.

46 Francesc Eiximenis, *Vida de Jesucrist*, in Barcelona, Biblioteca Catalunya, MS 459 and 460. See Viera, "Evolution;" Pere Bohigas Balaguer, "Prediccions i profecies en

in honour of the Incarnation, and wrote a letter asserting that the Old Testament alone proved both the Trinity and the Eucharist's transubstantiation. Against it, Rabbi Solomon ben Reuben Bonfed replied that the convert so needed to "twist and distort the Bible text to establish the Trinity" that he could have just as well proved the "Quaternity." Just after 1400, Profiat Duran (ca. 1350–1415) wrote his satirical attack on Christianity, *Al-Tehi ka-Aboteka* [Be Not Like Your Fathers], with such subtlety that Christians long mistook it for a defence of Christianity, and would cite it approvingly.[47] In these years, the Jews in Toledo produced an apparently, conveniently, first-century letter revealing that their ancestors had in fact opposed the execution of Jesus in Palestine (see Chapter 4).[48]

The Disputation at Tortosa

The surviving Jews had barely recovered when the Church pounced to save them, too. A new disputation was held in the city of Tortosa, in Aragon, in 1413–14. A recent convert, Gerónimo de Santa Fe (Joshua ben Joseph al-Lorqui, fl. 1400–30), was the lead disputant for the Christians. He had once written anti-Christian polemics, but with the conversion restarted his career as a writer of anti-Jewish polemics. Some Jews, horrified by his treachery, came up with a mnemonic re-arrangement of Gerónimo's name into "blasphemer." Pope Benedict XIII (1328–1423), in a disputed line of the papacy, presided over the Tortosa proceedings. Defeat would devastate Jewish morale and prompt harsh new legal persecution.[49]

When the rabbis arrived, saw the hundreds of ecclesiastical and secular officials enthroned against them and the scribes carefully recording their names and places of origin, "our heart melted and became water." Gerónimo began his opening speech with a threat from Isaiah 1: when the rabbis protested, the Pope

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les obres de fra Francesc Eiximenis," in *Aportació a l'estudi de la literatura catalana*, ed. Bohigas Balaguer (Barcelona: Abadia de Montserrat, 1982), 94–115.

47 Isaac Broydé, "Polemics and Polemical Literature," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Isidore Singer, 12 vols. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901–06), X, 105–06; H. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, ed. Isidore Singer, 6 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1894), IV, 182.

48 "Carta que fiz traducir de caldeo en latin e romance el noble Rey Don Alfonso que la vila de Toledo conquirio e yaze en el armario del aiuntamiento de Toledo," in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, MS 838, fol. 2r–9v (two copies).

49 Hieron de Sancta Fide, *Hebraeomastix: Vinde Impietatis, ac Perfidiae Iudaicae* (Frankfurt: Ioachimum Bratheringium, 1602); Hyam Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Littman, 1982), 168, 220. See Antonio Palacios López, *La Disputa de Tortosa* (Madrid: Arias Montano, 1957).

simply pointed out that they should not be upset by it since Gerónimo was in fact "one of you"—that is, a recent convert.

The rabbis were pragmatic. They abandoned their usual lively style of vigorous debate, and instead resolved to be respectful and even-tempered through the proceedings. Their caution doubled mid-debate, when they realized their words were being transcribed. Since they could neither verify the accuracy of the transcript nor question the reliability of a papal scribe, they "agreed to be guarded in our speech, and to keep silent as much as possible." Unimpressed by their tactic, the Pope told them they could choose either to give forthcoming answers, or die. The rabbis hastily devised a new strategy: "Only one of us would speak, and if his words pleased the Pope, well and good." If the answer annoyed the Pope, "we would say that his reply was not agreed by all of us, and that it was a mistake, and our opinion differed from his."[50]

