Volker Leppin

Strategies of Diversity and Hegemony

An approach to the study of premodern religious interactions from a Christian theological perspective[1]

Abstract: This essay takes the position of Western Christian theology. It deals with the role of premodern studies in the current state of academia and society. It argues that researching historical religious encounters can help understand strategies of diversity. It does so by broadening the question of encounter: In particular concerning Judaism, Christianity does not only get in touch with Jewish religion but at its core it is shaped by Jewish symbols and concepts, not the least the concept of a Messiah. When trying to understand how premodern Christianity acted facing multiple claims to religious truth, the essay outlines two strategies: Othering on the one hand, and bearing a lasting ambiguity on the other. The latter means awareness of Christianity of its inevitable entanglement with other religions. In the end, it argues, that learning about sensitivity toward diversity in an exemplary field can help to develop a more adequate Christian self-identification for the future.

Keywords: Christian-Jewish relations, Christian-Muslim relations, religious encounters, Church history, premodern racism

The time in which premodern studies could assume its own preeminence and impact is at an end. Eurocentric, as the humanities have been for a long time, they had no need to ask if or why knowledge of the Middle Ages or Early Modern era should matter, let alone if these terms could apply to every part of human history. Concern with the events, practices and outcomes of premodern Western European culture was taken as a matter of fact, feeding the self-perception of scholarly actors who identified themselves as heirs to the European legacy. The conflict is not entirely unfamiliar to those committed to theology, as theology has undergone the same decline from being the queen and master of all other disciplines to finding

1 I am deeply grateful to Colin Hoch (Yale University) for editing this essay and debating its content critically. Brach Jennings (Tübingen) gave me some important insights reading it. The New Haven Theological Discussion Group kindly gave me an opportunity to discuss it on April 22 2023, as did Katharina Heyden and David Nirenberg in a meeting of their research group "Coproduced religions" (Bern / Princeton) on April 25.

HIReC 1 (2024), 3–29
ISSN 2941-4172
DOI 10.1628/hirec-2024-0003

itself at the limits of the academic orbit, questioned in its fundaments, and suspected of owing its existence to a persistent alliance with the powerful. The upside is that theology, which has had a long history of self-reflection,[2] has already been prompted to unfold its own fundaments pretty clearly. The underlying question has always been whether or not a secular, or at least religiously nonpartisan university was ready to bear a non secular discipline, as theology is by definition.

One might frame this debate as a test of diversity. Taking theology into the university means approving of, or at least accepting an approach to scholarship that is rooted in a religious basis, one that could perform a complementary role to religious studies, which is in itself defined by a point of view beyond actual religions.[3] At least some of the theological disciplines could argue that they use the same methods as religious or historical studies. This would, however, diminish the real differences in their underlying assumptions, and highlight the question of how to approach premodern religious history as compared to theologically based Church History. Not only religious-based studies have been questioned here, but also research with secular assumptions. Like theology, premodern European studies has to recognize that it represents a culture that for too long claimed superiority over others, just as Christianity did in relation to other religions, and now has to define its place as just one voice in a multifold choir. There is scant evidence these days that European history before the Revolutions in America and France are of any interest to a society grappling with issues like structural racism, or for scholars structuring the field of humanities with notions like postcolonialism. The latter definitely implies a way of "provincializing Europe", as Leela Gandhi puts it,[4] and even questions the notion of history itself as being part of a hegemonizing strategy in a European worldview, which, of course, does not lead us to abandon historical approaches in general, but encourages their critical use.[5]

2 Ulrich Köpf, *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974).

3 S. Hillary Rodrigues, John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London / New York: Routledge, 2009), 44: "Theology is typically the domain of religious 'insiders' who are actively promoting, defending, transmitting, and shaping their tradition. (…) The discipline of religious studies in the secular university differs on each of these main points. The scholar studying religion in this academic setting need not to be an insider in any tradition." Cp. Conrad Cherry, *Hurrying Toward Zion. Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 87–123.

4 Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2nd edition, 2019), 42.

5 Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 170 f.

Given the state of this debate, scholars of European history, or – to narrow it down even more – of Western European history, echo Galileo's persecutors when they stubbornly maintain Europe's centrality in global society. Instead, European history can only be understood as a part of a globalized approach. Finding themselves within this setting, researchers of European history have to face not only questions generated by their tradition but also those that have arisen through modern social developments and liberation movements. Doing so does not introduce an anachronistic approach. At least it is not more anachronistic than any use of modern terms would be. Just to recall a famously established approach in the humanities, social history ascribes a model of interpretation to humans in the past that they never would have accepted or understood as an explanation for their thoughts and behaviors. Whosoever does not simply wish to repeat their ancestors' self-identification, has to pick up notions foreign to them. This is not necessarily something imposed upon writing European history from an external point of view, it actually accords with what can be called a tradition of "Western Self-Critique".[6] Understanding European history appropriately has always meant transforming established views and, in this case, integrating them into a better and broader view of the world. Dealing with premodern epochs in a current state of the humanities characterized by postcolonial approaches consequently means developing a critical view of said European history. However, it does not mean that we should uncritically apply modern concepts to premodern times. Researchers have only to consider what transformation their subject undergoes when using modern terms and questions, and conversely, how modern approaches have to be adapted to be used effectively in describing and analyzing the past.

1. Premodern religious encounters and the challenge of modernity

At first sight, premodern history seems to be far off from said problems that challenge modern societies. Yet, recent debates have proven that it is not. Carefully scrutinizing medieval sources prevents us from simply identifying modern notions in them,[7] but also prevents us from excusing the

6 Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 178.

7 Cornel West, "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," in *Race Critical Theories. Text and Context*, ed. Philomena Essed, David Theo Goldberg (New York: Blackwell, 2002), 97 f.

Middle Ages from the moral liability implicit in the development of burdensome concepts like racism.[8] This applies also to religious encounters as in question in this essay, and especially to the history of Jews which Geraldine Heng has called a "Benchmark Example" for developing concepts of "religious race" in the Middle Ages.[9] Christian attitudes toward the Jews often entangled religious arguments with a proclivity towards concepts of natural genealogy, often expressed through notions of blood and consanguinity.[10] Stressing the religious element more so than Heng, one might be reluctant to call the social construction observed here 'race,' but it is by no means far-fetched. The case of *limpieza de sangre* in Early Modern Spain and its colonies is well-known. In the middle of the fifteenth century, older and well-established Christian communities did not accept converts from Judaism as full members of their communities, refusing marital relations with them to preserve an alleged purity of blood.[11] "[W]ords like *raza, casta, linaje*, and even *natura*"[12] were used to define the differences

points to the influence of natural theory on the modern concept of race, discerning it this way from earlier concepts.

8 S. e. g. the impressive study of Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997), about the roots of the so-called "curse of Ham" in medieval exegesis. For embeddedness of postcolonial studies with facing racism in general s. Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," *Postcolonial Studies. An Anthology*, ed. Pramod K. Nayar (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).

9 Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University Press, 2018), 27–31. The history of the Jews in the Middle Ages even is somehow related to the story of Ham: In a bizarre turn, some Christian texts, including the *Glossa ordinaria*, linked Ham not by descent but by likeness to the Jews who – relying on Isidore of Seville (Isidore of Sevilla, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum: In Genesin c. 8.4* [PL 83,235C]), the Glossa told its readers – had mocked Jesus upon seeing him dead as Ham had done with his father when seeing him drunk (*Glossa ordinaria* [PL 113,112C]); cp. Braude, *Sons of Noah*, 133.

