

THE MONOTHEISTS

JEW, CHRISTIAN, AND MUSLIM IN
CONFLICT AND COMPETITION



The Peoples of God

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4

A Kingdom of Priests

IT IS SOMETIMES pointed out that there is no such thing as “Judaism,” or “Christianity,” or “Islam” save what we construct as such in our own minds: there are, in truth, only Jews, Christians, and Muslims. To put it somewhat more accurately, however, those names are what the believers constructed in their own minds. The three group designators were devised not by modern social scientists but by members of the groups themselves, early on. The conceptualized “Judaism” first appears, in Greek, in 2 Maccabees 2:21; in 14:38 the phrase “practicing Judaism” is used. It is echoed by Paul (Gal. 1:13–14). “Christian” is used quite self-consciously as a very new membership marker in Acts 11:26, and “Christianity” (Gk. *Christianismos*; Lat. *Christianitas*) appears, now as a fully domesticated term, in Ignatius and Polycarp at the end of the first and beginning of the second Christian century. “Islam” has the most exalted pedigree of all. It was God’s own designation of the “religion” to which he had summoned the believers. As often in the Quran, God himself is speaking: “If anyone desires a religion (*din*) other than Islam (*al-islam*), never will it be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of the losers” (3:85).

The believers thus saw themselves as members of an identifiable group, and they organized themselves as such, even at times in a form close to something we might call a state (see I/6–8). The three faith communities are in fact metasocieties whose special quality derives from their being founded by divine decree and as part of a divine plan. The famous Covenant concluded by God with Abraham is the founding charter of that sense of community, and all subsequent claims of filiation go back to it. Although this Covenant was initiated and in a sense dictated by God, its adherents must, like Abraham himself, assent to it.

Each of the communities of Jews, Christians, and Muslims has, then, an absolute quality that sets it off from merely human societies. Its claims derive from God and so are absolute; they trump any merely human demands of loyalty toward the state or even family. Unlike civil society, which looks primarily toward the rights of its members, religious communities look chiefly to the

responsibilities of the believers who constitute them. But for all their transcendent qualities, the monotheist religious communities are still made up of mortal men and women who have had to work out, with only partial help from God, their community boundaries and the identity markers of their members or, to put it more bluntly, who was in, who was out, and, always more difficult to explain, how and why.

Identity Markers

Who or what is a Jew is a legitimate, self-posed question for Jews, as is its counterpart for the other two bodies of monotheists. Each community has struggled to define and so separate itself from the various “others” who surrounded and challenged it. By defining themselves, at least in part, as Children of Abraham, the Jews laid down the initial issue of identification for both the Christians and the Muslims, who likewise claimed that title. Thus the Christians had from the outset not merely to identify themselves as the authentic Abrahamic heirs, but to deny such a claim to the Jews, to dismantle at least part of the Jews’ self-identification, and the Muslims to do likewise with both the Jews and the Christians.

This is the overarching religious context of the monotheist communities’ self-identification. But from the beginning, each community had also to define itself against its immediate neighbors and rivals. As we read into the Bible, it becomes clear that the first element in Jewish self-identification was that they were people of the special covenant offered them by their God, accepted by them and sealed with the sign of circumcision. Yet that is not how they referred to themselves. They were not *Benei Brith*, “Covenanters” but *Benei Israel*, “descendants” or “the tribe” of Israel. Where we might have expected *Benei Abraham*, they claimed instead to be the linear descendants of Abraham’s grandson, Israel. That tribal identity was not enough, however. After we are told about Israel and his twelve offspring who will eventually constitute the people “Israel,” we are introduced in the rest of the Pentateuch to another, more elaborate set of distinctive marks that have nothing to do with lineage and everything to do with cultural and social separation of the Israelites from their neighbors.

The Christians’ problems were from the outset more complex since they had initially to lay claim to the special spiritual identity possessed since the patriarchal age by their parent community, the *Benei Israel*, and at the same time to maintain themselves, like the Israelites, as separate from the pagan world around them. Muhammad’s first concern was, like that of the early Israelites, to define his community by its monotheism, in contrast to the prevalent idolatry and polytheism of Mecca and Arabia generally: we are “believers” (*muminun*) and “submitters” (*muslimun*); you are “unbelievers” (*kafirun*) and “associators” (*mushrikun*), the Quran asserts. As the Muslim community took shape around that basic marker, other identity issues arose, initially by the presence in Medina

a Jewish community that could, and apparently did, deny Muhammad's implicit inclusion of his submitters in some supposed community of monotheists—what later came to be called, with a somewhat different marker, the People of the Book (see II/1). In its Medina suras the Quran thus takes up the task of distinguishing the Muslims from both the Jews and the Christians by recourse to the notion of a religion of Abraham, a faith community that antedated both Judaism and Christianity and of which the Muslims were the most authentic representatives (see I/3).

In and Out

The boundaries of community, once marked, had also to be warded: the members had to decide who was to be allowed in, and how, the process that may be generally defined as conversion. Entry into the community is usually marked with a formal ritual performed either on behalf of a newborn inductee (infant circumcision in Judaism and Islam, infant baptism in Christianity) or as an adult initiation rite (pubescent circumcision in Islam and adult baptism in Christianity; bar mitzvah in Judaism, confirmation in Christianity). The community has, moreover, also to discern who is to be excluded from it, and why. Whereas apostasy is effectively self-exclusion—an individual's formal adjuration of his or her faith—banning, the Hebrew *herem*, or, as the Christians called it, excommunication, occurs when the community, acting through some competent authority, cancels the individual's membership and imposes some form of exclusion.

Judaism and Islam have very diffuse religious authority structures and so it is not entirely clear who is competent to render such a decision or how far such a writ runs. The rabbis seem to have invoked *herem* chiefly against those who spoke ill of rabbis, and then not very often or very effectively (see I/5). Pre-Reform Christianity, in contrast, did possess a defined and competent authority and the combination of a monarchical episcopate (see I/6) and the Church's guardianship of the merits of Jesus' redemptive death made excommunication a frequently invoked and powerfully effective instrument of theological orthodoxy and ecclesiastical policy (see II/5). With the sixteenth-century disintegration of the Church into confessional churches, however, and the redefinition of the latter's authority, jurisdictions narrowed, as did the force of excommunication.

Kinship and Covenant

The Jews were a kinship community from the beginning. The Covenant was granted to Abraham and his heirs, and the dramatic tension of the Genesis narrative is generated by the fact that Abraham had no issue. Indeed, Abraham's very first words to God in Genesis are "Lord God, what can You give

me, seeing I am childless?” (15:2). Once there was an heir—the precise heir, as we have seen, was a matter of some dispute in the generations of Isaac and Jacob—the inheritance was settled permanently on the Benei Israel, the twelve tribes descended from Jacob/Israel’s twelve sons. This self-appellation leaves no doubt that it is kinship identity that is at stake in the Covenant. The ethnic cleansing that occurred in Palestine after the return of the exiles (Ezra 9–10)—Israelites who had married “foreign” wives had to rid themselves of both those brides and the offspring of such unions—underlines the point forcefully, as does the later halakic or religio-legal definition of a Jew as someone born of a Jewish mother.

Note: The foundation of the State of Israel as a Jewish state and the 1950 adoption of the Law of Return stating that “every Jew has the right to emigrate to the State of Israel,” and be granted citizenship therein, raised the identity issue in a new form. The Zionist founding fathers seemed willing to accept a broad self-identification—“a Jew is anyone who says he is a Jew”—as a basis for granting citizenship, but their view did not prevail. In 1959 the halakic definition of a Jew, someone born of a Jewish mother, was made the basis of Israeli naturalized citizenship. But that was by no means the end of the matter. In 1962 a Jewish convert to Catholicism invoked the Law of Return and was denied citizenship, though he fulfilled the strict halakic definition; in 1970 the Law of Return was amended to exclude those “ethnic Jews” who had professed other religions.

“Be You Holy As I Am Holy”

But an Abrahamic birthright was never enough. There was from the beginning a form of spiritual identification among the Israelites, first defined perhaps as faithfulness to God, expressed through worship of him alone, famously signaled in Genesis by the formula “Abraham put his faith in the Lord, who reckoned it to him as righteousness” (15:6) and sealed by the external sign of circumcision (17:10–14). Another early form of spiritual self-definition had to do with holiness: Israel was to be, in the Bible’s remarkable phrase, “a kingdom of priests, My holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). Holiness (*qedushab*), it was later explained, is an attribute of God, and since the Israelites are God’s people, that reality creates a moral obligation in them to be holy as well. “Be you holy as I am holy” is the way God puts it (Lev. 11:44–45; 19:2; 20:7–8).

The Israelites were left in no doubt about what that command involved. The imitation of God’s own holiness was translated into an elaborate set of taboos, ritual and dietary, that are set out in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The same conditions and prohibitions surrounded the Israelites’ manner and places of worship (see II/6), where taboo zones around

the Jerusalem Holy of Holies, for example, protected Yahweh's dwelling from attacks of impurity. Finally, these restrictions guided the Israelites in their social relations among themselves and with their neighbors. The ethnic separation from the Gentiles (< Lat. *gentes*; Gk. *ethne*, "nations") continued to be maintained by restrictions on exogamy, while the dietary and similar laws set down markers to separate the Jews socially and ritually from their pagan neighbors.

Separation was, then, an unmistakable characteristic of Israelite holiness. Although in the Bible the thrust toward separation is envisioned as something to set the Israelites apart from the other folk who inhabited that land and who were "vomited out of it" for their unholy practices (Lev. 18:24–30), a later generation of Jews diagnosed the problem somewhat differently. We are not certain what the term "Pharisees" means—it occurs only in Greek texts—but it is temptingly close to *perushim*, "The Separate," or "The Separated," who appear in rabbinic writings after 200 C.E. The Torah had made a clear separation between Israel and the heathens (Lev. 20:26), a theme the rabbis often take up and elaborate, much as the Pharisees had in the centuries surrounding the turn into the Christian era. But the Pharisees were less concerned with the heathens than with their fellow Jews. For them a "nation of priests" meant strict observance not only of the Torah but also of the "tradition of the fathers" they invoked in their interpretation of the Law (see II/3).

The holiness program emerged in a newly tightened version from Pharisaic circles in the first century C.E., and in that form it eventually prevailed in what came to be known as rabbinic Judaism. Though their strict views on tithing, fasting, and Sabbath observance were noted by their contemporaries, their food regulations most obviously and effectively defined the Pharisees vis-à-vis the rest of the Jewish community, setting them off from the *am ha-aretz*, the "people of the land" who constituted the majority of the day's "ordinary" Jews. The Pharisees insisted that all meals be taken in a state of ritual purity as strict as that of the priests serving in the temple, a daunting requirement that restructured and delimited a basic form of social intercourse. Holiness as separation could go no further, short of withdrawal from the community, which the Essenes had already done, but the Pharisees steadfastly refused to follow them into the wilderness. They found their isolation in the dining room.

