

## Chapter Twenty-six

### Religion and Religiosity after the Crusades

The First Crusade was a great turning-point for western Christendom. An obvious consequence of the First Crusade was that many Catholics became aware that their lot in this earthly life left much to be desired: in Orthodox Christendom and in the Dar al-Islam people were better off than they were in Catholic Europe. This recognition led to material and economic improvements in western Europe and to a new kind of education, which in turn was followed by humanism and the Renaissance. By 1500 western Europe was a very different place than it had been four hundred years earlier, and considerably closer to modernity. This secular improvement will be the subject of the next chapter, but in this chapter we must take a close look at the religious upheaval with which it began.

Militancy against Muslims was paralleled at home by a heightened religiosity. Ordinary Christians, who had long assumed that they would reach Heaven by following the lead of the Church and its clerical hierarchy, began taking upon themselves the responsibility for their souls' salvation. Thousands of Christians enlisted in new and demanding monastic orders, and thousands more left the Catholic church to join communities of devout but renegade Christians. Another aspect of the Christians' new religiosity was violence against the small Jewish communities in their midst, which until then had enjoyed relative security. Judaism was also infused with a new religious enthusiasm, as the mystical texts known as the Kabbalah made their appearance and quickly took their place alongside the Tanakh and the Talmud.

### Religious ferment in western Christendom in the wake of the First Crusade

In western Europe and especially in France the twelfth century was marked by an explosion of new religious movements. In both Christianity and Judaism the new religiosity was the mirror opposite of secularism, as people focused intently on the spiritual. In Christendom the new spiritualism impelled men and women to renounce the material world, a pattern characteristic of the entire medieval period. Although some of the new movements were closely aligned with the Catholic church, other and earlier movements were opposed to (and by) the Church. By the definition of the Church the latter were heretical, because they promulgated doctrines contrary to those held by the Church. One of the earliest and most radical of the heretics was Peter of Bruys, who rejected the authority of the Old Testament and of Paul and was burned to death by a mob in St. Gilles, near Nimes, ca. 1125. Slightly less radical was Peter's follower, Henri of Lausanne, who died in prison ca. 1145: Henry rejected infant baptism and the eucharist. More orthodox was Arnold of Brescia (d. 1155). Castigating the corruption of the Church and the materialism of the clergy, Arnold preached poverty and rigorous monasticism.

The commotion caused by these individual preachers paled in comparison to the turbulence associated with the Cathars. Their name may have come from the Greek *katharoi*, "pure ones," and they seem to have had some connection with the Bogomils, a dualist

communion first persecuted by the Byzantine emperors in the eleventh century. However and wherever the Cathars originated, in the west they first became conspicuous in the city of Albi, in southern France (Albi lay near the Mediterranean coast and some fifty miles northeast of Toulouse). By the middle decades of the twelfth century they had attracted so many converts that the name “Albigenses” became synonymous with “Cathars.”

The Cathars were thoroughgoing dualists, reminiscent of the Gnostics and Manichaeans of antiquity. Their elect (*perfecti*) gave up property and sexual intercourse, and their laity (*credentes*, “believers”) lived a life of moderate self-sacrifice. Both elect and believers renounced warfare, and tried to avoid violence of any kind, whether against humans or animals. The Cathars believed that the god of the Old Testament was evil, as was the material world that he had created, while the Father - the god of the spiritual world and of the New Testament - was good. Jesus, who was absolutely pure in spirit, was the revealer of this good god. As dualists, the Cathars rejected the doctrine of physical resurrection: their goal was to purify the soul and so to be reunited at death with the Father. Branded as heretics at the Council of Tours in 1163, the “Albigenses” held their own council in 1167 and their numbers continued to grow, not only in southern France but also in northern Spain and northern Italy.

The Waldensians were another large religious community that arose in the twelfth century. The movement apparently began in 1176 with Waldo (Valdez) of Lyon. Like the Cathars, the Waldensians denounced materialism and preached poverty. Poverty had been an important theme for the authors of the synoptic Gospels. In these Gospels Jesus instructs the Rich Young Ruler, “Go, sell everything you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven: then come and follow me.” And when the Rich Young Ruler sadly walks away, Jesus says to the Disciples that “it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>1</sup> In the only discourse of Jesus that the synoptic writers report on the subject of the Last Judgement, Jesus warns that Heaven will be reserved for those who have fed the hungry, clothed the naked and nursed the sick. Those who did not do such things for the destitute will be cast into everlasting fire.<sup>2</sup> Although the exhortation to divest oneself of material possessions was taken seriously by the Jerusalem *ekklesia* it was not repeated by Paul and was mostly ignored by the New Covenant churches and the patristic writers. The medieval Church had acquired a great store of material possessions, and many of the bishops were very rich men. Waldo of Lyons discovered in the Gospels how contrary this materialism was to the teachings of Jesus the Christ.