10 David Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today* (Chicago / London: Chicago University Press, 2014), 169–190, rightly has unfolded that because "race" has become a biological construction to describe cultural differences in modernity, we would follow exactly this wrong route when identifying anything like a biological entity of race in premodernity. Like in modernity, only traces of constructions, which reformulate cultural differences by biological concepts, can be found there; cp. Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory. An Introduction* (New York: University Press, 3rd edition, 2017), 9, who rightly states "that race and races are products of social thought" which "correspond to no biological or genetic reality".

11 Maria Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: University Press, 2008), 28. See also the comprehensive volume Mercedes García-Arenal, Felipe Pereda, ed., *De sangre y leche. Raze y religion en elm undo ibérico moderno* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2021).

12 Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, 183.

between those who claimed to be true Christians and those whom they defined not to be real Christians, even if baptized. What began in social practice soon became codified through legal measures. A few generations later, the German reformer Martin Luther would speak of "Jewish blood" ("Jüdische blut").[13] In his early writings of 1523, Luther praised the Jews for being of the "blood of Christ" ("von dem geblutt Christi"),[14] but this shows the same genealogical framing of religious affiliation as his later polemics against the Jews, whom he accused of boasting that they were superior to Christians by virtue of their carnal descent from Abraham. A great deal of scholarship has been done to show that Anti-Judaism is not Anti-semitism,[15] and that there is good reason for this distinction. Yet, this does not mean that one has nothing to do with the other, or that one did not lead to the other. Heiko A. Oberman, after all, coined Luther's approach the "roots of Antisemitism".[16] It would seem that keeping the connection in mind is an appropriate approach to a field of core relevance for Christian self-reflection.

No Christianity, and no history of Christianity, has ever happened without a relationship to Judaism. When Christians adopted Jewish hopes and claimed that messianic expectations were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, they began a history wherein their identity was defined by Jewish concepts and beliefs. The relationship was primarily a negative one from the start; the New Testament itself laid the groundwork for a concept like Isidore's that blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus Christ more so than the Roman authorities who actually brought him to death by their laws. Christians disinherited the Jews when they understood the promises of the Hebrew Bible to have been realized in their own congregation and claimed themselves heirs of the New Covenant. This led to a Christian dialectical self-fashioning vis-a-vis the Jews, and perhaps even fostered Christian hostility towards them. Christians knew that they would have never become Christians without Israel and the Jews. Their stories are entangled in a way that David Nirenberg has accurately described in his volume on "neighboring faiths":

13 Luther, *Vermahnung wider die Juden* (WA 51,195,12); cf. Thomas Kaufmann, *Luther's Jews. A Journey into Anti-Semitism* (Oxford: University Press, 2017), 2 f.

14 Luther, *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei* (WA 11,315,26).

15 A good overview can be found in: Johannes Heil, "'Antijudaismus' und 'Antisemitismus'. Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997). Peter Schäfer, *Kurze Geschichte des Antisemitismus* (München: Beck, 2020), explicitly rejects this distinction.

16 Heiko A. Oberman, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

this book proposes a world in which the three religions are interdependent, constantly transforming themselves by thinking about each other in a fundamentally ambivalent form of neighborliness.[17]

Nirenberg's vision helps us to understand how the study of premodern religions has changed in recent decades. Whether or not one follows Nirenberg in calling this newly developed view of their relationship "co-production",[18] the idea is convincing or even obvious that seeing Christianity, Judaism, and, as Nirenberg rightly adds, Islam as separate entities, whose interactions only occurred by chance, would miss the deep entanglement that has existed from their foundations. Yet, we still have to take into account an important difference between Judaism and Islam regarding their mutual relation to Christianity. While Judaism has been an undeniable influence in Christianity, shaping its religious conceptions and imagery from the beginning, Islam developed under both Jewish and Christian influences, transforming some central Christian convictions and placing central figures of Christian history like Jesus and Mary into its own storytelling. Moreover, for those countries which were dominated by Christians, Jews lived as an important part of the population and were subject to the ruling authorities, whereas Islam was mainly seen as a rival power from the outside, and perceived more in terms of military confrontation than in terms of a religious distinction.

This short sketch of the relationship between the three religions obviously mirrors a Christian view, in particular: a view from the standpoint of Western Christianity.[19] In fact, the essay that follows was written by a Church historian who aims to use the comparative methods accepted in other fields of history, but who defines himself as a part the Christian theological traditions shaped in Latin Europe. The perspective presented here does not claim to offer a view of the three religions from the outside, it even cannot claim to cover all different forms of Christianity; rather, it is framed by a certain branch of the Christian tradition with the aim of transforming what its telling of Christian history has been up to now. There will always be a place in Church history for thorough research on certain phenomena which don't show their relation to other religions, at least not

17 Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, 4.

18 Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, 5. The reason why I do not adopt this term is the notion of intentional building, given by the semantics of "production" in it.

19 I am grateful to both groups mentioned in footnote 1 to make me understand that my approach is deeply bound to only a Western Europe perspective and could benefit from a more global view. For the time being, this can only be notified as a task for the author's future learning.

at first glance. There is a history of Christian government, spirituality, and theology that stands very much on its own without explicitly noticing the world of the Other. This world is nevertheless present to it and has shaped at least a part of Christian history. Any history of Christianity has to take it into account.

This is our future task; to situate the place of historical Theology within theological institutions. Here is not the place to discuss in detail what theology is or has to be. Rather, it suffices to understand theological language in basic terms, with an eye towards Judge Goldberg's famous ruling in the case of School District of Abington vs. Schempp, wherein the 'teaching of Religion' was distinct from 'teaching about religion,' which belongs to departments of religion.[20] Theology as a 'teaching of religion' must always be aware of the temptation to overestimate what is based on its own tradition, and neglect what comes from the outside. Historians certainly do not have that luxury. For a long time now, Christianity's roots in Judaism and in aspects of pagan antiquity have been well-researched. One could debate whether or not the term 'syncretism' still serves as an adequate description,[21] especially as it presupposes an original separation of different religious systems, but the conclusion remains the same, there has never been anything like pure Christianity. Instead, throughout its history Christianity has benefitted from other religions to the degree that Wolfhart Pannenberg, in his sketch for a theology of the history of religions, claimed that Christianity's absorption of other religions proved its correlation to God as "determining the totality of reality."[22] A historian, even a theological one, could never go so far. However, they would still have to observe and admit that the relationship of Christianity to other religions, especially Judaism and Islam, is not one-dimensional. Nor is there anything new in Christian history that would deform a prior, pure form of Christianity. Encounters with other religions are an integral part of Christianity that have shaped it not as an entity distinct from other religions, but one that mirrors them in ways which can be described and analyzed historically and

20 Sheila Greeve Davaney, "Theology and Religious Studies in an Age of Fragmentation," in *Theology in a World of Specialization*, ed. Erik Borgman, Felix Wilfred (London: SCM Press, 2006), 40.

21 S. for discussion (and defense) of the term David Frankfurter, "Restoring 'Syncretism' in the History of Christianity," *Studies in Late Antiquity* (2021). For an interesting constructive use in modern debates: Ross Kane, *Syncretism and Christian Tradition: Race and Revelation in the Study of Religious Mixture* (Oxford: University Press, 2021).

22 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Toward a Theology of the History of Religions," in id., *Basic Questions in Theology. Collected Essays. Vol. 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 96.

theologically, acknowledging similarities as well as differences.[23] In practice, this means that the history of Christianity cannot be written without taking into account that at any possible moment its beliefs and practices have potentially been shaped in reference to another religion, either in terms of affirming and aligning with it or in contradicting and criticizing it. Once again, this does not apply to any particular question in the field, but in general the issue of interreligious relations has to raise awareness about the entanglement of Christianity with the history of other religions, especially other monotheistic ones.