What Is a Jew?

The prophets who opposed secularizing Jewish monarchs of an earlier era were rather isolated figures whose position as revivalists and reformers rested on charismatic foundations. Opposition to the post-Exilic Hasmonaeans, in contrast, took the form of parties whose programs created neither revival nor reform, but rather schismatic fissures in the Jewish community (see I/1 and

I/5). The Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and followers of Jesus held sharply differing views about past history, future prospects, and what constituted a Jewish life. What they perhaps shared was the notion that the Covenant once concluded with the entire Benei Israel had now become a special covenant observed only by a faithful remnant, namely, themselves.

There is an unmistakable air of exclusivity to the Second Temple sectarians, from Pharisees to Essenes to the followers of John the Baptist or Jesus of Nazareth. The political question of a Jewish state had been rendered moot by the Roman absorption of Judaea in 6 C.E., and although some were still willing to die for its restoration—as they did in the great Jewish insurrections of 66–70 and 135 C.E.—most of the spiritual energies of the Jewish community in Palestine were devoted to constructing new legal, ascetic, and eschatological canons to answer the question “What is a Jew?” But this was no mere speculative issue. Many of these groups attempted to live out their definition either in public life or apart from it, and to try to convince others of the righteousness of their own cause.

It was the Pharisaic answer to the question that prevailed: a Jew was someone who observed the Law, both the written Torah given to Moses and the unwritten Law, the tradition of the fathers, that went back to the same time and had the same sanction (see II/3), and whose authoritative interpreters were the rabbis who after the second devastation of Palestinian Jewry in 135 were the sole voice of Judaism. Temple and Qumran were gone, along with their guardians and devotees, and the sectarian followers of Jesus of Nazareth had chosen or been forced to separate themselves from rabbinic Judaism. More, the Romans accepted the Pharisaic disassociation from the insurrection, and in the sequel chose to deal with the Pharisaic leadership as representatives of the Jewish Covenant, not merely in a religious but also in a political sense. For their part, the Romans regarded the Jews as both an ethnic group (*natio*) and a religious community (*religio*) at whose head now stood, at their sufferance, a single official, the *nasi*, or “prince” (see I/6).

Conversion and Clientage

One acknowledgment that Judaism was, as the Romans expressed it, a *religio* as well as an ethnic category is the fact that it was possible to join the community without having been born into it, in short, to convert oneself into a Jew. The act, if not the process, appears without comment in Ruth 1:16, where the Moabite Ruth simply announces to her Israelite mother-in-law, “Your people will be my people and your God will be my God.” This is an act of loyalty and perhaps a post-Exilic effort to counteract the harsh regulations requiring the dismissal of foreign wives and their offspring on the Jews’ return to Judaea. But even here Ruth’s child by Boaz is accepted as an Israelite—he

will actually be David's grandfather—only because he is passed off as the child of Ruth's Jewish mother-in-law, Naomi. Here too the convert's family ties, his or her actual kinship links, are obliterated and a new fictive affiliation is assigned: "son (or daughter) of Abraham."

We do not know how these early conversions—see also Esther 8:14, where a great number of Persians are said to have embraced Judaism out of fear of the recently empowered Jews—were effected. There may have been no fixed process for becoming a Jew before the beginning of the rabbinic era. To be a Jew one had to live like a Jew, and that probably involved, at least for the males, circumcision. This seems more like a simple act than a ritual since it could be performed by anyone, even a non-Jew, and it apparently served to do the job even without intent, and perhaps even resistance, on the subject's part. If we may trust Josephus, the Hasmonaean kings forcibly circumcised the Idumeans (Edomites) of the Negev and the Itureans of the Galilee and so rendered both people "Jewish" (*Antiquities* 13.9.1; 13.11.3). There is no record of the conversion of females.

Evidence suggests that becoming a Jew in the Second Temple era was relatively simple, a private affair without benefit of court, credential, or ritual. Jews were apparently eager to make converts after the return to Judaea, and Gentiles were equally eager to associate themselves, in one degree or another, with Jewish practices. Some Jews may even have permitted some form of conversion without benefit of circumcision, as Paul was doing with his Gentile converts to "Jesus messianism."

Becoming a Christian

Whether as a reaction to the minimalist view of who was a Jew or as a supplement to it, immersion begins to appear in something approaching a conversion context among the Jews in the first and second centuries. In the first century both the Essenes and the Baptists of John, including Jesus and his followers (John 3:22), practiced an immersion ritual in a purely symbolic way, that is, it does not appear to be connected with the purification from any specific ritual impurity. Later in Judaism, baptism regularly supplemented circumcision, as the Mishnah makes explicit, and among the Christians baptism replaced circumcision, at least among Paul's converts (1 Cor. 1:17; 12:13; Acts 8:12–13, etc.). In addition, Jewish circumcision had now to be performed with intent, on the part of both the circumciser and the subject. The intent to convert rather quickly implicated, one imagines, the notion of instruction of the convert. That latter soon becomes standard in both Judaism and Christianity, though it is done rather more formally in Christianity since there, as in Islam, it is the *only* way of joining the community.

Among Christians the initiatory baptism was originally administered by the bishop who headed the congregation the convert intended to join. As the formal guardian of the faith and morals of that congregation, the bishop was responsible for instructing the catechumens, “those under instruction (*katechesis*.)” The term *proselyte*, or “newcomer,” was preferred among Jews, though this latter term was eventually used in both communities to describe the convert-to-be. In the early Church prospective converts had to pass moral scrutiny—certain professions, like acting, were regarded with grave suspicion—as well as receive formal instruction, usually throughout the Lenten season, after which they were baptized and admitted to communion on the Saturday immediately preceding Easter Sunday.

Many of these safeguards grew out of a need to mark off, and so define, Christianity from the pagan religions that surrounded it. But as time passed and as a rapidly expiring paganism no longer posed a threat to an increasingly Christian world, the niceties of instruction were often disregarded even with adult converts. It was thought sufficient to baptize them first and, if possible, to instruct them later. Sacramental baptism, after all, made them Christians, not an understanding of their new faith.

“Jew and Greek”

Christianity differed from Judaism rather precisely on the matter of kinship affiliation. “God can raise up children of Abraham from these stones,” John the Baptist shouted at his Jewish contemporaries (Matt. 3:9), and although Jesus did not exactly agree with his mentor on this point, his follower Paul assuredly did. Paul was prepared to grant the Gentiles membership among the Children of Abraham without benefit of circumcision, which had been demanded even of Abraham, or Torah observance, which had been required in some degree of every Israelite since Moses had come down from Sinai. Paul’s program for the inclusion of the Gentiles was not the stringent rabbinic conversion rubric as preparation for what might appear to be a kind of second-class citizenship in a kinship society, but a declaration in effect of open borders inviting mass immigration into the ranks of the Chosen People.

Paul was proposing nothing less than equal citizenship for all. “There is no such thing as Jew or Greek, slave or free, man or woman; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. So if you belong to Christ, you are all the offspring of Abraham and heirs by virtue of the promise,” he wrote (Gal. 3:28). In other words, no one was born a Christian; one became a Christian by an act of faith, signaled, as the physical act of circumcision had membership among the kin of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, by a rite called baptism. But the simple act of pouring water and reciting a brief formula was more than Christianity’s initiation

ritual. Unlike circumcision, a passive rite whereby the community notched its identity marker on the male body of one of its own by birth, in baptism the initiatory act was necessarily preceded by a profession of faith. The initiate must say, in effect, “I have read and agree to the terms of the contract; I wish to become a member.” Only then does a representative of the community respond by pouring the water and saying, “You are a member.”

Religious Tolerance: The Romans on Jews and Christians

Understood as the willingness to abide the other, whether the “otherness” is physical, cultural, ethnic, or religious, tolerance is probably best thought of as essentially a personal and individual trait. But tolerance, or its absence, also manifests itself in social acts of forbearance or persecution. These forms of human behavior are the subject of a substantial body of law, both customary and positive, both human and divine. In the present context, we are chiefly concerned with the juridical side of toleration and with an otherness that is at base theological—that is, the religious differences that Jews, Christians, and Muslims, all worshipers of the same Creator God, discern in each other. Like many of the differences that disturb, these carry with them a strong sense of “sameness” or identity with that other.

The practice of tolerance, or in this case, intolerance, goes back to the very origins of monotheism. Among the first commandments Yahweh gave his Chosen People was the warning that he is a jealous God and that they should worship no other but him. The great body of Torah law that followed this programmatic statement had in fact as one of its primary ends the separation of his holy people from the unclean masses who surrounded them and whom Yahweh had “vomited” out of the promised land. The Torah set up a protective wall of purity around both the people and their God in his temple, a wall that later generations of Jews strove to make higher, sturdier, and more impermeable.

Building a political wall around Eretz Israel was a different matter, however, and here the Israelites showed a kind of pragmatic intolerance of the people who lived around them, sometimes in and sometimes just outside the land the Lord had promised them. Where the Israelites were strong enough to impose their will, they did; where they could not, as was increasingly the case after the Exile, they lived, with difficulty, and let live. Jewish sovereignty, and so the ability to dictate political, social, or religious terms to others, ends incrementally between 6 C.E. and 135 C.E. Thereafter, the Jews in Eretz Israel and the Mediterranean diaspora lived under Roman sovereignty and, more tellingly, Roman law.

To understand religious tolerance among the Greeks and Romans, it is first necessary to grasp the role of religion in their societies. Although it sometimes

led to such, religious practice was not regarded in the ancient Mediterranean world as directed toward either personal piety or higher moral standards. Religion was an affect of society: its practice was a civic ritual and its officials, the priests, were civil magistrates. Religion was regarded chiefly as being useful in establishing and maintaining civic order. The Roman state, for example, cared little—it was a matter of indifference rather than toleration, perhaps—which other tribal, national, or household gods were worshiped so long as the imperial deities were given their ritual due as a matter of civic—we might say “patriotic”—duty and as long as those other rites did not disturb the public order.

Roman indifference may indeed have yielded to tolerance with the Jews. Most of their citizens and subjects were more than willing to worship a deified Roman emperor—polytheists are not fastidious in such matters and, furthermore, participating in those rites meant sharing afterward in the sacrificial meats, a not inconsiderable protein boost to the standard Mediterranean diet. The Jews, however, would not. The Romans did not much admire the Jews or their religious practices—*superstitio* was the term most often applied to them. But, like the Greeks before them, the Romans nonetheless permitted the Jews to abstain from rites precisely on the grounds that these were contrary to their religious convictions, and provided that the Jews prayed to their own God for the well-being of the emperor and the empire, which they generally did. The Jews, in short, were a religiously tolerated minority first in the empires of Alexander’s successors and then in the *imperium romanum*. Because they could not fully participate in civic life, which entailed religious duties, they were barred from many civil privileges and protections.