Benedict explained that the purpose was not to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, then obvious, but to show that the Talmud and Jewish tradition themselves proved that the Messiah had already come, a key step towards identifying Jesus as that Messiah. Joseph Albo, a leader of the Jewish side, protested that he had never objected to the idea of the Messiah having already come, and argued that messianism was not necessarily Jewish.[51]

The rabbis received some formal considerations. Because the Jewish law was older than the Christian law, the burden of proof was on Gerónimo to demonstrate why the Jews must abandon their tradition. Moreover, the prelates recognized the relativity of reason: Because the rabbis had not been trained in the Christian style of logic, the Pope told them they could ignore Gerónimo when he used logical syllogisms, but "when he speaks of proofs from tradition, answer him with tradition."[52]

Let us listen in on the debate. Gerónimo points to the passage "The world will be not less than 85 jubilees, and in the last jubilee, he will come," and the

50 Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial*, 178–79.

51 Joseph Sarachek, *The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1932), 212–15. See Brian Ogren, "The Forty-Nine Gates of Wisdom as Forty-Nine Ways to Christ: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's Heptaplus and Nahmanidean Kabbalah," *Rinascimento* 49 (2009): 27–43 (33).

52 The rabbi Hasdai Crescas (1340–1410) had written a Castilian *Refutation of Christian Principles* that made a similar argument for the burden of proof: "if the evidences of both religions were equal in number, credibility, and cogency, and were it difficult to decide to which religion the verdict should go, the benefit of the doubt would be in favour of the more ancient faith, Judaism." Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial*, 171, 175. See Sarachek, *Doctrine of the Messiah*, 197; Carlos del Valle Rodríguez, ed., *La inconsistencia de los dogmas cristianos, de Crescas* (*Biṭṭul 'Iqqare ha-Notsrim le-Rabbí Ḥasday Crescas*) (Madrid: Aben Ezra, 2000).

rabbis note that Jesus did not come at that time. Gerónimo, however, reminds them that the precise question is not whether Jesus was the Messiah but whether the Messiah has come. This confounds the rabbis, who cry out to the Pope, "If it was not Jesus—in whom some sign of greatness and wisdom appeared—who can it be? Matteo the madman, or Marvaste the fool?" The Pope, however, finds Gerónimo's distinction to be on point—and is frustrated that the rabbis do not understand Gerónimo, a fellow Jew. Benedict tells the rabbis that if they say that the Messiah has come, but is not Jesus, then Gerónimo will be happy to reveal the Messiah's identity.[53]

Frustrated, the rabbis go on the offence, and argue that the Talmud actually condemns the kind of chronological investigation that Gerónimo attempted. They cite the passage "Blasted be the breath of those who calculate the end!" The Pope exclaims, "O foolish Talmudists!"—which gives the rabbis an opportunity to question the entire proceedings: if the Talmud is "foolish," why is Gerónimo seeking to use it as an authority. This angers Benedict even more, although he enjoys the rabbis' clever follow-up: Daniel was a prophet, not a calculator.[54]

We should also get a sense of how both sides used the Talmud's text. The rabbis protested that Gerónimo was reading selectively. In citing one passage of messianic calculations, he omitted the conclusion, which negated them: "Through our many iniquities all these years have been lost. And because of the increase of our sins, all these years have been lost." This made such calculations invalid for determining whether the Messiah had already come. Gerónimo defended his selection with the plain ken: the valid first half of the verse was written by Elijah, and the second by the Talmudists, who added it only to prevent the first half's application to Jesus. The rabbis protested by appealing to skepticism: how could one know that Elijah did not write the entire verse? The authorship was thus in doubt. They explained that "it is the way of our Talmud that when an explanation is not compelling because of some difficulty made against it, the expression 'perhaps' is used, and no reply is made…" Underneath this doubt, however, they pointed out, with the deep ken, that it was more "fitting" that a single verse have a single author.[55]

The Pope judged in favour of the Christians. The entire proceedings was a heavy blow to the already devastated Jewish morale. Jews, even from among the group of disputing rabbis, converted in large numbers, before the debate had even concluded. Pope Benedict issued a bull in 1415 which outlawed the study of the Talmud, Jews' utterance of the name of Jesus, their manufacture of

53 Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial*, 176; Palacios López, *La Disputa*, 31.
54 Maccoby, ed., *Judaism on Trial*, 176.
55 Ibid., 172–73. The passage in question is from *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Neziḳin*, ed. I. Epstein, 12 vols. (London: Soncino, 1935), II, 657 (97a–97b).