Christianity has not only had to deal with diversity throughout its history, but from the beginning, it has had to comprehend itself within a diverse history of different religions wherein Christianity was only a part, even if it usually claimed not only to be the most important part but even the only true religion. As late as the Enlightenment, it had to learn that truth could be borne by other religions as well. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous 'Parable of the Ring' from "Nathan the Wise" provides the most telling expression. A father, Nathan recalled, had three sons who he loved equally. Tradition nevertheless compelled him to bequeath to only one of his sons a ring that had the power to make its owner pleasing to God and mankind. As the loving father did not feel able to favor one of them over the other, he commissioned two or maybe even three copies of the ring. In the end, he transmitted a ring to each of his sons, with no one knowing which of them was the original. The only way to ascertain who had the true ring was for all three to become, as ownership of the ring had originally promised, pleasing to God and mankind. Setting aside the ending's ethical twist, Lessing asserted that the absolute nature of Christianity, along with its claim to absolute truth, had come to its end with modernity.

Modern relativization has proven true in philosophical discourse and persuasive on the stage, and it has given us historical insights into the conditional nature of all religions, including Christianity. However, it is yet to find its expression in an adequate historical theological method. If modern Christianity is right to forgo its claim to absolute truth and put itself into perspective (and obviously it is right to do so) an interesting phenomenon occurs. For too long, Christianity has made a claim to supremacy that was questioned, to say the least, by the existence of other religions which also claimed to have an exclusive approach to God. Here, we find what the encounter of different religions makes fascinating for

23 S. e. g. Mark Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995).

Christian theology; faced with other claims to exclusive truth throughout its history, Christianity has had to rethink its own claims, either by questioning them on its own, or by fostering it by several strategies. Framed in this way, a history of Christianity *within* the history of religions, instead of a Christian history separate from other religions or encountering them only by historical accident, contributes to a history that might help to understand strategies for coping with diversity. This not only gives us a clearer picture of the past but also serves the needs of our times. The following cannot be anything more than an attempt to find a path forward in the field, one that stresses that premodern Christianity's approach to dealing with other religions' claims was much more ambivalent than one would initially assume. The focus will be on the Middle Ages, a time when distinct religious bodies had been formed already. The essay is a first step towards a coherent theory of interreligious encounters.

2. Othering

The primary way of dealing with diversity in the medieval past was to socially construct and label it as the Other. However, even if this essay does not deal with the initial formative periods of Judaism and Christianity,[24] it is worth remembering that there was a time in which it was less certain that identifying as Jewish precluded identifying as a Christian. With respect to the two religions, the widely used metaphor of 'parting ways' implies a shared path in the beginning, as it was obviously the case that Jesus' movement was founded to renew Judaism from within. This produced a kind of dialectic; the more Christians felt the need to emphasize their difference to Judaism, the more they seemed to have been aware of commonalities. Difference, obviously, was not simply a matter of fact, but rather something to argue about and foster through subsequent debates. To a certain degree, this applied to Christian-Islamic relations as well, as Christian authors defined Islam as a body fundamentally entangled with Christianity. In *De haeresibus,*[25] John of Damascus (d. 749) set the tone for

24 S. different approaches to this issue in James F. G. Dunn, The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity (London: SCM-Pr. 2nd ed., 2003). Peter Schäfer, Die Geburt des Judentums aus dem Geist des Christentums: Fünf Vorlesungen zur Entstehung des rabbinischen Judentums (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

25 John of Damascus, *De haeresibus ch. 101* (MPG 94,763–774). Counting the chapters here follows the Migne edition which can be debated; cf. Daniel J. Sahas, *John of Damascus on*

medieval understandings of Mohammed when he gave an account of a group he called the "Ishmaelites". A cursory reading of the book's title and chapter reveals how this Christian monk classified Islam. John described Muslims as the heirs of Ishmael, Abraham's son by the enslaved Hagar, which accorded with post-Qur'anic accounts of Islam,[26] and provided a Biblical pedigree that connected all three monotheistic religions through a common ancestor. More decisive, however, was his categorization of Islam as a Christian heresy, alleging that Mohammed had been in conversation with an Arian monk.[27] This provided the rationale for why the Jesus of the Qur'an was no more than an important but definitely human prophet. John, who had gained some first-hand knowledge of Islam, also associated it with a well-known Christian heresy by adding some Docetist components to the Qur'anic interpretation of the crucifixion.[28] In the centuries to come, other writers provided variations to this story, but in general, they shared John's definition of Islam as a Christian heresy. We will return to this point when dealing with the ambiguity of Christian relations to other religions.

As we know from our own family stories, kinship can be a reason to highlight commonalities, but it can also lead to the stressing of differences in order to highlight one's own uniqueness. The son doesn't want to just mirror his father, the younger sister wants to chart a path different from her grown siblings. This family dynamic might help us to understand the rigor of Christianity's refusal of Judaism and Islam. Of course, this does not mean that Christianity showed more tolerance for religions other than these two in its area of influence, but rather, the way that it shaped its relations to Judaism and Islam, which were tied to it not only geographically but also historically, might have been influenced by the deep desire to show that despite its connections and similarities, it was different. "Othering," as Charles K. Bellinger puts it rightly, is a better word to describe what traditionally has been called prejudice, because: "it is connected in current discourse with the idea that a person's *self-image* is formed

Islam. The "Heresy of the Ismaelites" (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Peter Schadler, *John of Damascus and Islam. Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018).

26 Rudi Paret, "Ismāʿīl," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, consulted online on January 13, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3644.

27 John of Damascus, *De haeresibus ch. 101* (MPG 94, 765 A).

28 John of Damascus, *De haeresibus ch. 101* (MPG 94, 765B): "ἐσταύρωσαν τὴν σκιὰν αὐτοῦ."

through the mental act of *othering*. 'I' gain a sense of who 'I' am by convincing myself that I am *not the other*."[29] What is true for individuals is true for groups as well. If the Other is produced by a self-fashioning or self-identifying process, othering says a great deal about how the self wants to see itself, or wants to be seen by others, whomsoever we might define as the Other. In other words, Christianity defines itself in othering Judaism and Islam.

In medieval history, the event that most obviously shows othering taken to its furthest extent are the Crusades. Setting aside the intricate problem of reconstructing the original words of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095,[30] the report by Fulcher of Chartres gives us an impression of their tone. The Arabs were depicted as barbarians murdering Christians, destroying Churches, and threatening Christ's kingdom.[31] As if this were not enough to justify war, the othering reached a peak in calling them *pagani*, or heathens.[32] Consequently, the war against Islam, according to the Pope's words, was not the prelates' war, but one waged by Christ himself.[33] This sounded different than categorizing them, as had been the case since John of Damascus, as stubbornly errant Christian heretics. For Urban, or those reporting his speech, the Muslims were simply faithless *infideles*.[34] They were to be excluded not only from the heavenly kingdom of God, as they had been when seen as Christian heretics, but also from earthly Christian communities. They had been redefined by the war's need for a clearer and more distinct enemy.

Othering this day did not only apply to Christian attitudes towards Muslims in this time. The Crusades also affected the Jews living within Europe. A basic difference between Muslims and Jews, and consequently between the biases against them, resulted from the fact that Muslims were seen as a peril from the outside, even though they had occupied Sicily and the Iberian peninsula since 711. In general, however, borders separated them from Christian Europeans, and interaction was only possible in distinct political spheres. This was different from the Jews who lived among Christians, reminding them always that they were not the only ones

29 Charles K. Bellinger, *Othering. The Original Sin of Humanity* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020), 3.