As we have seen, the Romans identified the Jews as both a *natio* and a *religio*, an ethnic community like the Syrians and a religious community like the Druids. Initially the Christians, as a barely distinguishable Jewish sect, were protected by the same tolerant exemptions as the Jews as a whole. But soon the Romans too recognized that the Christians were not Jews. The exemptions disappeared and the Christians’ refusal to join in emperor worship was henceforward regarded by the Romans as an act of civil disobedience and disloyalty. The Christians, like the Jews they once were, looked on religion as an autonomous obligation, not as an adjunct or extension of the state.

Their exemption removed, the Christians were increasingly subjected to state persecution—as opposed to private or public prejudice—in the third century: to be a Christian was in effect to commit a crime, even though no specific criminal act had been committed. Christians were regarded as doubly dangerous. They refused to worship the emperor, a primary act of Roman political identification, and, unlike the Jews, whose God and rituals could easily be construed as an ethnic aberration, the Christians were preaching a universal “City of God,” as Augustine later called it. Their own vision of the world, and their loyalties, apparently had, no place for the *imperium romanum*. Some Christians—not nearly so many perhaps as legend depicts—were executed on that charge, and

so became “witnesses” (*martyres*) to their faith (see II/6), or, from the Romans’ perspective, paid for their disloyalty to the state with their lives.

The World Turns Christian

Counting in the premodern era was an inexact science, and the results often move from chance to fantasy if the ancient authorities are allowed to do the counting. According to Acts 1:15, shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus there were precisely 120 Christians, all of them in Jerusalem. But no more than thirty years later, “many thousands” of Jews in Jerusalem accepted Jesus as the Messiah, this in a city with a total population at that time no higher than 20,000 and as low as 10,000. Such growth is incredible; what was more likely being said, with the rhetorical numerical flourish favored by the times, was that God was favoring the new enterprise in a highly visible way.

If we leap over the intervening three centuries and come to the emperor Constantine’s critical conversion to Christianity, a new question presents itself. Was that conversion political opportunism? Was Christianity the already discernible wave of the future? Here the estimate game must be played with larger and yet more concrete figures. Gibbon may have been the first to hazard a guess as to the numbers, that Christians were perhaps—it is always of course “perhaps”—5 percent of the total population of the Roman Empire when its ruler declared the new faith. Later historians have scaled the figure upward to 10 percent, and since present estimates put the empire’s total population at 60 million, there would have been 5 to 7 million Christians among them. That amounts to a 40 percent growth rate per decade from Jesus’ death until about 350 C.E. After that, the rate must have notably leveled off with the progressive shrinking of the pool of prospective converts.

At first conversions to the Christian faith would likely have spread along existing networks, principally families and friends, as they did among the earliest Muslims and still do in similar cases. The next group most likely to switch allegiances would seem to be those with weak religious affiliations of their own and, predictably, the alienated and discontented; again we must think of Muhammad’s Meccan converts. There are no clear-cut signs of who these first wave of Christian converts might be—earlier proposals that they were chiefly slaves have been abandoned owing to lack of evidence—but it seems highly plausible that the Jesus movement made deep inroads in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora. Those Jews would be the most assimilated to the Greco-Roman “civil religion” of their environment. In the face of the disastrous destruction of the Jewish cult and political base in Palestine and the consequent Roman mistrust of Jews everywhere, they would also likely be the most drawn to what has been described as a form of “accommodated Judaism.” Later European Jews in somewhat the same circumstances made their

own “accommodation” with Reform Judaism, but here an alternative—a familiar yet new and different take on Judaism—readily presented itself in those Diaspora synagogues. Rabbinic Judaism, with its stiffened boundaries, may have been as much a product of nascent Christianity’s attraction to assimilated Jews in the Diaspora like Philo—Paul himself was one such—as it was of internal dynamics within the Christian community.

Note: Another group from which converts were drawn to Christianity is signaled by the early churches’ apparent success in attracting women, particularly upper-class women, who then provided network access to the male members of their communities. Some reasons for this are fairly obvious. The new faith condemned not only infanticide but also divorce and male adultery, thereby providing Christian women in the ancient world far greater marriage security than their pagan counterparts. Christian women also married considerably later than pagans: according to recent estimates, nearly half of the latter had wed by age fourteen, many of them even before puberty, compared to only 20 percent of Christian women. Unlike in contemporary Jewish circles and the popular cult of Mithra, Christianity’s chief pagan rival, Christian women held positions of honor and responsibility in early Christian congregations.

Religious Tolerance: Christians on Pagans and Jews

With Constantine’s conversion, Christianity passed rapidly from being tolerated, to favored, and then finally in 381 C.E., to the official religion of the Roman Empire. The movement brought Christianity into a long-standing and often uneasy relationship with the political and legal institutions of a powerful, venerable, and highly conservative state (see I/7). It also carried the Christians into a new relationship with their religious rivals: Judaism on one hand, and the whole spectrum of pagan cults on the other. The Church had, obviously, a well-defined set of beliefs and the energy and conviction to attempt to convince others of the truth of those beliefs. It did just that, with considerable success among the *pagani*, those last lingering Gentiles in the outback, though with rapidly declining success among the Jews and almost none later among the Muslims. The Church had few means to coerce either belief or conformity save by calling on the state. In the case of the pagans, there was little hesitation to do so: imperial legislation was enacted—in the later Roman Empire only the emperor made law—making illegal the worship of any but the Christians’ God. In 453 an imperial constitution declared pagans enemies of the state, and those convicted of such should have their

goods confiscated and suffer execution. Pagan temples were destroyed, as often by mobs as by the state, and in 529 the emperor Justinian closed down not only the last tolerated pagan temple in the empire—it was at Aswan, where Nubians came across the frontier to trade and, formerly, to pray—but also the last bastion of intellectual paganism, Plato’s Academy at Athens, still in operation after nearly a millennium. The faculty reputedly found asylum in Iran.

The Jews were protected by Roman statute, and though it was in its power to do so, the Church refrained from an outright prohibition, as it had done with the pagans. The Jews should be permitted to exist, Christian authorities like Augustine argued, to bear witness to the “Old Testament,” which was Christianity’s messianic charter, so to speak. As one medieval churchman put it, “Life is granted to the Jews—they are after all our slaves—because they bear the Mosaic Law and the Prophets which attest our faith. Not only in their books but in their appearance we see the Passion of Christ.” The Jews were, in short, fossils preserved by time to attest to the antiquity of faith and bear witness to a lower and now petrified form of life that had been superseded and surpassed by Messianic Christianity. They served other ends as well. They testified to the severity of God’s justice—the reference to their “appearance” in the text just cited points to their social degradation—and to the eschatological climax of the drama of redemption, when an unmistakable sign of the End Time will be the conversion of the Jews.

But if the Church officially refrained from doing violence to the Jews, a great many individual Christians did not. Christianity’s increasing dominance in numbers and power, excited and inflamed by an emerging theology that cast the Jews as the murderers of Christ—the charge appears formally as early as the third-century *Homily on Passover* of Melito of Sardis—led to violence against Jewish persons and property, and the (now Christian) Roman state intervened by forbidding such acts. Paganism might be a crime, but being a Jew was not. Throughout their long and tortured relationship, Jews continued to be an officially tolerated religious minority as long as there was a Christian state.

The Need of Baptism, and of the Church

Baptism was central to membership in the Christian community, in the contrast, for instance, carefully made between the baptism of John and that of Jesus (Mark 1:8). The exact nature of the act came into sharp relief, however, in the increasingly fierce persecutions directed against Christians in the third century. It is not certain what Jesus’ typically aphoristic remark in Matthew 12:30, “He who is not with me is against me,” meant to signify in its original context, but to a bishop of Carthage named Cyprian (d. 256), those words were a clear statement that heretics and schismatics—those who had once

been members of the Church but who had wandered from its teaching or its authority—could not expect to be saved. In the North Africa of Cyprian's day wholesale defections from the Church recurred in time of persecution—Cyprian himself lived through a major Roman persecution in the mid-third century. The question for bishops like Cyprian was thus whether Christians who had received baptism from the defectors had been truly baptized. No, announced Cyprian, there is no valid baptism outside the Church's baptism and indeed, "there is no salvation outside the Church."

Though his views on baptism had soon to be rethought, Cyprian's teaching on the necessity of membership in the one catholic (that is, universal) Church—"You cannot have God as your Father unless you have the Church as your mother" was another of his pronouncements—was often reaffirmed in the centuries that followed, notably in the influential Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. In their decree concerning the Albigensian heresy, the assembled bishops proclaimed that "There is one catholic Church of the faithful and outside it no one is saved." The most notorious echo of Cyprian, however, occurred about a century later. In 1302, in an effort to assert the Church's—and the papacy's—authority before the king of France, Boniface VIII issued his bull titled *Unam sanctam*, which in its opening words unequivocally declared: "There is one, holy, catholic Church, outside of which there is no salvation." None. For anyone.

Boniface had every right to be so thunderously confident in his doctrine of *nulla salus extra ecclesiam*, "no salvation outside the Church," since the same teaching had been commonplace in the Church from the beginning and persisted, quite unchanged, till the middle of the twentieth century. Indeed, it was broadened. The Council of Florence (1431–1443), in the wake of the East-West schism (see I/6), explicitly extended the doctrine beyond "deviants" to "infidels"—those like pagans, Jews, and Muslims, who had never believed in the first place: "No one outside the Church, not just pagans but Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can share in eternal life," it declared.

Augustine and the Donatists

Cyprian had had to address the rebaptism of returned heretics in the mid-third century: the issue became even more troublesome in the early fourth, provoked by the last great imperial attempt at obliterating the Christian movement. In 303 C.E. the emperor Diocletian decreed that the Christians' churches were to be destroyed, and that the clergy had to hand over the congregation's sacred books. These measures became even more severe the following year when all Christians were required, under pain of death, to sacrifice to the gods of the empire. The enforcement seems to have been particularly vigorous in the North African provinces, and there the reactions were varied

and equally vigorous. Some Christians handed over—*traditor* or “hand-over,” in context, a collaborator, soon became a slogan word—both the Scriptures and their brethren to avoid prosecution, while others held on to both the books and the faith to the bitter end.

When the persecutions were relaxed in 305 and again in 311, the Christian survivors emerged from their hiding places and a vengeful reaction soon set in. The records of the living and the dead, collaborators and resistance heroes, were all scrutinized. Old wounds were opened, old debts paid. In 311 what may have been local arguments rose to a higher level of discord. A cleric named Caecilian was elected—popular episcopal elections were still the order of the day—bishop of Carthage and, by virtue of that fact, chief bishop of Christian North Africa. Caecilian was associated with a moderate and conciliatory faction among the clergy and he was, moreover, consecrated by another bishop some accused of being a traditor. This provoked outrage by the hard-liners who thought the blood of the persecution’s martyrs was being betrayed. They were also convinced that Caecilian’s consecration was invalid since it had been performed by a traditor who had in effect left the Church. They elected and consecrated their own candidate, Majorinus, who soon died and was succeeded by a certain Donatus who gave his name to the entire movement, Donatism, that emerged from the affair.