Communion chalices, and their public appearance without a distinctive badge. Physically forcing a Jew to convert was invalid. Encouraging a conversion by making death the alternative allowed the Jew to make a choice, and therefore, although Benedict admitted that the death threat itself was evil, such a conversion was legitimate.[56]

After Tortosa

In the 1430s, royal and papal intervention was needed to specify that all Christians were Christian. This was the exception that proved the rule in an Iberia that continued to distinguish the "real" Christians of Christian families from the lesser Christians of convert families (*conversos*), with the latter often ineligible for public office and undesirable in marriage.[57] The Jews' declaration in the Gospel of Matthew (27:25), "Let his blood be on us and on our children," was understood as a binding oath that brought a curse upon even descendants of Jews who had converted to Christianity.[58] The *conversos* criticized these racial arguments by pointing out that Christianity had its origins in Judaism and Jesus had his origins in the Jews. Alfonso de Cartagena (ca. 1450; he was baptized as a boy when his father, Paul of Burgos, converted in 1391) actively wrote in defense of the *conversos*. He insisted that Israel would be redeemed by Jesus. With the plain ken, Alfonso pointed out that most Jews were not present at the Passion, and could not have participated in that blood curse.[59]

The conquest of Constantinople in 1453 launched movements among *conversos* in Valencia that expected the arrival of the true Messiah: the deep ken linked the cataclysmic event that had just happened to more cataclysmic events to come. These were echoed two decades later in Córdoba.[60]

In 1492, the Catholic Monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand (1452–1516), expelled from their territories any Jews unwilling to convert, which caused further disruptions. That same year, Isaac Abrabanel (1437–1508), a Jewish scholar-financier in Portugal, attempted to pay protection money to allow the Jews to stay. Heartbroken by the expulsion, he wrote a series of apologetic works

56 Chazan, *The Jews*, 110.
57 Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities," 23–24.
58 For example, Paul of Burgos, *Scrutinium scripturarum*, 498–506.
59 Alfonso de Cartagena, *Defensorium Unitatis Christianae*, ed. Manuel Alonso (Madrid: Escuela de Estudios Hebraicos, 1943), 94, 166. See Netanyahu, *Origins of the Inquisition*, 281, 537, 548, 996.
60 Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961), II, 292–95; John Edwards, "Elijah and the Inquisition: Messianic Prophecy Among Conversos in Spain, C.1500," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 28 (1984): 79–94 (82).

in the 1490s. Abrabanel emphasized the importance of scripture over reason, and on the importance of messianism for Judaism—but Jesus was not that Messiah. Indeed, the Jews' rejection of Jesus proves that he was not the Messiah. In some verses of Isaiah (52:13–53:11), "my servant" referred to Israel, not the Messiah, so in the verse where its meaning was ambiguous, Abrabanel argued for a continuity of meaning—this too referred to Israel. "He had no form nor comeliness that we should look upon him. Nor beauty that we should delight in him" could not refer to Jesus, who was beautiful. In 1495, Jewish negotiators nearly secured a concession that unconverted Jews might remain in exchange for payment of a hefty fine—at the last moment a Christian official reminded Isabel of Judas betraying Jesus for silver, and the deal collapsed. In 1492, many Jews fled to Portugal, but in 1497, in order to marry Isabella of Aragon (1470–98), Ferdinand and Isabella's eldest daughter, the Portuguese king Manuel I (1469–1521) undertook an expulsion of his own: some Jews emigrated to colonies; others converted, taking ostentatiously Christian names like Cruz (cross), Trinidad (trinity), and Santos (saints). Ghettoization continued through the century, and by 1520 few Jews remained in western Europe.[61]