30 S. Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades. The War for the Holy Land* (London et al.: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 691 n. 1.

31 Fulcher Carnutensis *Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127). Mit Erläuterungen und einem Anhange*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg: Winter, 1913), 134.

32 Fulcher, *Historia*, 135.

33 Fulcher, *Historia*, 134 f.

34 Fulcher, *Historia*, 136.

venerating the God who created the World and bequeathed their grace upon those who were willing to follow them. Both religions called into doubt the notion of a Christian Europe, but in different ways. While Muslims governed certain parts of Europe, Jews held no political authority anywhere, but were present in many communities. Their existence was framed by Christian supremacy, fluctuating between protection and persecution.

Jews were subjected to Christian supremacy in its most violent form during the first weeks of the First Crusade. Knights looted Jewish communities, especially in the Rhine region, raped and murdered the inhabitants, and expelled the survivors. Eva Haverkamp has collected moving reports of these atrocities. In his account, Salomo bar Simeon from Mainz gives us an idea of what might have been going through the mind of those who diverted their anti-Muslim aggression onto the Jews:

> Now then, we have taken this far way to seek out the house of shame (i. e. the tomb of Christ) and take revenge on the Ishmaelites. Yet, the Jews live here among us whose fathers have killed and crucified him innocent. So let's first take revenge on them and weed them out among the peoples, that Israel's name will not find mention anymore; or they shall become like us and confess the Son.[35]

Speaking in terms of source criticism, this would have been far from what the knights had actually said. Salomon jotted his notes around 1140, more than a generation after the events, and he clearly spoke from the side of the victims, not the aggressors. Nevertheless, he opens a window into what motivated the knights in their persecution of the Jews. While Muslims were defined as heretics, Jews did not derive from early Christianity, and so could not easily be defined as heretics, even if this happened in some legal and pastoral traditions.[36] Nor could they simply be defined as heathens, as the New Testament presented a clear distinction between Jews and Gentiles. They believed in the very God who was venerated as the father of Christ by Christian believers. Accordingly, the main accusation was altogether different, and it was reflected in Salomon's idea of what the knights might have thought. Jews were disparaged as the murderers of God. They were blamed not so much for being faithless, but rather for being false-hearted, which, especially in the liturgy of Good Friday was expressed

35 *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während des Ersten Kreuzzugs* (MGH. Hebräische Texte 1), ed. Eva Haverkamp (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2005), 253; I am following Haverkamp's translation on p. 252.

36 S. Alexander Fidora, "The Latin Talmud and the Extension of Papal Jurisdiction over Jews," in *Medieval Worlds* 11 (2020), 159, about Innocent's IV commentary on the *Liber Extra*, and the sermons of Berthold of Regensburg.

by a word close to *infideles*, but slightly different: *perfidi*.[37] Every Good Friday – and in many other cases – Christians were reminded of the accusation that the Jews were responsible for the death of Christ. In any case, the accusation obviously does not stand up to modern scrutiny. The gospels clearly indicate that Jesus was executed by Roman officials, even if they also indicate the complicity of Jewish leaders. According to our contemporary understanding, the longstanding accusation had more to do with early Christian anti-Judaism than with factual events, whereas for medieval Christians it was a major part of the story they believed to have happened in first-century Jerusalem. Nevertheless, whenever Christians spoke or heard the Creed, they were reminded that the final responsibility for the death of Christ lay with Pontius Pilate. Theologically, one might even ask if it was right to blame humans for a death that, according to God's purpose, had to take place to save believers. It seldom occurred to the Christian mind that what they understood as God's plan had given the Jews a very ambiguous role; on the one hand as an indispensable part of salvation, and on the other, as premodern mind understood them, as the murderers of God.

In medieval theology, a negative attitude towards the Jews prevailed even if society had to find ways to administer their presence in a predominantly Christian society. The Fourth Lateran Council gives us some insight into how this worked in social and legal practice. In general, there was nothing unusual about imposing sumptuary laws in medieval society; both clerics and peasants had to wear a certain habit.[38] Against this background, we should not be surprised to find the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 advising Jews and Muslims to wear distinctive habits. What was unique about the regulation, however, was the rationale behind it: peculiar garments were to prevent Christians from mistakenly marrying Jews or Muslims, because such marriages were, according to the council, "con-

37 For the Good Friday Prayer "for the false-hearted Jews" (*pro perfidis Iusaeis*) in the Middle Ages s. Amalar of Metz, *De ecclesiasticis officiis l. 1 c. 13* (PL 105,1027C); cp. Peter Browe: *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter* (Rom: Università Gregoriana, 1973), 136. Browe pleads for "faithless" (ungläubig) as a translation of *perfidus*, which seems to me a bit too little nuanced.

38 Gerhard Jaritz: "The Material Culture of the Peasantry in the Late Middle Ages: 'Image' and 'Reality,'" in: *Agriculture in the Middle Ages. Technology, Practice, and Representation*, ed. Del Sweeney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 163–188, 172p. We have not to think about those rules as being too strict, as Ulinka Rublack, "Sartorial Politics in Germany, c. 1300–1750," in: *The Right to Dress. Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c. 1200–1800*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge: University Press, 2019), 37–73, 48p, shows referring to the regulations by Emperor Charles V in 1530.

demned blends" (*damnata commixtio*).[39] Again, we have to be careful not to conflate this concept with later concepts of miscegenation. Here the distinction was not a racial one, at least not on the surface. The same council used the term "*commixtio*" to denote the participation of baptized former Jews in Jewish rites as a religious act.[40] However, the idea behind the council's regulations, which also excluded Jews from offices,[41] was to define Jews as being different from and inferior to Christians.

The social and legal regulations imposed by the Fourth Lateran, together with many similar ones issued by temporal authorities, created a reality of othering alongside theology and liturgy. One might also wonder if it was to protect the Jews or to discredit them that the Lateran Council also banned them from milling around in the streets on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.[42] Here the connection to the aforementioned liturgical prayer for the Jews, which in fact was a prayer against the Jews, is quite obvious. These considerations might help us to better understand hatred against Jews in medieval Christianity. While we have already touched upon the influence of Christian self-definition in relation to its foundation in Judaism, we might also add here that anti-Judaism highlights a certain ambivalence inherent in Christianity that Michel de Certeau has impressively described:

> In the Christian tradition, an initial privation of body goes on producing institutions and discourses that are the effects of and substitutes for that absence: multiple ecclesiastical bodies, doctrinal bodies, and so on. How can a body be made from the word? This question raises the other haunting question of an impossible mourning: "Where art thou?"[43]

De Certeau identified a creative impulse that emerged from the dilemma of Christ's missing body. The downside, however, is that it raises the question of not only "Where art thou," but also "Who has taken you?" For centuries, an all too common answer has been "the Jews." Christianity was built upon the death of its founding figure, and while it cherished this founder's resurrection and everlasting life, it also bemoaned the loss. As we know from our own coping with the death of loved ones, mourning often includes the search for someone to blame. Christianity blamed the Jews time and again for Christ's death, displaying an inability to properly cope with

39 *IV Lateran council c. 68* (*Conciliorum oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. Guiseppe Alberigo et al. [Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973], 266, 9p).
40 *IV Lateran council c. 70* (COD 267,8).
41 *IV Lateran council c. 69* (COD 266,24–267,3).
42 IV *Lateran council c. 68* (COD 266,14–16).
43 Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 81.

this death. In other words, the fact that Christians falsely accused the Jews of killing Jesus, while at the same time embracing his death as fruitful and salvific, shows that Christianity has throughout its history failed to properly acclimate itself to the salvific side of the death of its founder, the Son of God. Christ's death should give reason for joy, but this has not always been the case. Obviously, a joyful death can only be grasped dialectically, but Christian anti-Judaism, centered around the remembrance of the Cross, showed a tendency to disambiguate these dialectics. While it was impossible to deny the positive outcomes of this death, an outlet for its dialectic tensions emerged through blaming the alleged murderers of Christ.