At that juncture the converted Christian Constantine became emperor. He authorized an investigation into the matter that was spiraling out of control, but he referred the final decision to the bishop of Rome, Pope Miltiades (r. 311–314). He and his consulting bishops reviewed the evidence and found for Caecilian. Donatus and his fellow bishops—a dual hierarchy had rapidly developed in North Africa—were to surrender the churches that had come into their hands. Constantine was not pleased—the Donatists as the self-proclaimed Church of the Martyrs had popular support in the North African provinces—and he summoned a council of all the Western bishops to assemble at Arles in 314 and adjudicate the matter. They did—the new pope, Sylvester (r. 314–335) declined to attend on grounds of propriety and set a long-range precedent—and once again decided for Caecilian and against Donatus. They also laid down some doctrinal points. Christians were forbidden, contrary to what Cyprian had taught, to rebaptize returned traditores: baptism was baptism, and an indelible sign, no matter how evil the priest administering it.

Constantine was still not content. He summoned Caecilian and Donatus to the imperial court in Milan and heard the case in person. In the end, he agreed with the Arles bishops. Caecilian was the true bishop of Carthage; the Donatists must vacate their churches immediately. With imperial support on their side, the Catholics, for so the Council of Arles had judged them, began to carry the day. Some of the Donatist bishops were bought into submission (from the imperial treasury), some beaten into it by church and state alike,

and some simply gave up. But with the accession to the throne in 361 of the convinced anti-Christian Julian, the picture altered once again. Determined to create as many problems as possible for the Church, Julian restored to the Donatists their churches and properties across North Africa. It was a time of extraordinary violence in the North African churches. The emperor's acts were matched, however, by the ordination in 395 of Augustine as bishop of Hippo, a place where there was, as in most North African cities, a Donatist bishop as well.

Augustine argued the illegitimacy of the movement on historical grounds, on the Donatists' highly inconsistent application of their own principles, and, finally, on his development of the doctrine of the nature of baptism. With Augustine as their spokesman, the Catholics now felt they had an unassailable historical and doctrinal position, and they persuaded the emperor Honorius to convene a public inquest in the form of a debate between the two sides. The disputation was held at Carthage in 411 before the imperial legate. Augustine and the Catholics obviously prevailed, and the emperor's legate gave them the judgment. In 412 Honorius issued a law once again bidding the Donatists surrender their ecclesiastical properties to the Catholics and fining those who refused. Though there were occasional battles down to the Muslims' arrival in the 630s and 640s, the war against the Donatists was effectively over.

Consensual and Coerced Conversion

Membership in the Christian community, was thought to be, as we have seen, consensual: Christians were made, not born. The making of Christians turned out to be a troublesome matter, however. Baptism has already been described as an act that required a prior profession of faith in God, Christ, and the Church. So it did early on and still does in the case of adult baptism, but the increasingly widespread practice of infant baptism, with its presumption that others might speak for the child, turned baptism into an act whose initiatory effect took place by its performance alone or *ex opere operato*, as the medieval Latin shorthand had it. It seemed like an easy way of making the reluctant into Christians: stand (or tie) the prospect in place, pour the water, and recite the formula, not just for the sheer pleasure of it, of course, but to save souls for Christ, particularly intransigent, unyielding souls who would never be reasonably converted.

"Intransigent, unyielding souls" is a passably accurate Christian description of Jews and Muslims, and Christians faced with such resistance have often wrestled with the question of forced conversion. Some jurists would permit it, but the more general sentiment was not very different from the Muslims' own. Muslims and Jews might be fought if they resisted—an argument that

had more force with respect to armed and politically aggressive Muslims—but once they submitted, they ought to be neither killed nor forced to convert. But behind this conviction there was the always formidable figure of Augustine, whose exposure to the stubborn Donatists had convinced him that some coercive persuasion was legitimate. Others disagreed. Sisebut, the Visigothic king of Spain (r. 612–620), ordered the conversion of all the Jews in his domains, but a council of Spanish bishops held in Toledo in 633 presided over by Isidore of Seville rebuked the king and for the first time laid down that baptism must be voluntary and without coercion, citing Paul: “Therefore He has mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He wills He hardens” (Rom. 9:18). But, the council’s decree continued, the Jews who had already been converted were obliged to remain in the Church “to avoid blasphemy and cheapening of the Faith.”

This was the Church’s common teaching down to the end of the Middle Ages. It received its canonical form in the *Summa theologiae* (2–2.10.8) of Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), who drew an initial distinction between those who have never received the faith, in which case they cannot be baptized or converted against their will, and those who were once among the faithful, whom Thomas concluded could be forcibly returned to the faith. But an important proviso provoked considerable discussion in the sixteenth century. The infidels, if they could not be converted by force, could be forcibly restrained from hindering Christian missionaries and from insulting Christ and the Christians.

An additional consideration arose out of the very nature of Christian baptism. As a sacramental act, baptism indelibly marked the soul of the baptized. Hence, it was argued, although coerced baptism might be illegal in the eyes of canon law, it was valid—that is, the baptized had, willy-nilly, become a Christian. Eventually, a lawyer’s compromise emerged, and in 1210 Pope Innocent III decreed that if the infidel was, despite persistent refusal, literally forced to be baptized—bound, gagged, and baptized, so to speak—the baptism was invalid: it did not take. But if the same infidel was threatened, by terror or torture, for example, and then acceded to baptism to escape the consequences of further refusal, such a baptism was valid: the baptized was a Christian and also, somewhat more ominously, subject to Church law.

Forced conversion only works, of course, where the converter has the power to coerce, in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Spain, for example, where the Christian Reconquista swept appreciable numbers of Jews and Muslims under Christian sovereignty. The Church, as we have just seen, had decided that the conversions of its new infidel subjects elicited by threats was acceptable practice, with the comforting pragmatic consideration that even if one could not trust the faith of the “New Christian” converts, their children at least would be genuine Catholics. Such bankrupt policies have their own

penalties, and in the end the Spanish Church could not live with the hypocrisy and perjury it had itself engendered by forcing the so-called Marranos and Moriscos into the bosom of Mother Church. It expelled them all.

The Jews of Western Christendom

To the Roman guarantee of acceptance of Jewish beliefs (which were never really an issue) and practices (which often were), the Church of Latin Christendom added the guarantee of protection. It was desperately needed. Christian theology, particularly its rhetorical echo in public preaching, painted a grim and provocatively hostile portrait of the Jews. The Jews emerged not merely as stiff-necked deniers of Jesus' redemptive mission but even as deicides, the veritable murderers of the God-man Jesus. These sentiments were pronounced continuously in sermon and liturgy, often enhanced by hard political, social, or economic circumstances for which the Jews might, reasonably or unreasonably, be held responsible, and often excited local populations to resort to violent acts against their Jewish neighbors.

The Church's earliest statements of toleration and protection of the Jews were resumed and codified in Gratian's authoritative twelfth-century collection of Church canons, the *Decretum* (see II/4), which refers back to and validates the decrees of earlier sixth- and seventh-century Spanish synods. The papal and synodal decrees on the same subject are reaffirmed and updated in a later collection of canon law, the *Decretals* (1234) edited by the Dominican Raymond of Peñafort. Raymond was, in fact, one of the most aggressive and relentless prosecutors of his century's program to convert the Jews and Muslims.

In these documents, the Jews' right to be publicly and forthrightly Jewish is affirmed, as is the secure possession of their lives, their properties, and their places of worship. But limitations were set as well, many of them reminiscent of the limitations Muslims placed on the People of the Book living under their sovereignty (see I/8). Jews might not hold public office or own Christian slaves; they should not appear in public on Good Friday. Christians were forbidden to fraternize with Jews (or Muslims), socially or sexually, and to make this segregation easier to observe and enforce, Jews—and Muslims—living in Christian lands were required to wear distinctive garb. Finally, Jews were not to be forced into conversion—as the Quran put it, “There is no coercion in religion” (2:256)—but if one of them should be forcibly baptized, this latter sacrament was to be recognized as valid and the subject regarded as a Christian. In consequence, baptized Jewish children were to be removed from their parents and sent to monasteries or orphanages for rearing in the faith.

Note: The practice of separating and rearing baptized children apart from their parents did not end in the Middle Ages. In Bologna in 1853 an illiterate Catholic servant girl secretly baptized Edgardo Mortara, the year-old son of the Italian Jewish couple, for whom she worked, because, as she later said, he was ill and appeared to be in danger of dying. Five years later, when she revealed what she had done, the police had no choice but to come to the Mortara home and take the six-year-old Edgardo from his parents. Church law decreed that Catholic children, of whom Edgardo was now one, not be raised by Jews. Since Bologna was part of the Papal States, the areas of Italy where the pope still exercised political sovereignty, Church law was also the law of the land (see I/7).

The canonical kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara created an international storm with many voices, Jewish and Christian, demanding the return of the boy to his parents. To no avail: the then pope, the deeply conservative Pius IX (r. 1846–1878), took a personal interest in Edgardo and supervised his education. At thirteen, the young man entered a seminary and was eventually ordained under the name of his mentor. Father Pio, once Edgardo Mortara, died in 1940, by all accounts a pious Catholic and a model priest to the end.

Some of the reasons for this degree of toleration of a people regarded as “perfidious” have already been scouted. The very existence of the Jews confirmed the fact of divine revelation: they too affirmed the Word of God and lived in accordance with it. In a negative and perhaps more psychologically appealing sense, the generally miserable condition of the “outcast” Jews, Europe’s gypsies before the letter, graphically and publicly illustrated the transfer of the Covenant from them to the powerful and dazzlingly prosperous Christian Church.

The degrees of toleration (and restriction) afforded to the Jews by medieval legislation were not always executed or enforced uniformly. Popular feeling, fanned as often as not by the Church’s own preaching, frequently overmastered Church teaching. Moreover, the Church was not the state, and in many cases secular sovereigns, for whom the Jews might be commercially or financially useful, were generally more reliable protectors of Jewish lives and property than the Church. Then too, in the twelfth century, the theologians of Europe’s new universities, who also laid claim to the magisterium—the power to speak for the Church—began to shift emphasis away from Scripture, where Jews had their only legitimacy in Christian eyes, to more rational bases where Jews had no standing at all. Finally, Christians were made increasingly aware by Jewish apostate converts to Christianity of the contents of the Talmud and other postbiblical Jewish writings with a discernible anti-Christian bias. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, Jews had become

an institutionalized degraded minority, perhaps best symbolized by the Fourth Lateran Council's 1215 decree that Jews must wear distinctive clothing. The Church brought enough pressure on their monarchs to cause the Jews to be expelled in 1290 from England, in 1306 from France, and in 1492 from Spain.