After selling his own considerable possessions and giving the proceeds to the poor, Waldo began preaching the gospel of poverty and attracting followers. This was something of a scandal, because in Catholic Europe only men who had entered clerical orders were permitted to preach. When the pope refused to waive the requirement for him, Waldo broke with the Church. Securing French translations of the New Testament and for parts of the Old Testament, Waldo studied them assiduously and insisted that scriptures alone were authoritative for a Christian: without explicit scriptural support, the pronouncements of priests, bishops, councils and popes were invalid. So Waldo dispensed with the doctrines of Purgatory, of the cult of saints, and of the saving power of the mass. Waldo’s followers described themselves by various names - the Brethren in Christ, the Poor in Christ, the Poor men of Lyon - but to outsiders they were simply

the Waldensians (Latin *Valdenses*) and heretics. Waldo died in 1217, but the religious community long outlasted its founder. As late as the middle of the seventeenth century the Duke of Savoy mounted a military operation into the Alps to eradicate Waldensians who had settled there, an operation denounced in Milton's "On the Late Massacre in the Piedmont."

### **The mendicant monastic orders**

The strenuous asceticism preached by the Cathars and the Waldensians led to the establishment within the Church of mendicant ("begging") monastic orders. The mendicants came to be called "friars" (*fratres*), a label which helped to distinguish them from "monks," who lived and worked in a monastery. A precursor of the mendicants was the Cistercian order. Robert, the elderly abbot of a Benedictine monastery at Molesme, was dismayed at the un-spiritual character of many of his monks and so in 1098, with twenty-one of the religious following him, he founded a new monastery, with renewed dedication to prayer, work and charity. The site of the new foundation was Citeaux (Latin *Cistercium*), near Dijon. The Cistercian monks were not mendicant, supporting themselves by the labor of their own hands in the monastery's fields. As a young man Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) joined the order in 1113, and two years later was delegated to establish a Cistercian monastery at Clairvaux. There he became one of the most eminent churchmen in all of western Christendom.

A truly mendicant order was founded by Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), in response to the challenge of the Cathars in northern Italy. As a rich and sporting young man Francis had no particular religious interest, but he was eventually attracted to the life of poverty and gave all that he had to the poor. Journeying to Rome, in 1209 he received papal approval to establish a new order. The monks in the new order were formally called the Penitents of Assisi or the *Fratres minores* (Friars Minor, the *minores* reflecting the fact that Francis was not ordained as a priest, and so remained in minor orders), but became known to the wider world as "Franciscans". For women who wished to join his mendicant order Francis also established the Poor Clares, originally the Poor Ladies. The first of the women who joined this order was Clare of Assisi, an heiress who gave all that she owned to the poor and thereafter lived in poverty.

At about the same time the Dominican order was established, yet another order of mendicant friars. The Dominicans came to be known as "blackfriars" because they wore a black cloak over a white cassock. The order began as a counter to the Cathar (Albigensian) movement. Dominic of Calaroga, in Spain, came to southern France to combat the new heresy and was astounded and dismayed at how successful the Cathars were in attracting converts from the Catholic church. The other-worldliness of the Cathars contrasted sharply with the corruption and materialism of the Catholic clergy (by the early thirteenth century even the Cistercian monks had lost much of their original simplicity and austerity, in part because wealthy lay persons who admired the friars' self-sacrifice had given gifts to the monasteries). In 1212 Dominic was consecrated as a bishop and began preparations to set up a new monastic order, dedicated to poverty and designed to root out the Albigensian heresy and to preach the Catholic faith. Dominic's petition was approved by the pope in 1216, and thus was the Order of Preachers (*Ordo praedicatorum*) established, an order generally known as the Dominicans. The Dominicans were mendicants who owned no property, either as individuals or collectively, and

in that respect seemed to match the anti-materialism of the Cathars while still assuring themselves of salvation within the Church.

### **The violent response to the heresies: the “Albigensian crusade” and the Inquisition**

The Church responded in various ways to the rapid spread of the heretical movements. Because some of the new teachings had come from the Bible, and especially the Gospels, the Church tried to prevent the laity from reading the Bible without clerical supervision. Translations into the vernacular were seized and destroyed, and bishops instructed their priests to keep control of the Latin Vulgate.