We have reached a topic of debate far beyond the usual procedures of historical inquiry, but it is a necessary one when reflecting upon the impact of religious encounters in the history of Christianity. The relationship to Judaism touches upon the core theme of Christianity, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have already seen how Christians developed sincere convictions and dogma through their negative attitude towards the Jews on Good Friday. Popular legends about Jews desecrating the Eucharistic host showed a similar pattern. While the stories were obviously told to denigrate Jews and to justify persecuting them, they also served as proof of Christ's 'real presence' in the host. They often described Jews stabbing the bread and producing blood, providing miraculous evidence for this central belief in medieval Christianity. They were also a type of applied and enacted dogma. Every Eucharist reenacted the death of Christ on Golgotha, and so the stories recounted the basic narrative of Good Friday. Jews in the desecration legends represented a continuation of the Jews who in the view of these Christian narratives 'murdered' Jesus Christ. The examples of the Eucharist show how stories about Jews sought to say something about Christian faith. In effect, if the central symbol of Christianity has been related to anti-Judaism for so long, researching the negative attitude of Christianity toward Judaism should tell us something about Christianity itself. As a result, an honest history of Christianity has to take into account that it has expressed itself not only through Christian love but also through hateful speech and acts. One might be tempted to write these off as exaggerations or abuses of the Cross. And yet, historical research has shown that the negative potential of the Cross stemmed from its inherent dialectic. The symbol of love can be a symbol of aggression when turned against alleged culprits. The Crusades were not historical accidents; they followed logically from an aggressive interpretation of the Cross that we can find in the Gospel when Matthew has the Jews condemn themselves

(Mt 27:25). Modern theology might, or rather should consider this kind of logic inadequate and wrong, but if Christian theology is to be aware of the failings of Christianity in order to overcome them, it has to face them historically.

The case is obviously different with respect to Islam, as long as we have only Western Christianity in mind, as it is intended here. Islam was not only outside the geographical and political bounds of Christianity, it also lacked the same degree of entanglement that existed between Judaism and Christianity. Muslims were not part of the Biblical story in either the Jewish or Christian traditions, and obviously could not have been as Mohammed appeared centuries later. One might even wonder if the polemics we heard against Muslims in the beginning of the Crusades were rooted in religious convictions or in considerations of political power. Choosing Islam as an enemy was "almost incidental" for the Crusaders, as Thomas Asbridge has stated.[44] Indeed, their initial goal was to liberate the pilgrimage sites in the Near East rather defeat a rival religion, even if Pope Urban's description of Jesus Christ as the actual leader of the war invoked images of a holy war. Christians, however, could not avoid deliberating Islam's role as a religion. Some considered this side of Islam out of true curiosity, while others set out with the polemical goal of refuting Muslim claims to truth. The translation of the Qur'an commissioned by Peter the Venerable is an example.[45] Christians wanted to know about a religion that was not only situated in the East, but also in the Southwest, one that venerated Mary and Jesus in ways different from their own. The identification of Islam as a heresy, which we saw in John of Damascus, expressed the astonishing fact that someone could know about Jesus Christ and nevertheless deny not only his divinity, as the Arians had done, but also his central role in salvation. There were faithful ones who included Jesus in their religion without believing in him as the savior of mankind.

At the Fourth Lateran Council, whose rules concerning Jews and Muslims under Christian rule we have already touched upon, the justification for the Crusades was to free the Holy Land rather than to denigrate Islam itself.[46] And yet, othering followed in the wake of Urban's proclamation; Christ and the Christian people were juxtaposed with Muslim

44 Asbridge, *Crusades*, 37.

45 S. the newly published critical edition: *Alchoran siue lex Saracenorum. Edición crítica y estudio,* ed. José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz (Madrid: CSIC, 2022).

46 *IV Lateran Council* (Mansi 22, 1058).

Saracens.[47] In fact, it only intensified in late medieval writings against the Ottoman 'Turks.'[48] The fall of Constantinople in 1453 and subsequent Ottoman conquests in Central Europe evoked a number of treatises defending Christian power and religion. Denigrating Islam became part of the public discourse, although it was often based more so on conceptual othering than on a first-hand knowledge of its practitioners.

In accordance with the fact that Islam, in contrast to Judaism, was seen as a force threatening Europe from the outside, the conflict was framed more in terms of a military rivalry than a religious one. This does not mean, however, that talented Christian thinkers did not challenge Islam in religious terms. The most comprehensive treatise of this kind was Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribratio Alkorani*. Yet, even the highly educated German humanist shared the conviction that Muhammad had learned about Christianity from a Christian heretic. Nicholas followed another tradition than the Damscene's, blaming a Nestorian monk named Sergius.[49] Ultimately, it was not altogether different from viewing an Arian as liable for Muhammad's knowledge of Christianity. Both represented a false Christology that denied Christ's divine nature. According to Nicholas, Mohammed's Christology was also influenced by Jews who demanded that the Qur'an name only God the Father as Lord, excluding Christ.[50] The argument became more nuanced as Nicholas aimed to show that the Qur'an *de facto* and unwittingly taught that Christ was the Son of God, an assertion we will address later. For the purpose at hand, we instead have to concentrate on the way Nicholas is othering Muslims, or, as he calls them, the Ishmaelites. His anchor point is the concept of Islam representing Abraham's religion[51] – or, in Nicholas' words: Abraham's Law. Nicholas' argument reveals that he clearly grasped the difference between Islam and Judaism in Christian eyes: it came second, or, if we include Judaism into the picture, even third. Islam did not claim to

47 *IV Lateran Council* (Mansi 22, 1066).

48 See the overview in Thomas Kaufmann, *"Türckenbüchlein". Zur christlichen Wahrnehmung ‚türkischer Religion' in Spätmittelalter und Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

49 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani. Second Prologue 11,1–8* (Nicolai de Cusa, opera omnia. Vol. 8: Cribratio Alkorani, ed. Ludwig Hagemann [Hamburg: Meiner, 1986], 13 [for this essay, I have been using the online version: accessed January 14, 2023, http://www.cusanus-portal.de/]).

50 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani. Second Prologue 12,1–13,4* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 14 f.).