The Talmud on Trial

As we have seen, the Church was long thought to have had no direct jurisdiction over Jews and Muslims as such, save to designate them as legitimate objects of evangelization or in cases where a Jew or Muslim living in Christendom might commit some offense against a Christian belief, ritual, or person. That understanding was dramatically altered by two popes in the thirteenth century, Gregory IX (r. 1227–1241) and Innocent IV (r. 1243–1254), both canon lawyers before their elevation to the papacy. In 1239 Gregory sent a letter to the archbishops of England, France, León, and Castile ordering them to confiscate all the Jewish books in their sees and hand them over to the Franciscans and Dominicans for scrutiny. His specific target was the Talmud, “the Teaching, as it is called” and “the principal cause of the Jews’ obstinate perfidy,” as he noted in his letter.

The immediate provocation of this act was an uproar in France brought about by Nicholas Donin, an apostate from Judaism and a convert to Christianity, who publicly attacked the Talmud as the repository of Jewish heresy and blasphemous hostility toward Christianity. His charges were loud and long enough to bring about a public disputation in 1240 in Paris before Louis IX. Donin played the prosecutor and a number of French rabbis served as lawyers for the defense at what was almost literally a trial of the Talmud. Not surprisingly, the Talmud was convicted. Gregory’s earlier letter was implemented and, in 1244, twelve or twenty-four cartloads of books confiscated from the Jews of Paris were publicly burned.

The alleged crux of the matter was, as Gregory had said, the Talmud, the collection of legal exegesis and commentary at the heart of rabbinic Judaism (see II/3). The Talmud was more than an ideological and legal guide for Jews; it was also inaccessible. The Bible may have been expropriated by the Christians as their “Old Testament,” but this testament to the oral Torah remained an entirely Jewish possession. According to one rabbinic story, when Moses received the oral Torah on Sinai, he asked the Lord to write it down and God replied: “I did indeed wish to give it all to them in writing, but it was revealed that the Gentiles would in the future have dominion over them, and will claim the Torah as theirs; then would my children be like the Gentiles. Therefore, give them the Scriptures in writing, and the Mishnah, Haggadah, and Talmud orally, for it is they that separate Israel and the Gentiles.”

The Parisian setting of this auto-da-fé was not entirely fortuitous. The city was also the home of Europe's fledgling and most prestigious university. In 1231 Gregory had warned the theologians there to avoid the recent trend toward study of Hebrew texts. Students at Paris had been dipping their toes in the vast ocean of Jewish exegesis and the more traditional theologians were becoming disturbed. Gregory intended to curb the practice by removing the most dangerous, and offensive, of those texts from the Christian scholars' hands.

In 1244 Innocent IV, immediately after his accession, issued a bull, *Impia Iudaeorum*, which extended the Church's jurisdiction over the Jews in a new and notable way. The bull is full of vitriol: the Jews, with whom Christians were prepared to live in peace, repaid the Church's tolerance with patent infidelity, not toward Christian teachings, which they refused to accept, but to their own revelation, the Bible, which they and the Christians shared. The Jews were no longer faithful to Scripture. Innocent, the professional canon lawyer, argued, here and elsewhere, that the pope, as the vicar of Christ, who has dominion over all, possessed both the right and the responsibility of seeing that the Jews lived according to both the natural and the biblical law since their own leaders did not do so.

This was the background against which Innocent made his canonical ruling against the Talmud "which is a great book for them [the Jews] and which goes far beyond the Bible and which blasphemes against God and His Christ and the Blessed Virgin, and which they use to teach and nourish their children and render them distant and alien to the Law and the Prophets." It was by no means the end of the Talmud or of Christian attempts to suppress it and its influence. In Spain there were two more notorious show trials of the Talmud. The first took place in Barcelona in 1263 when another Jew-turned-Christian, the Dominican Pablo Christiá, made the accusations and one of the greatest Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, Moses ben Nahman, or Nahmanides (d. 1270), was the defendant (see below). Later, in 1413, a two-year trial began in Tortosa, prosecuted by another converted Jew and the Dominican firebrand Vincente Ferrer.

Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Spain

Spain, the Arabs' al-Andalus, had a quite different religio-cultural tradition from most of Europe; only Sicily and the Balkans present parallels. In Iberia large numbers of Christians and Muslims lived for many centuries in principalities that made war on and alliances with one another irrespective of religion. Christians (called Mozarabs, or "would-be Arabs," because of their high degree of assimilation) lived under Muslim princes, and Muslims (Mudejars, or "permitted," because they were allowed to continue to practice their religion)

lived under Christian ones. Amid both groups lived a substantial number of Jews. The three communities by no means loved one another, but there was a degree of respect and, more obviously, an effective degree of *convivencia*, or coexistence. It was, perhaps, forbearance rather than genuine toleration. Convivencia was most apparent on the local level, but in more ideological quarters forces of disequilibrium were constantly at work. One destabilizing force were fundamentalist Muslim Berber groups from North Africa like the Almoravids (Ar. *al-murabitun*). These were Muslim “military monks”—the *ribat* was a kind of fortified monastery—who overthrew the reigning Muslim princes and annexed al-Andalus to their North African empire. Christians and Jews in those newly conquered lands were immediately subjected to persecution, as were the Spanish Muslims whose faith or works did not measure up to severe Almoravid standards.

The process was repeated in the twelfth century. This time the Berber invaders were called Almohads (Ar. *al-muwahhidun*, or “Unitarians”). Between 1145 and 1150 they were masters of southern Spain and once again launched persecutions against Jews and Christians and purges of their fellow Muslims, among them the philosopher Ibn Rushd (see II/7). Twice, then, the generally tolerant and gracious-living Muslims of al-Andalus were reformed from within by their more fundamentalist Berber coreligionists from the Saharan margins of Islamic society.

While all this was occurring, in northern Iberia the notion of a Christian Reconquista of Muslim Spain was laying hold of both the chivalrous nobility and the Church’s hierarchy. But if it was a reconquest, it was not yet a crusade. In its earliest stages the war against the Muslim states in Spain was desultory and somewhat inconclusive, though by hindsight it is clear that Christian arms were becoming superior to the Muslim capability to resist them. The Christians took Toledo in 1085, Saragossa in 1118, and in 1212 a combined Christian army met the Almohads at Las Navas de Tolosa, east of Cordoba, and broke them. Cordoba itself fell to Christian forces in 1236, Valencia in 1238, and Seville in 1248. The final stage merely waited on the unification of Christian Spain, which was effectively accomplished in 1469 by the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castile. Granada finally capitulated in January 1492. The Reconquista was complete.

The Christian conquest of al-Andalus had tragic consequences for Jewish and Muslim Spaniards. Hardening Christian attitudes toward the Jews had little to do with Spain or the reconquest, as has already been noted; this was a European phenomenon. The Reconquista did, however, transfer ever increasing numbers of Spanish Jews from the more tolerant Muslim sovereignty to an increasingly severe and suspicious Christian one. It did the same with the Muslims. After the fall of Granada in 1492, all of Spain’s remaining Muslims lived under Christian rule. In the early stages of the conquest the old *convivencia* prevailed and the change of sovereignty was explicitly understood, in

the “Capitulations” signed at Granada, for example, to entail no change in religion. But the Muslims were too numerous, perhaps, and the Church too fearful, to abide by that agreement. Forced baptism, as understood in Church law, seemed the only solution. First it was imposed on the Jews, who as *convertos* were only partially successful in convincing the “Old Christians” that they had truly embraced the Christian faith. Christian suspicion manifested itself in the judicial instrument that lay ready to hand, the Inquisition (see I/5).

The Christian War on Islam: Peter the Venerable and Ramon Lull

The Reconquista was merely the political side of a war the Church was waging against Islam. Islam raised military threats to Christendom’s well-being that Judaism never had or would, but Muslims, if more politically dangerous and more exotic to Western Christians, bore none of the heavy historical baggage that the Jews did in Christian eyes. That, perhaps, inspired some to think Islam might be conquered by means other than the sword.

While visiting Spain, Peter the Venerable (d. 1156), abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Cluny in France (see II/8), conceived of a project to assist in converting Muslims. It required a dossier that was to contain, among other pieces, a translation of the Quran, in Latin, of course. Peter persuaded the Englishman Robert of Ketton (d. 1157), a distinguished translator who had come to Spain to work on Arabic treatises in mathematics and astronomy, to put aside his scientific work and undertake the task—for a quite handsome sum, it must be added. It took Robert somewhat more than a year to complete the translation—he possibly had help; there was a Muslim on Peter’s team, “to guarantee the fidelity” of the translation, and he may have worked with Robert—but when finished in 1143, this work, known early on as *The Religion of Mahumet, the False Prophet, which in Arabic is called Alchoran, that is, The Collection of Teachings*, became an international best-seller. It was included in Peter the Venerable’s anthology of works on Islam, together with Robert’s translation of a collection of Arab historical traditions generously titled “The Lying and Laughable Chronicles of the Saracens.”

Robert of Ketton’s Latin translation of the Quran is a large, sprawling work—but it is more properly a paraphrase since the translator incorporated extensive material from the elaborate apparatus of Muslim commentary available in Arabic on this holiest of books. (A second, more literal Latin translation was done at the request of the archbishop of Toledo in Spain in 1210–1211, by Mark of Toledo, a Mozarab Christian and another professional translator of Arabic science, but it never enjoyed the popularity of Robert’s.) Robert of Ketton had turned, somewhat surprisingly, given the polemic nature of the collection and his own admission in his preface of hostility toward Islam, to the

Muslims themselves for an explanation of their Scripture. This first and widely read Latin Quran was, then, if not a perfectly accurate referent to what the Quran actually said, a reliable index to what Muslims understood it to say.

One of the Middle Ages' more interesting and prodigiously productive personalities, Ramon Lull (d. 1316), was known on occasion as the "crazy man" or the "Arabic Christian." He was a Catalan—"the founder of Catalan prose" is another of his claims to fame—born in 1232 on cosmopolitan Majorca into a Mediterranean world where the political tide was turning against Islam. Between 1226 and 1248 Muslim holdings in Iberia were reduced from one-third of the peninsula to the tiny emirate of Granada squeezed into the southeastern corner (where it would survive, in this reduced and impotent state, for another two and a half centuries). Castile and Aragon became enlarged in both land and population by these early thirteenth-century conquests. Castile gained an additional 10 percent in its population, but Aragon grew by a striking 30 percent, and a large number of the new subjects to the Crown were Muslims. These latter were the Mudejares, the Muslims now living in Christendom, and their presence proved both a threat and a challenge, not so much to the sovereign, who found them useful, but to the Church.