Conversion under such circumstances was, not unreasonably, considered suspect, and the "new" Christians faced continuing persecution, discrimination, and special requirements. The emphasis on blood continued. The *converso* Mosén Diego de Valera (1412–88), expert in chivalry, explained that non-Christians had their own aristocracies—that high social status would only increase upon conversion to Christianity—and the Jews had the extraordinary distinction of having been chosen for the Incarnation: God had made Jesus a Jew.[62]

Envoi

This chapter has explored the boundaries, at a cultural and social level, between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We looked at two cases of a growing societal saturation of one religion: Islam at the expense of Christianity in Anatolia, and Christianity at the expense of Judaism in Iberia. In these shifting contexts, two men exemplify the navigation strategies we have seen throughout the chapter.

The first, one Simón de Santa Clara (late fifteenth century), from Cataluyud, lived in all three traditions. His father had compelled him to convert from

61 Sarachek, *Doctrine of the Messiah*, 225, 230, 253–55; Jon Cowans, ed., *Early Modern Spain: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 24–27.

62 Nirenberg, "Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities," 30–31; Martin de Córdoba, "Espejo de la verdadera nobleza," in *Prosistas castellanos del siglo XV*, ed. Mario Penna (Madrid: Atlas, 1959), 102–05.

Judaism to Christianity around age twelve, and later in life he cannily suggested his willingness to be a Jewish-Christian-Muslim: "I have kept the Holy Law of Moses. I have kept the law of Jesus Christ, and if right now Saint Muhammad appeared, by God! I would keep all three; and if all were to end tomorrow, I would not fear God because I had walked in all three laws."[63]

The second, Anselm Turmeda (1355–1423), moved between two traditions in ambigious ways. Born in Majorca and memorizing most of the gospels as a child, Anselm went on to study at the University of Lerida (Catalonia), then on to Bologna, where he lived for ten years with the elderly priest Nicholas Martello, as his servant and student. One day, the priest was too ill to lecture, and the students waiting for him to arrive discussed Jesus's mention of a paraclete who would come after him (Jn 14:26, cf. Qur'an 61:6). The student returned home, and told Martello of the conversation. The professor revealed that the paraclete mentioned by Jesus was actually the prophet Muhammad, and that Islam was the true religion. Asked his opinion about Christianity, the priest-professor replied, "My son, if the Christians had persisted in the original religion of Jesus, they would indeed belong to the religion of God, for the religion of Jesus and all of the Prophets is that of God."[64] He urged the student to convert to Islam if he wanted to be saved, noting ruefully that he would himself if he were younger and stronger. The student sailed via Majorca and Sicily to Tunis, where he converted, to the shock of the Christian merchant expatriate community and the delight of the sultan, who made him an officer at the customs-house. Anselm became 'Abd Allah al-Tarjuman ("the translator"), and wrote a *Tuhfat al-Arib fi al-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Salib* [Autobiography and Retort to the Followers of the Cross] (1420). Following Islamic traditions, he argued that Jesus was not God, but just a human prophet, who did not die. The gospels were falsified. He carefully distinguished between the "Nazarene" religion (Christianity) and Islam, "the truly founded religion [*al-din al-qawim*]," the religion that "abrogates all other religions [*al-nasikh* [...] *kull al-adyani*]." The "religion of Jesus" he identified with Islam.[65]

63 Encarnación Marín Padilla, "Relación judeoconversa durante la segunda mitad del siglo XV en Aragón: Enfermedades y muertes," *Sefarad* 43 (1983): 251–344 (306–07).

64 'Abd Allāh al-Turjumān, "The Autobiography of Fray Anselmo Turmeda," trans. Dwight F. Reynolds, in *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Dwight F. Reynolds (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 194–201 (198).

65 تحفة الأريب في الرد على أهل الصليب (n.p., 1873), 2–3, 6–9.