51 For this concept which might be less widespread in Islamic thought than Christian polemics suggest, s. Gerald Hawting: "The Religion of Abraham and Islam," in *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, ed. Martin Goodman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

be the origin of all, as Christians had to grant to the Jewish religion, but the other way round, it followed the other religions, integrating them within its claim to be the pinnacle of religious development. Nicholas' argument now went as follows: if Mohammed directed others to follow Abraham's Law, he could not claim that God had revealed it to him any differently than God had already revealed it in both Testaments, Old and New, because these did not differ from Abraham's Law, but explained it.[52] He continued; "Assuredly, you ought not to presume that God gave you greater knowledge than Christ, whom you esteem more highly than yourself and all prophets."[53] It was an altogether different argument than the one used against Judaism. The key to refuting Islam was its posteriority and, as we may conclude, epigonal nature. For Nicholas, it raised the question of what new revelation it could possibly introduce. Obviously, for a Christian theologian it had to be impossible that after the revelation of God in and through Christ anything new could come.[54]

Nicholas asserted that a contradiction lay at the heart of Islam: if it was just a renewal of the Abrahamic religion, it had brought nothing new and, consequently, according to its own self-conception had to defer to the revealed scriptures of the Bible. While this particular argument was built upon the concept of a descent from Abraham, in the following Nicholas even refused the idea that Muslims had been constituted as Abraham's offspring. In remarkable wording, he spoke of "Arabas" (*Arabes*),[55] highlighting that his treatise was more than just a rebuttal of the Turks. In doing so, he claimed to get the heart of the matter. The Arabs, he explained according to the Muslim tradition, were only heirs of Hagar and therefore inferior in status to Sarah's offspring. We can surmise that Gal 4:21–31 formed the basis of Nicholas' argument. Galatians was even more palpable when he asserted that to become a descendent of Abraham one had to do so

52 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani III,11,195,6–15* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 156).

53 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani III,11,195,21–23* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 156; translation follows *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa*, trans. Jasper Hopkins, vol. 2 [Minneapolis/Minnesota: The Arthur J. Banning Press, 2001], 1074 [accessed January 14, 2023, http://www.cusanus-portal.de/]): "Utique non debes praesumere deum tibi maiorem peritiam dedisse quam Christo, quem et tibi et cunctis prophetis praefers."

54 I set aside here the question of tradition as something accompanying the Bible in medieval and Roman Catholic conceptions. It is hard to say what the exact medieval position was about this. At least the Council of Trent has clarified for the Roman Catholic Church that both are rooted in the same full revelation in Jesus Christ revealed to the apostles (DH 1501) which excludes any material addition to Christ's revelation itself.

55 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani III,14,209,3* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 166).

"by faith […] Abraham's descendants in spirit."[56] The consequence, according to Nicholas' Christian framework, was obvious; only Christians could be Abraham's descendants. According to John 8:58, Christ was coeternal with the Father and had existed even before Abraham. Therefore, according to Nicholas, it was wrong to see Muslim believers as Abrahamic, and right to assert that "Abraham was a Christian."[57] Nicholas had totally rejected Muslim claims to truth, and claimed all of it for Christianity. Once again, his argument had been based upon a chronology that included Christ's preexistence; from the beginning, all had been accomplished through Christ, and so Islam's subsequent claims could not have been valid.

Islam had been othered according to the chronological priority of Christendom to Islam, and Christ's existence prior to Abraham. This was different from the othering of Judaism, which had from the very beginning been based upon the alleged hostility of Jews to Jesus Christ. Both strategies of othering were claims to intellectual supremacy over the other religion. Their social consequences included the repression of the Jews and war against the Muslims. While the rebuttal of Islam seemed to be quite consistent with Christian dogma, we have seen that Christian perception of the Jewish role in the story of Jesus highlighted a problem within Christianity itself; namely, the inability to reconcile competing visions of its founder. Going forward, managing diversity should not simply mean gathering different peoples and beliefs into a single body, but rather critically examining the process of othering in order to better understand the history of Christianity in itself. As a result, Jewish-Christian relations cease to be merely an addendum to the history of Christianity, as they have been categorized for a long time, and become an essential part of it. What is true for Judaism is also true for Islam when it comes to lasting ambiguity.

3. Lasting ambiguity

As we previously discussed, the process of intellectually and socially constructing the Other implies a basic commonality with that which is defined as the Other. Only an entirely successful strategy of othering would completely eradicate this commonality, while Christian strategies seem to have failed to obscure commonalities between Jews and Muslims. We

56 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani III,14,209,8* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 166; Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa 2, 1080): "filii Abrahae in spiritu per fidem."

57 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani III,15,214,8* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 169; Treatises of Nicholas of Cusa 2, 1083): "Abraham fuit Christianus."

cannot go into detail again, but a few words suffice to sketch what should be at the core of future research; namely, the lasting ambiguity in the relationship of Christianity to Islam and Judaism. If Islam was to be understood as a heresy, as it had been since John of Damascus, it becomes more so an aberrant variant of Christianity than a completely alien rival. To be sure, medieval Christians did not primarily define heresy in this way, nor would they have allowed for the concept of variant forms of Christianity. Yet, to a certain degree, in depicting Islam as an aberration of Christianity they acknowledged the kinship of Islam with orthodox Christianity. At the same time, they understood their own faith as an improvement and successor to Judaism. Going down this route, an overwhelming number of discussions can be had, starting with one about the originally Jewish title that in its Greek rendering gave Christianity its name: Christ.

Another core topic is the recoding of the Hebrew Bible as the Old Testament in Christian use. Jewish use had obviously not ceased with the coming of Christianity but rather flourished. Christians who thought of themselves as correct in their use of both testaments faced a permanent alternative, even if they despised it. The fourfold sense of scripture was an impressive attempt to deal with this discrepancy within a closed system. On the level of the literal sense, Jewish interpretation could get it right, but when the other 'spiritual' senses were applied, seen by Christians as guided by the Holy Spirit, it produced an interpretation in which Christians could overtake the Hebrew Bible. The more that late medieval scholars insisted on the literal sense, however, the more they had to deal with Jewish exegesis. In the thirteenth century, the Dominican Raymond Martini, whom Thomas Willi described as the "first serious gentile Christian after Jerome," developed an innovative way of interpreting the Old Testament in his *Pugio fidei*.[58] Instead of referring to the Vulgate, he made frequent use of the Hebrew text to prove the truth of Christian readings. For example, he argued using the 'Shema Yisrael,' a prayer central to Jewish belief. According to Raymond, because the text said that God was one, but used the plural אלהים to denote one God, it showed that God was one and many, as the doctrine of the trinity maintained.[59] Later exegetes such as Nicholas of

58 S. Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews. The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 133. For more recent, comprehensive research on the *Pugio fidei* s. Görge K. Hasselhoff, Alexander Fidora, ed., *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Santa Coloma de Queralt: Erc, 2017).

59 Raimundus Martini, *Pugio fidei p. 3. D. 1 c. 3* (RAYMUNDI MARTINI | ORDINIS PRAEDICATORUM | PUGIO FIDEI | ADVERSUS | MAUROS | ET | JUDAEOS […] [Leipzig: Lanckisus, 1687], 484).

Lyra would follow in using Jewish exegesis.[60] So did Paul of Burgos, a convert from Judaism, and Faber Stapulensis, the humanist writer. Their aim was to show that the Jews had altered the original text to prevent it from being understood from a Christian perspective. Paul of Burgos, for example, took up Ps 21(22):17 as an example of what he called Jewish "perversity."[61] He based his allegation on the Hebrew phrase כארי ("like a lion"), which remains an enigma even for modern exegetes.[62] According to him, the Jews had altered a text whose original meaning had been preserved in the Vulgate as "*foderunt*" or "They have pieced," for Paul an obvious prediction of Jesus' suffering at the Cross. Clearly, while Christians boasted that they possessed the truth, they could not avoid debating the Jews. Different uses of the same book irrefutably intertwined their exegetical approaches.

Perhaps the most striking case of Christians acknowledging their entanglement with Judaism can be seen in iconography. Michael Bachmann has raised awareness of the substantial number of medieval depictions of the Apostles, and even of Jesus himself, wearing the distinctive 'Jew's hat.'[63] Interestingly, the sartorial laws invoked before as an example of discrimination and exclusion bend backward to show that Christians were aware that their origins lay within the very group that they now relegated to the margins of society.