The Church's reaction to both challenge and threat was sparked by the Dominicans, a Catholic order of friars (< *fratres*, "brethren") founded by the Spaniard Dominic de Guzman with papal approval in 1216 (see II/8). Their primary mission was to preach, in the first instance against Cathar heretics in the south of France (see I/5), but their mandate was quickly broadened and they became the principal agents of the Spanish Inquisition. They were in the forefront of the missionary effort directed at the Muslims with new enthusiasm in the thirteenth century. In the wake of Christendom's stunning reversal of political fortune in Spain, there were newly buoyed hopes that Christianity's religious war against Islam would likewise reap new successes. For some years there had been a Church-run Arabic studies program on Majorca, and in 1250, (St.) Raymond of Peñafort (d. 1275), the eminent Catalan canon lawyer and former master general of the Dominicans, sent eight Dominican friars to study Arabic there in preparation for a proselytizing mission among the Muslims.

Among the newly trained Arabists was Ramon Martí, who in the next twenty-five years spearheaded Spanish Christian polemic against the Jews and Muslims. Besides writing several works attacking both faiths, Martí was present, along with Raymond of Peñafort, at the already noted public debate in Barcelona between Nahmanides and Pablo Christiá that was held before James I in 1263. In 1268–1269 Martí was in Tunis attempting, unsuccessfully, to convert its Muslim ruler to Christianity. It was he who carried Raymond's request to Thomas Aquinas, his old schoolmate and the reigning Christian theologian at the university of Paris, to write a summa against the infidels (*Contra Gentiles*, 1270–1272), wherein purely rational arguments were laid out to convince a Muslim of the truths of Christianity.

In this climate Lull resolved, rather impetuously, to write a book, “the best in the world against the errors of the unbelievers.” Even before that, he thought, he would go to the pope and the Christian princes “to get them to institute, in whatever kingdoms or provinces might be appropriate, monasteries in which selected monks and others fit for the task would be brought together to learn the language of the Saracens and other unbelievers.” This would provide the personnel “to preach and demonstrate to the Saracens and other unbelievers the holy truth of the Catholic faith.”

With little encouragement from his Church but under the impulse of repeated “illuminations,” Lull undertook his own campaign against Islam. He learned Arabic well enough to compose works in that language and he devoted his prodigious literary energies to fashioning and perfecting “The Art,” a form of interfaith discourse that (1) did not rely on Scripture and so transcended the belief systems of the Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and (2) was constructed on the most fundamental principles he could divine, what he called the “Absolute Principles.” Lull was trying to reach back, or up, to a level of abstraction where all three sets of believers could agree. He pushed even further in his quest for the deep structure of truth: the Absolutes themselves he reduced to letters of the alphabet to better manipulate them in his “combinatory art.” His own writings, this aggressive and confident layman argued to the pope, would be far more effective in convincing the infidel Jews and Muslims than Scripture itself.

In 1275 Lull finally persuaded the king to open the first European school on Near Eastern Studies (including Arabic) in the Franciscan monastery of Miramar on Majorca. The institute was confirmed by papal bull in 1276 and survived until sometime after 1292. Lull subsequently attempted to persuade a succession of popes—and a Church council—to open other schools of Arabic like that at Miramar and, ever the tireless publicist, arranged for himself to give a lecture on the Universal Art at the university of Paris. It created no stir, but the lack of academic enthusiasm did not prevent him from returning to Paris again and again to castigate the faculty for relying on Aristotle and Averroes (see II/7) and for neglecting the ever growing number of works of Ramon Lull.

Lull made it to Islamic territory three times to put the Art to work first hand. The initial occasion was in Tunis, where he arrived in 1293 and immediately “engaged the men most versed in the Mohammadan religion,” as his autobiography puts it. On the pretext that he might be interested in converting to Islam, Lull invited arguments on its behalf, which he then refuted with arguments of his own. The game was soon up, however, and after a spell in prison, he was deported on the orders of the local sultan. Not long afterward Lull was distracted by news of the Mongols’ breaking into Syria and threatening to take Jerusalem. These events prompted the Syrian jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) to issue his fatwas declaring the Mongols, who were professedly Muslims, to be unbelievers and so the objects of Muslim jihad (see

I/5), but for Lull and many others in Europe, the Mongols seemed like prospective converts who might rid Christendom of Islam for good. Lull went to the Latin kingdom of Cyprus and begged the Lusignan king there to send him to either the Mongol khan or the sultan of Egypt so that he might persuade one or the other or both to convert. The king declined.

In 1307, rebuffed in all his projects and expectations, Lull sailed for Bougie in what is today eastern Algeria for one last attempt—he was then seventy-four years old—at convincing reasonable Muslims of the truth of Christianity. He stood up in the public square and announced loudly in Arabic: “The Christian religion is true and the Saracen religion is false and filled with errors and this I am prepared to prove.” The attendant crowd was prepared to dispatch him on the spot, but he was saved by the city’s chief justice, the qadi or mufti, who also fancied himself a philosopher. They argued as reasonable men will, but the qadi soon unreasonably concluded that the visitor might be more quickly convinced of the truth of Islam in jail. Lull remained there for six months writing up his side of the argument until the local ruler had had enough and ordered the troublesome Catalan deported.

Lull returned in time to appear at the Council of Vienne (1311–1312) and argue once again for the establishment of Eastern-language schools. The bishops agreed, and Canon 11 of the council decreed the teaching of Arabic, Hebrew, and “Chaldean” (Syriac) at the universities of Paris, Bologna, Salamanca, and at the Papal Court to prepare students for missionary work. Then a startling development occurred at Tunis. The throne there was seized by a usurper who, in order to get a Christian alliance to defend him against local Muslim enemies, professed interest in converting to Christianity. So in 1314 Lull was again, after twenty-one years, back in Tunis. He got his chance to argue his case once more, orally and in writing, but after December 1315 we hear no more of him. Lull died sometime in early 1316 either in Tunis on the way back or in Majorca, where he is buried. He was eighty-four years old and had written altogether 265 books. Many of them were short pamphlets, but ten of them were between 150,000 and 250,000 words, one of 400,000 words, and one a staggering tome of nearly a million.

What of the Infidels?

Canon law has to do with regulating the behavior of Christians, not merely the true and faithful members of the Church but even those heretics and schismatics who had left or been thrust out of the Church yet were nonetheless still subject—baptism was, after all, an indelible sign—to the Church’s jurisdiction. And what of the infidels, the Jews and Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus who were never part of the Church? For a very long time not much mind was paid to the distant Buddhists, Hindus, or other “heathen” residents

far beyond the pale. But Jews and Muslims—Saracens, they were generally called—lived, the former throughout Europe, the latter in Spain, Sicily, and the crusader states in the Middle East, under Christian political sovereignty. The Muslims beyond the borders of Christendom constituted, furthermore, an enormous political threat to Christian Europe from the seventh to the seventeenth century. Eventually they too attracted the attention of the canon lawyers.

In Gratian's *Decretum* of 1140, only passing attention is paid to the Jews and even less to the "infidels," in both cases as the Christians' subjects. Debates with Jews and infidels were encouraged to hasten conversion to Christianity, whereas marriage with either group was discouraged because it was feared just the opposite would occur. By the time Gregory IX's *Decretals* were published in 1234, both the political landscape and the lawyers' concerns had shifted. Jews and Muslims were now regarded separately. The Jews were still treated in the context of being Christians' subjects, but the political threat of Islam was now recognized—in the ban on dealing with Muslims in arms or war materials, for example. The Crusades themselves are not taken up, however, as matter for legal consideration.

Christian-infidel relations received their first substantial treatment at the hands of Innocent IV (r. 1243–1254), himself a canon lawyer, who cast his remarks in the form of a commentary on a decretal of his predecessor, Innocent III (r. 1198–1216). *Quid super his* became the foundation of much of what followed. Is it licit, he asked, to invade the infidels' lands and, if so, why? The answer was "yes"; the Muslims were in illegal possession of lands that belonged by right to Christians, from whom they had seized them, particularly the Holy Land, "which was rightfully Christian because Christ's life and death there had consecrated the land." In the famous Donation of Constantine that emperor had specifically ceded Judaea to Pope Sylvester I (r. 314–335) and his successors (see I/7). More recently in 1229, the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II (r. 1215–1250) had by negotiation with its Muslim ruler come into legal possession of Jerusalem, a city no longer in his or any other Christian sovereign's possession.

Innocent held that the infidels, which in this context meant principally the Muslims, could choose their own forms of government, but that the pope, as the vicar of Christ, had charge of the care of their souls, a right he possessed *de jure* if not *de facto*. Although the Muslims were free to govern themselves, the pope still had the right to intervene politically in their affairs when, for example, the Muslim ruler violated, or allowed his Muslim subjects to violate, with impunity the natural law, that law immanent in all creation and to which all humankind was subject. Just as God had intervened against the perversions of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were bound not by the Torah but by natural law, so the pope could summon the princes of Christendom to invade Muslim lands, though his agents could not impose baptism there, as we have seen, since this was a voluntary act.

Innocent's argument went a step further. Given Jesus' command to the Apostles to "go to all nations and make them my disciples" (Matt. 28:19), the pope had an obligation to send missionaries to the Muslim and other infidel lands; if the infidels prevented them from entering or persecuted them for preaching or, indeed, persecuted any of their own Christian subjects, the pope was justified in dispatching Christian forces to invade those lands and even depose their ruler. Christian princes did not possess this right of themselves. Only the pope could send them into the infidel lands.

Although Innocent IV was willing to grant the infidels political control over their own lands—provided they had not been illegally seized from Christians—not everyone agreed. The canon lawyer Henry of Susa (d. 1271), better known as Hostiensis—he was bishop of Ostia, hence the sobriquet—wrote his own commentary on *Quod super his* in which he put forward the opinion that with the coming of Christ "every office and all government authority and sovereignty and jurisdiction was taken from every infidel lawfully . . . and granted to the faithful through Him who has the supreme power and who cannot err." Infidels ought then to be subjected to Christian sovereignty, and if they were, according to Hostiensis, they should be permitted to keep their property, possessions, and offices. Hostiensis was not advocating immediate invasion of the infidels' lands; a number of Crusades had already illustrated the folly of that. The dispatch of missionaries was a more practical step.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the canonists turned their attention to the infidel Muslims in a somewhat different landscape. In Spain the Christian reconquest of the Muslim domains came to its triumphant conclusion with the surrender of Granada in 1492. The act was perfectly legal, according to the canonists, since the Christians were merely taking back from the infidels a land that had once, seven centuries earlier, belonged to them. They were further justified by the barbarous condition of the infidels. The Muslims were not, in the new view, part of Christ's flock, as Innocent IV had argued, but undomesticated wild beasts, the "wild ass" descendants of Ishmael referred to in Genesis (16:12). But once conquered and pacified, property rights again asserted their ascendancy: the Muslims were to be permitted to keep their goods and properties.