Our discussion of ambiguities might be accused of highlighting only a few very particular examples. Yet, this would not only underestimate the impact of standard exegetical works like Lyra's, but also overlook the most obvious method of accepting the Other as related or even kindred. Wherever Christian theologians made use of philosophy in the Middle Ages, we find a proclivity to see more of what is common than that which separates. While medieval theologians polemicized against "Averroist" Christian academics, it was only a result of the well-known fact that Averroes, Avicenna, and Maimonides were intellectual sparring partners in Christian theological thought, in addition to the pagan Aristotle. There is no reason to downplay the impact that these philosophers had in helping to

60 Wolfgang Bunte, *Rabbinische Traditionen bei Nikolaus von Lyra. Ein Beitrag zur Schriftauslegung des Spätmittelalters* (Frankfurt et al.: Lang, 1994).

61 [Sebastian Brant:] Tertia pars huius | operis in se continens glosam ordina|riam cum expositione lyre litterali et mora|li: nec non additionibus ar replicis (Basel: Froben, 1498), f. r 4^{r}.

62 S. Brent A. Straen: *What is stranger than a Lion? Leonine Image a in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Fribourg/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 370 n. 81.

63 Michael Bachmann: "Jesus mit dem Judenhut: Ikonographische Notizen," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 100 (2003).

develop a Christian mentality that could admit not only elements of truth in the Other, but even accept non-Christian teachers to a certain degree. If they were totally wrong, this could not have happened. The religious implication of this philosophical enterprise might not have always been obvious to those who used Averroes as "the commentator" of Aristotle, a normal habit among Christian scholars, but it popped up whenever it was questioned by someone.

The basic conviction that in all religions some truth could be found might under certain circumstances even lead to a limited acceptance of other religions. Raymond Lull, even if active as a missionary, might be seen as an outlier in this respect, given his impressive knowledge of Arabic and Muslim culture.[64] On the other hand, Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa was not. He not only wrote the harsh rebuttal of the Qur'an that we discussed previously, but also a much friendlier book, *De pace fidei*. There he argued that if only one God existed, then only one religion could exist.[65] The argument could of course be used to assert that only one triumphant religion could be right, but Nicholas provided a different answer, pleading instead for "one religion in a variety of rites" or "*religio una in rituum varietate*".[66] Nicholas' one religion had the essential features of Christianity, but in acknowledging the validity of a variety of rites he insinuated that all of them venerated the one God whom Christians adored as the Father of Jesus Christ. Nicholas had stressed commonality much more than distinctions. Now we come to an end in which ambiguities tend to obscure othering, highlighting instead that which is common. Because it is closer to the modern worldview, we might choose to highlight this essentializing aspect of medieval culture. And yet, a historical approach has to admit that the peaceful dialogues of Raymond and Nicholas do not represent average medieval Christianity. Instead, we are far closer to the average with the aforementioned strategies of othering. There are, however, ambiguities between these two poles. They might even be the most intriguing part of medieval Christianity's encounter with other religions, because they call into question Christian 'self-fashioning', and show that simple othering does not work. Othering fell short even among medieval Christians who

64 S. Alexander Fidora: "Ramon Llull – Universaler Heilswille und universale Vernunft," in: *Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter*, ed. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004).

65 Nicholas of Cusa, *De pace fidei V,14–16* (Nicolai de Cusa, Opera Omnia. Vol. 7: De pace fidei, ed. Raymund Klibansky and Hildebrand Bascour [Hamburg: Meiner, 1959], 14 f., accessed January 15, 2023, http://www.cusanus-portal.de/).

66 Nicholas of Cusa, *De pace fidei VI* (Nicolai de Cusa, Opera Omnia 7, 7).

noticed that not everything that was called the Other was actually the Other, at least not in every respect.

Conclusion

This essay offers no more than one possible way of dealing with historical Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations in a world in which diversity is perceived and appreciated like never before. Moving forward, if we take the notion of 'othering' seriously, as we have done here, we must deconstruct what it means to be the 'Other.' The entangled histories of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam mean that from the very beginning what seemed to be Other was to a certain degree part of Christianity. The reverse is also true; Christianity was and is part of the history of both of these religions. Accordingly, the more we validate and explore the ambiguities, the more strategies of othering are questioned and limited.

A history of Christianity written in light of these circumstances should not begin in a way that sets the other religions apart from itself, but rather, it has to start with the inherent similarities and connections between them. Diversity is not created through an accumulation of essentially separate entities; instead, it is built through relationships in which these three entities define themselves through classifying, othering, or integrating the others. The task seems especially suited to religious historians with the methodological skills to see these religions from a kind of equidistance. Setting aside the concern that a neutral or impartial view is impossible, Church historians in the field of theology, or those we might better call historical theologians, have to admit that they are limiting themselves when they stick to the study of one religion, and make of it a kind of preoccupation.

While keeping the focus on Christianity, Christian historical theologians can still pay attention to the ways in which relationships with other religions shaped Christian identity. In doing so, they can craft a perspective that sees other religions as essential partners in the process of Christian self-identification. The task is a historical as well as a theological one. Historically, it will show that any attempt to retroactively construct a purely Christian European culture fails to grasp that European culture notwithstanding the vast majority Christians held in numbers has always been religiously diverse. Christianity's claim to be the sole vehicle of truth actually obscures this diversity by suppressing parts of itself. It also leads to the theological question of how much the Christian religion needs other

religions to understand themselves. The answer seems quite obvious after all we have said here; which is to say, it needs them dearly. In fact, both historical and theological reconstructions of Christianity which do not start with Christianity's place among other religions will fall short, because they will invariably miss core elements of the growth and self-definition of Christianity. The idea of Christian history should be a dialogical one, even if the dialogue risked being offensive in many cases. One could even return to Nicholas of Cusa to highlight the impact of this approach; regarding the Trinitarian God, he admitted that God exceeded all human comprehension.[67] In this instance, what he called mystical theology was basically negative theology, and it was no surprise that he referred to Dionysius the Areopagite to unfold his thoughts. Nicholas' negative theology actually leads us to an understanding of religion that sees revelation as a way of defining the undefinable. In other words, all knowledge gained through revelation is limited by our capability to understand it.

This essay, however, has been mainly about historical issues. The approach sketched out here also demands a special awareness of method. In short, one could say that what is needed is to integrate the relational nature of Christianity into every step of historical research. No topic in the history of Christianity should be dealt with without relating it to at least the two religions mentioned here which are historically related to Christianity. This means making interreligious relations an integral dimension of the history of Christianity rather than only a part of it. It also means that discussions of other religions cannot be restricted to covering only actual encounters or explicit references to them. Instead, their implicit influences have to be tracked in relation to how Christianity conceptualizes the Other. Once again, this might be easier in the case of Judaism, because Christianity has fundamentally based itself upon an interpretation and adaption of the Hebrew Bible. Yet, the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible is obviously only one way of exploring their relationship, and as Christianity has been throughout its history aware of the Jewish alternative, it has always known about the limits or at least the subjectivity of its own approach. Christian adaptation of Jewish exegesis in the Late Middle Ages was another way of making this more obvious. Going down this route, historical research could contribute to a critical theological understanding of Christianity in a world of diversity. In practice, this would mean a critical self-assessment highlighting the limits of Christianity, and an awareness

67 Nicholas of Cusa, *Cribratio Alkorani II,1,86–89* (Nicolas of Cusa, Opera omnia 8, 72–75).

that hatred against the Jews shows that Christianity has not reconciled the negative and positive connotations of Christ's death on its own. In a broader sense, it would show how sensitivity toward diversity in an exemplary field can help to develop a more adequate Christian self-identification for the future.

Volker Leppin
Yale Divinity School
ORCID: 0000-0001-8561-1086

Bibliography

Alchoran siue lex Saracenorum. Edición crítica y estudio, edited by José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz. Madrid: CSIC, 2022.

Amalar of Metz. *De ecclesiasticis officiis* (PL 105, 985–1242).

[Sebastian Brant.] *Tertia pars huius | operis in se continens glosam ordina|riam cum expositione lyre litterali et mora|li: nec non additionibus ar replicis.* Basel: Froben, 1498.

Conciliorum oecumenicorum Decreta, edited by Guiseppe Alberigo et al. Bologna: Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, 1973.

Fulcher Carnutensis *Historia Hierosolymitana (1095–1127). Mit Erläuterungen und einem Anhange*, edited by Heinrich Hagenmeyer. Heidelberg: Winter, 1913.

Glossa ordinaria (PL 113p).

Isidore of Sevilla. *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum* (PL 83,207–443).

John of Damascus. *De haeresibus ch. 101* (MPG 94,578–790).

Martin Luther. *Dass Jesus Christus ein geborner Jude sei* (WA 11,307–336).

Martin Luther. *Vermahnung wider die Juden* (WA 51,195 f.).

Nicolai de Cusa. *Opera omnia. Vol. 8: Cribratio Alkorani*, edited by Ludwig Hagemann. Hamburg: Meiner, 1986.

Nicolai de Cusa. *Opera Omnia. Vol. 7: De pace fidei*, edited by Raymund Klibansky and Hildebrand Bascour. Hamburg: Meiner, 1959.

Quellen zur Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland. Vol. 2: Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge, edited by A. Neubauer and M. Stern. Berlin: Simeon, 1892.

RAYMUNDI MARTINI | ORDINIS PRAEDICATORUM | PUGIO FIDEI | ADVERSUS | MAUROS | ET | JUDAEOS […]. Leipzig: Lanckisus, 1687.

Bachmann, Michael. "Jesus mit dem Judenhut: Ikonographische Notizen." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 100 (2003): 378–398.

Bellinger, Charles K. *Othering. The Original Sin of Humanity.* Eugene: Cascade Books, 2020.

Braude, Benjamin. "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods." *William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997): 103–142.

Browe, Peter. *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter.* Rom: Università Gregoriana, 1973.
Bunte, Wolfgang. *Rabbinische Traditionen bei Nikolaus von Lyra. Ein Beitrag zur Schriftauslegung des Spätmittelalters.* Frankfurt et al.: Lang, 1994.
Certeau, Michel de. *The Mystic Fable, Volume One: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.* Translated by Michael B. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
Cherry, Conrad. *Hurrying Toward Zion. Universities, Divinity Schools, and American Protestantism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
Cohen, Jeremy. *The Friars and the Jews. The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism.* Ithaca / London: Cornell University Press, 1982.
Davaney, Sheila Greeve. "Theology and Religious Studies in an Age of Fragmentation." In *Theology in a World of Specialization*, edited by Erik Borgman and Felix Wilfred. London: SCM Press, 2006.
Delgado, Richard, and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory. An Introduction.* New York: University Press, 3rd edition, 2017.
Dunn, James F. G. *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity.* London: SCM-Pr. 2nd edition, 2003.
Fanon, Frantz. "The Fact of Blackness." In *Postcolonial Studies. An Anthology*, edited by Pramod K. Nayar, 15–32. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.
Fidora, Alexander. "The Latin Talmud and the Extension of Papal Jurisdiction over Jews." *Medieval Worlds* 11 (2020): 152–164.
Fidora, Alexander. "Ramon Llull – Universaler Heilswille und universale Vernunft." In *Juden, Christen und Muslime. Religionsidaloge im Mittelalter*, edited by Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004.
Frankfurter, David. "Restoring 'Syncretism' in the History of Christianity." In *Studies in Late Antiquity* (2021): 128–138.
Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory. A Critical Introduction.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2nd edition, 2019.
García-Arenal, Mercedes, Pereda,Felipe, ed. *De sangre y leche. Raze y religion en elm undo ibérico moderno.* Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2021.
Hasselhoff, Görge K., Fidora, Alexander, ed. *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts.* Santa Coloma de Queralt: Erc, 2017.
Hawting, Gerald. "The Religion of Abraham and Islam." In *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites. Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, edited by Martin Goodman et al. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
Heil, Johannes. "'Antijudaismus' und 'Antisemitismus'. Begriffe als Bedeutungsträger." *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 6 (1997): 92–114.
Heim, Mark. *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995.
Heng, Geraldine. *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages.* Cambridge: University Press, 2018.
Jaritz, Gerhard. "The Material Culture of the Peasantry in the Late Middle Ages: 'Image' and 'Reality.'" In *Agriculture in the Middle Ages. Technology, Practice, and Representation*, edited by Del Sweeney, 163–188. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1995.

Kane, Ross. *Syncretism and Christian Tradition: Race and Revelation in the Study of Religious Mixture.* Oxford: University Press, 2021.

Kaufmann, Thomas. *Luther's Jews. A Journey into Anti-Semitism.* Oxford: University Press, 2017.

Kaufmann, Thomas. *"Türckenbüchlein". Zur christlichen Wahrnehmung ‚türkischer Religion' in Spätmittelalter und Reformation.* Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008.

Köpf, Ulrich. *Die Anfänge der theologischen Wissenschaftstheorie im 13. Jahrhundert.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1974.

Martínez, Maria Elena. *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico.* Stanford: University Press 2008.

Nirenberg, David. *Neighboring Faiths. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today.* Chicago / London: Chicago University Press 2014.

Oberman, Heiko A. *The Roots of Anti-Semitism: In the Age of Renaissance and Reformation.* Philadelphia: Fortress 1983.

Pannenberg, Wolfhart. "Toward a Theology of the History of Religions." In id., *Basic Questions in Theology. Collected Essays. Vol. 2.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

Paret, Rudi. "Ismāʿīl." In *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on January 13, 2023, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3644.

Rodrigues, Hillary and John S. Harding. *Introduction to the Study of Religion.* London/ New York: Routledge 2009.

Rublack, Ulinka. "Sartorial Politics in Germany, c. 1300–1750." In *The Right to Dress. Sumptuary Laws in a Global Perspective, c. 1200–1800*, edited by Giorgio Riello and Ulinka Rublack. Cambridge: University Press, 2019.

Sahas, Daniel J. *John of Damascus on Islam. The "Heresy of the Ismaelites".* Leiden: Brill, 1972.

Schadler, Peter. *John of Damascus and Islam. Christian Heresiology and the Intellectual Background to Earliest Christian-Muslim Relations.* Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2018.

Schäfer, Peter. *Die Geburt des Judentums aus dem Geist des Christentums: Fünf Vorlesungen zur Entstehung des rabbinischen Judentums.* Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010.

Schäfer, Peter. *Kurze Geschichte des Antisemitismus.* München: Beck, 2020.

Straen, Brent A. *What Is Stranger than a Lion? Leonine Image a in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient near East.* Fribourg / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005.

West, Cornel. "A Genealogy of Modern Racism." In: *Race Critical Theories. Text and Context*, edited by Philomena Essed and David The Goldberg, 90–112. New York: Blackwell, 2002.