Muslims, Christians . . . and Other Christians in the Balkans

If the Arab and Berber movement into Spain in the eighth century created Muslim settlement on Europe's southwestern frontier, the Ottoman Turkish conquest of the Balkan states in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries produced an equally notable Muslim presence on its southeastern frontier. When the Turks arrived in the mid-fourteenth century, the Balkans were already a

mixture of peoples: in the north and center, mostly Slavs, who had begun to arrive in the sixth and seventh centuries; in the south, Greeks, with some indigenous Illyrian peoples squeezed up against the Adriatic coast on the west. There were budding national aspirations among the Balkan peoples, and already some of them, the Serbs and Bulgars, for example, were in the process of freeing themselves from the sovereignty of Byzantium—the Christian Greek-speaking Roman Empire of the East, with its capital at Constantinople—if not from the Byzantine political and cultural tradition.

One tradition the peoples of the Balkans had received from the Christian Roman Empire was Christianity itself. The brothers Cyril and Methodius, later venerated as saints, carried the Gospels to the Slavs in the mid-ninth century, but by the mid-thirteenth the Christianized Slavs were already divided along the same Latin Catholic/Greek Orthodox fault-line that had become formalized in the great East-West schism of 1054 (see I/6). The Croats and Slovenes in the northwest (as later the Czechs, Slovaks, and Poles) were, and remain, Latin Catholic, and attached to Rome; the Bulgars and Serbs to the east and south were Orthodox, though not tied quite so firmly to Constantinople.

By the middle of the fourteenth century the Muslim Turks were on hand in the Balkans, and from then until roughly 1700, when the tide had turned against them, the Ottomans exercised sovereignty over most of the Balkans up to the gates of Vienna in the west and well into Russian lands on the east. From the beginning the Turks did not simply occupy the land; they absorbed it into their empire, which stretched eastward to Iraq and south along the Mediterranean from Egypt to Algeria. Local Ottoman governors were appointed in the new Balkan provinces, and the Ottoman bureaucracy administered them. These functionaries were few in number, however, and to strengthen their hold the Ottomans colonized the conquered lands with Turkic (and Muslim) people brought in from Anatolia and elsewhere. The newcomers fanned out northward from Constantinople (which the Ottomans took in 1453 and made their capital) into the European hinterland in Thrace and Thessaly, and then northward through the eastern Balkans. They chiefly settled around fortified points and in the river valleys that were the peninsula's chief and most strategic trade routes. The Christian population withdrew northward into the more mountainous areas beyond Turkish control and interest.

The Turkish Muslim colonists helped stabilize the Ottoman presence yet had little effect on the Balkans in the long run. Many of them remigrated to Constantinople and Anatolia during the Balkan political upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of considerably greater consequence were those Balkan peoples who converted to Islam, most of them voluntarily, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These were the Albanians, an Illyrian remnant northwest of Greece, and, even earlier, among the peoples who in 1376 had proclaimed the autonomous kingdom of Bosnia. The latter was in

effect a frontier zone between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and its pre-Ottoman population was made up of both groups, Croats on one side, Serbs on the other, and between them a somewhat shadowy “church” of heterodox Christians who belonged to neither the Latin nor the Eastern confession.

The first clear indication we have of the extent of Slavic conversion to Islam occurs in the Ottoman census of 1520–1530. It is not a head but a household count—in part to estimate who should be paying the Muslim tithes (*zakat*) and who the tributary poll-tax (*jizya*)—and it reveals that in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Muslims constituted 18.8 percent of the total population, Christians 80.7 percent, and Jews .5 percent. The Jews, mostly migrants from Spain, whence they had been expelled in 1492, though relatively few in number, were of some consequence to the empire’s economic and cultural life and remained concentrated in coastal cities like Salonika. Most of the Muslims were found immediately to the north of Constantinople, thenceforward the Turks’ Istanbul, in what is today European Turkey and southern Bulgaria, and were likely Turkish migrants. But there were also sizable Muslim settlements in Macedonia and Bosnia, and these were converts, who would swell in number in the following century and later be joined by substantial numbers of converts in Albania. Moreover, the Muslims were heavily concentrated in the cities—Sarajevo, a city founded by the Ottomans in Bosnia, was by 1530 100 percent Muslim, Skopje in Macedonia nearly 75 percent Muslim, and Sofia in Bulgaria 66 percent. The Christian Serbs and Bulgars, it is clear, were mostly farmers and herders.

It is always difficult for the historian to assess motivations for conversion, particularly spiritual ones. In this instance, however, the more secular impulses are somewhat clearer. At the outset, it should be remarked that little suggests that conversion to Islam was coerced in any formal or administrative way. There were, however, in the Balkans, as always and everywhere in the Abode of Islam, notable social, economic, and financial advantages to trading in one’s dhimmi status and joining the Muslim umma, but among the Slavic Christians other factors were at work. The Church in many areas, and this seems particularly true of Bosnia, as compared to Croatia or Serbia, was underfinanced and undermanned, with little or no spiritual or intellectual infrastructure: clergy, hierarchy, and churches were all lacking. Moreover, the form of Islam that the Ottomans spread in the Balkans was of the Sufi rather than the lawyerly variety, and the most active of the Sufi “orders” (*tariqa*) in the Balkans was that known as the Bektashiyya (see II/8). Bektashi Sufism had come of age in Anatolia as a heterogeneous mix of religious elements, some Muslim, some Christian, and some of very local Anatolian origin. As it spread into the Balkans it proved equally accommodating to the Slavic Christians, many of whom were themselves on the margins of Christian orthodoxy. To convert from Christianity to Islam in the Ottoman Balkans in the sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries does not seem, at any rate, to have involved surrendering a great many Christian rituals, customs, or beliefs.

Naming the Others

The Quran has a good deal to say about the competitors and rivals of Islam: the Jews—both as Israelites (Banu Israil) and Jews (Yahud)—Christians (Nasara), Zoroastrians (Majus), Sabians, a group clearly conceived in the Quran but not easily identified by Muslim historians, and finally, the assorted pagans lumped together under the term “associators” (*mushrikun*), that is, those who worshipped other gods alongside the One True God. The first four groups were arguably included in the theological category of People of the Book, recipients of a genuine revelation that carried the considerable political advantage of being eligible for the special protective “covenant” (*dhimma*) granted to such (see I/8). The last group, the associators, received no such assurances: they were unbelievers (*kafir*; pl. *kuffar*) purely and simply and so had either to convert to Islam or to die.

For juridical purposes, Muslim lawyers tended to regard all three categories—Muslims, (non-Muslim) Scripturaries, and unbelievers—as simple units, with no distinctions within them. “All unbelief is one religion,” the great Shafii noted, and so too all the dhimmis, despite the fact that they might differ among themselves in their beliefs. Hence, whether a Jew married a Christian or a Christian became a Zoroastrian was for most Muslim jurists a matter of supreme indifference. Others were not so certain: if the Quran distinguished between them, should not the law do likewise? What clearly did matter regarding the People of the Book was where they lived, whether under the protection of the dhimma within the Abode of Islam or outside it, in the Abode of War, where they were objects of jihad.

From another perspective, however, all those religious categories could be collapsed into two fundamental ones. After the revelation of the Quran, there were only true monotheist believers, that is, the Muslims. All others are associators, or polytheists. The thought is not far from the Quran’s own, which itself convicts the Jews and Christians of polytheism, the first for their worship of “Uzayr” (Ezra?), the latter for believing the Prophet Jesus to be the son of God (Quran 9:30–31). Moreover, when Umar II (r. 717–720) forbade Jews and Christians from entering mosques—an interdict later relaxed by most Muslim law schools—he allegedly cited Quran 9:28, which prohibits the polytheists from approaching the Meccan Haram. Consensus never developed on this matter, however. Quran 2:221 forbids Muslim men from marrying “polytheist” women unless they first converted, but few lawyers thought this applied to Christian and Jewish women. The Sunni consensus permitted Muslims to marry Jews and Christians; only the Shiites thought it was forbidden.

The Making of a Muslim

Muslims use circumcision as an initiation ritual, probably in imitation of the Jews, just as Christians, with a little help from John the Baptist, took over baptism from a Jewish conversion ritual. But Islam, like Christianity, is a community of believers: Muslims too are made, not born. The Quran could easily echo Paul's sentiments that "there is no such thing as Jew nor Greek slave or free, man or woman" (Gal. 3:28), but the social realities of seventh-century Mecca differed from those of first-century Jewish Palestine. Muhammad lived, whether in Mecca or Medina, in a combatively tribal society, and in the Prophet's preaching a good deal of space and energy is devoted to taking down that tribal mind-set. The Muslim umma, as the community was called, was intentionally designed to replace a kinship society with a faith-based one. The program was successful, at least during Muhammad's lifetime. The Muslim umma was in fact an egalitarian society open to all believers.

At God's command, then, Muhammad founded a community that took as its identity marker a submission to total monotheism, an acceptance of Muhammad as God's envoy, and, consequently, of the Quran as God's words. Though the Quran frequently referred to the members of that community as "submitters" (*muslimun* > Eng. Muslims), an even more frequent designation for them was "those who have faith" (*iman*), thus, the "faithful" or *muminun*. Later some drew on this distinction between *islam* and *iman* to further distinguish the true and marginal members of the community. But as a matter of actual fact, becoming a Muslim depended directly and exclusively on making the profession of faith (*shabada*)—"There is no god but The God and Muhammad is his envoy"—sharing in community prayer, and contributing the alms-tithe, although in the beginning failing to pay the zakat seems to have had more serious consequences than neglecting prayer, presumably because it was more willful.

Adults who renounced paganism at Mecca and Medina had presumably to do nothing more than pronounce the shahada as an affirmation of monotheism, of a belief in Muhammad's divine mission, and, by implication, in the Quran's divine origin. There were baleful social consequences of such a profession in hostile Mecca—the Quran clearly reflects them—but notably less so in Medina, where the community moved inexorably to a Muslim majority. We begin to understand the long-term problem in conversion, however, in the instance of a Medinese Jew choosing, as some did, to become a Muslim and leaving his highly marked Jewish community for the equally distinct society of Muslims. Until Muslims became the majority over the entire Abode of Islam, leaving one's original community and joining the umma carried with it painful social dislocation wherever it occurred.

After Mecca's decisive submission to Muhammad in 630, the tribes of Arabia read the omens and decided that their future lay with the rising new

prophet in Medina. There was no longer any need to pursue or to proselytize. Delegations came on their own accord to the Prophet and announced their submission. Most were Bedouin, though there were also representatives of some of the Christian settlements in the Yemen. Religion sat lightly on the Bedouin, as the Quran itself remarks (9:97), and for some or perhaps most of them acceptance of Islam may have meant little more than recognizing Medina's sovereignty and paying what is set down in Islamic law as a religious tithe but surely appeared to the camel nomads as a tax or tribute (Quran 9:98). This seems reasonably inferred from the fact that immediately after the Prophet's death many of the Arab tribes abruptly stopped paying the zakat and Muhammad's successor had to dispatch armed troops to enforce its collection. Muslim officials could not guarantee that everyone would say his prayers, but they surely knew whether the zakat arrived in Medina.

Conversion to Islam was readily done but difficult to realize. The *Life* is filled with accounts of the Prophet's instructing delegates of this or that tribe on the new beliefs and practices to be followed, but the process of substituting the practice (*sunna*) of the Prophet for the venerated sunna of the ancestors was not accomplished quickly or easily. Surely the best that could be hoped for in those early days was that the tribes should stop sacrificing to and otherwise venerating their idols and learn some verses of the Quran, which they could then use as prayer. But Islam quickly spread beyond the Bedouin into the sown lands of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq, where their faith did not sit lightly on Jews and Christians who for centuries had been attacking each others' faith—and variant versions of their own. We have little clue as to how the conversion process proceeded here. It must have been slow, but some of its results can be observed fairly soon in Islam's career. The accounts of early Muslim writers, chiefly historians and quranic commentators, are filled with biblical and postbiblical tales filling out the Quran's sketches; they most often seem to come from very early Christian, particularly Jewish, converts to Islam. These were later lumped together as "Israelite tales" with the label "Do Not Use." The warning came too late in most cases. The Israelite tales from the People of the Book were an influential contribution to the formulation of Islam in the first obscure century of its existence.

An Arab, and Arabic, Islam

In its earliest manifestation, Islam was the faith of Arabs revealed by an Arab prophet whose message was, it boasted, "in a manifest Arabic." In the first conversions Arabs passed from tribe to umma, losing their tribal identity (though only briefly), but not, as it turned out, any of the cultural markers of language, dress, food, and so on. Islam was at first measured by prayer, which could not be monitored always and everywhere, and by payment of the alms-tithe, which

could. But when the call to Islam passed among other peoples—the Greek- and Aramaic-speaking people of Syria-Palestine, the Greek- and Coptic-speaking peoples of Egypt, the Greek- Aramaic- and Pahlevi-speaking peoples of Iraq and Iran—it sounded theologically familiar, but culturally it remained Arab. It continued to be such for a very long time—the anchor of the Arabic Quran secured it—so that Muslim converts had to assimilate to a new culture as well as assert a new faith.

The converts' cultural assimilation to Arabism was astonishingly rapid; within thirty or forty years the language of the Bedouin was being used as the language of state. Assimilation also occurred so thoroughly that it transformed the entire North African–Near Eastern land mass into an Arab cultural *oikoumene*. There were survivors—Persian culture held its breath long enough under the Arab flood that it was revived again after a century or so, though with strong Arab overtones—but the transformation was sufficiently complete that those Christians, Jews, and others who declined to embrace Islam were in the end content to speak its language.

The new converts' assimilation to Arab tribal society was considerably more difficult. The differences between peoples had always existed, of course, save in that pre-Babel world when all humankind was one (Quran 2:213; 10:19), but conversion had a particular significance in an essentially tribal society where identity and its consequent social and political protections were claimed on the basis of birth. There are ways of associating with tribal societies even if one is not born into them, but one of the most common, fictive adoption and its resultant patron-client relationship, provides the *cliens* with status of a decidedly inferior quality. What the *cliens* was to vestigial Roman tribalism, the *mawla* was to pre-Islamic Arab tribal societies: a freed slave, protected but dependent. It was a kind of juridical adoption whereby the newcomer became a client of the tribe, with limited membership privileges and a considerable menu of obligations.

The Arabs too were organized tribally before the coming of Islam, and though the Quran attempted to create a new type of umma where spiritual merit replaced the old blood ties—"the noblest among you in God's sight is he who is most righteous," Quran 49:13 announces in a bold reversal of tribal values—the Muslim society that emerged after the Prophet's death continued to display much of the same tribal organization and many of the status markers that had prevailed in pre-Islamic days. Thus new Arab converts could be assimilated into the rapidly expanding umma without difficulty, but non-Arabs who submitted were accessioned only through the pre-Islamic institution of clientage known as *wala*. Thus the new Persian Muslim, for example, was attached to some Arab tribal lineage as a *mawla*, or client, who depended on his patron (*wali*) for protection and, in some larger sense, from whom he took his identification as a Muslim (see I/8). This condition of clientage, a tribal hangover in a religious society that in theory recognized no tribal distinctions,

though it created serious social problems in the eighth and ninth centuries, and even later in Spain, eventually passed out of Islam.

Whether to Christianity or to Islam, we do not and cannot know for certain why conversion takes place, save perhaps where a sheikh or sovereign moves and his people perforce must follow him into a new faith, as seems to have occurred in the passage of the Slavic people of the Balkans into Christianity, or that of the Arabian Bedouin and the North African Berbers into Islam. Though we can broadly calculate and weigh some of the social and economic incentives to conversion, we can take no measure of the spiritual ones, except in the rare individual cases where someone undertakes to explain. We do know that Muslims were at first a very small minority in the lands they so rapidly conquered and that eventually, after two or three centuries perhaps, they were the majority. We know too that the people who became Muslims from Spain to Iraq were originally Christians and some Jews, and farther east, Zoroastrians. Muslims were the rulers of those people, their sovereigns in power and wealth, if not in sophistication and learning. Surely it was the possibility of sharing in the Muslims' power or wealth (or at least in not suffering the liability of being excluded from the perquisites of the new order) that prompted those other Peoples of the Book to leave their home communities and join the triumphalist Muslim umma, even given the disabilities and derogation that mawla carried with it early on.

Note: The conversion of entire ethnic or tribal communities to a new faith, what has been called "social conversion," sometimes leads to deviant versions of that faith as an identity marker. The later Slavic flirtation with Bogomilism, a form of the widespread Cathar heresy (see I/5), seems to fall into that category, but the Berber case is even more striking since there are multiple examples. The Berbers had originally undergone a social conversion to Christianity and then in the fourth century embraced a particular North African form called Donatism, against which the Latin and Catholic Augustine had to struggle most of his adult life. After another social conversion to Islam, the Berbers were found at the forefront first of North African Kharijism (see I/5 and I/8) and then at the center of two puritan reform groups. As Almoravids and, even more strikingly, as Almohads, they imposed their own rigorous version of Islam on the rather too easy-living but thoroughly traditional Muslims of Spain.

Islam and the Associators: The Hindu Case

After the Quraysh of Mecca, the earliest and best-organized community of associators encountered by Islam was undoubtedly the Hindus, named from their homeland of Hind in northern India. In 976 the Ghaznavids, a Persianized

Turkish dynasty established in Kabul, began their passage through the mountain passes of the Hindu Kush down into the upper reaches of the Indus Valley. According to an eyewitness, the Muslim sultan “demolished the idol-temples [of the Hindus] and established Islam in them.” His more famous successor, Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 998–1030), acquired a considerable reputation in pious Muslim circles as the scourge of Hinduism. But though the Ghaznavid expeditions were advertised as jihad, they were nakedly predatory raids. The Ghaznavids had not gone to Hind to stay, as their Arab counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa had done. Their chief, and perhaps only, objective in India was to plunder, not to extend the umma or convert the Hindus. The temples they sacked were quite simply the repositories of the wealth of the Hindu kingdoms of northern India, which the Muslims took when and where they could.

The Ghaznavids were replaced in their Afghan strongholds by the Ghurids in 1186, and the armies of this new military dynasty behaved more like the original wave of Arabs who swept across North Africa in the seventh century. The Ghurids’ Turkish generals led their forces across northern India from Peshawar all the way to Bengal, and the state that emerged in their wake, the Delhi sultanate (1206–1526), was the first Muslim polity in India. Nearly submerged in a vast Hindu sea, the sultans attempted to maintain their Islamic identity by swearing continued fealty to the distant Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. They had help. In the thirteenth century, the work of conversion was actively pursued, and the chief agents in the Islamicization of the lands of the Delhi sultans and their successors were the highly adaptable Sufis of the Chishtiyya tariqa (see II/8).

The assault on the Hindu temples continued, although now the intent was more distinctly political than merely looting their treasures. The Hindu temple and its image were the heart of the local raja’s legitimacy, a place where the king and the god were signaled as integrated and interdependent. They became, then, a principal battlefield for the incoming Muslim rulers and the Hindu rajahs they were attempting to unseat: looting or destroying a temple, or rededicating it as a mosque, was understood as a political gesture by both sides. That this and not *odium theologicum* was the primary motive for destruction of the Hindus’ temples is attested to by the fact that the destroyers were invariably military men—and not religious leaders, sultans, governors, or generals—who seized the defeated king’s tutelary image and, instead of destroying it as an idol, carried it back to their capital as a war trophy.

Under the Mughuls (1526–1858), another Persianized Turkish dynasty from Central Asia that ruled northern and central India from Kabul to Bengal until the arrival of the British, something approaching toleration of Hinduism emerged. Previous Muslim rulers in India seemed largely indifferent to the religious beliefs of their subjects, perhaps a wise course in many places where the Muslims remained an inconsiderable minority. Indeed, in some instances, they even granted some form of dhimmi status to Hindus, who were

on the face of it textbook instances of polytheists but who clearly were, and remained, far too numerous to be coerced very effectively.

The Mughuls showed no such indifference. The greatest of them, Akbar (r. 1556–1605)—whose reign spanned the turn of the first Muslim millennium, which had its own vibrant apocalyptic associations—was profoundly interested in all things religious, particularly when they could be turned to his own political advantage. He had a quite modern fondness for interfaith conferences, in which Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians, and even Catholic priests participated. Whether from tolerance or pragmatism, he abolished the *jizya* incumbent on Hindus, who were by this time generally treated as *dhimmis*.

If this was calculated to gain the support of his non-Muslim subjects, Akbar was not averse to taking on his own Muslim authorities. Despite the strong Sufi orientation of Indian Islam, and its fondness for integrating popular Hindu rites, festivals, and social practices into everyday Islam, the traditional *ulama* (legal scholars) were also powerful there, and Akbar challenged their authority in the name of the state. His instrument was an extraordinary decree that the leading court *ulama* were constrained to sign in 1579. It certified that Akbar was a “just ruler” in the technical sense of that term and, as such, was warranted to choose any quranic interpretation that he regarded in the state’s best interest, even if the *mujtahids*, the Islamic law experts, disagreed.

Akbar’s strong-arm politics was accompanied by a softer and more blurred melding of Hindu pantheism and Muslim mysticism. The blend pleased few save the cognoscenti, and under Akbar’s son Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), the *ulama* reasserted themselves. In the end, even the most eclectic Sufis deserted this flirtation with Hinduism and returned to more orthodox Muslim ways.