Physical violence was a more effective weapon against the heretics. A papal bull, issued in conjunction with the Synod of Verona in 1184, ordered the bishops to conduct an investigation (*inquisitio*) into all charges of heresy and to hand over the heretics to the temporal authorities for punishment. Heretics were to be given the chance to recant, but those who did not were to be burned at the stake. This Episcopal Inquisition (so called because it depended upon the industry of the bishops) was less successful than the popes had hoped, and was in 1230 replaced by the Papal Inquisition. In this stage of the medieval Inquisition the pope himself took charge of the investigation, with monks of the Dominican order as his agents.

Until the twelfth century the only punishment for heresy had been excommunication from the Church. Against the Cathars and the Waldensians excommunication was not very effective, since their numbers were large enough to constitute sizeable heretical communities. As noted above, the Cathars bore a resemblance to the Manichaeans of antiquity, and that resemblance may have opened the way for the Church to demand the death penalty against them. In the sixth century the emperor Justinian had burned Manichaeans at the stake, and by the second half of the twelfth century study of Justinian's *Corpus iuris civilis* had shown Catholic jurists how far that famous Christian emperor had been ready to go in the fight against heresy. In any case, the Synod of Verona in 1184 stipulated that heretics should be burned at the stake, and the sentence was reiterated by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and by the Synod of Toulouse in 1229. A rationale of a sort was that the extreme pain and the lingering death in the flames would demonstrate to a heretic how dreadful Hell would be: if the pain persuaded the heretics to ask God's forgiveness, their change-of-heart would be too late to save them from temporal death but would save them from the eternal fires of Hell. Over the next five centuries thousands of heretics were burned at the stake or were in some other way tortured and killed. The Spanish Inquisition is an especially notorious chapter of this story, but most of Christendom had similar tales to tell. In sixteenth-century Britain some two hundred Protestants - Thomas Cranmer among them - were burned at the stake during the short reign of Queen Mary I (“Bloody Mary,” 1553-58).

A military solution to the problem of heresy was the so-called “Albigensian crusade.” In 1208 Pope Innocent III, angry that so many (although far from a majority) of the inhabitants of southern France were joining the Cathars, called for a crusade to eradicate the heresy. The property owned by the heretical “believers,” Innocent declared, was no longer theirs, and would be assigned to the Catholics who killed them or drove them out. Although the Cathars

themselves were non-violent, the crusade was stoutly opposed by the Catholic knights of southern France (the Languedoc): they had no intention of letting armed forces from northern France invade their territories and terrorize their peaceable subjects. A large force of knights from northern France gathered at Lyon in early 1209 and proceeded into the Languedoc. The first and most brutal assault was on the city of Béziers, which lay to the west of Montpellier and a few miles from the Mediterranean coast. Although the Cathars were only a tiny minority in the city, the city's Catholic lords and inhabitants sympathized with them and refused to open the city to the crusaders. The crusaders forced their way into the city and slaughtered most of its population, perhaps as many as 20,000 people. It was over the surviving population of Béziers that Dominic was made bishop in 1212.

The assault on Béziers was the prelude to a long series of attacks upon the cities of the Languedoc by northern French Catholics. In 1210 the town of Minerve was taken and its Cathars were given the choice of recanting or death. Three women recanted, and a hundred and forty other Cathars were burned at the stake. The following year the crusaders took the castle and town of Lavaur. The lord of the palace and his knights were hanged and some three hundred Cathars were burned. So the atrocities continued until 1229, when a treaty ended the large-scale crusade, although scattered actions continued until 1255. The treaty of 1229, by which Raymond VII of Toulouse came to terms with the child-king Louis IX and his mother and queen-regent, Blanche of Castille, opened the way for the Synod of Toulouse in that same year and the beginning of the Inquisition in the city.

## **The power of the popes**

As envisaged by Constantine in the early fourth century, the highest authority in the catholic (small "c") church was an assembly of all its bishops, gathered in ecumenical council. Although councils continued to be the ultimate authority, for day-to-day governance the catholic church - being now free from the threat of persecution - came to depend upon a clerical hierarchy. As had always been the case, parish priests were under the authority of their city's bishop. More novel was the assumption, by the middle of the fourth century, that the bishop of an ordinary city should be subject to a "metropolitan" (the metropolitan bishop, who would later be called an archbishop, presided over the church in the capital city - the metropolis - of a Roman province). Still later and more vaguely expressed was the expectation that the metropolitans, or archbishops, should take their cue from the "patriarchal" bishop of their part of the empire. "Patriarch" was not yet a formal title, but a term of respect used to address the bishops of a few cities of unusual importance in Christian history. In the fourth century these were Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome, and by the fifth century the bishop of Constantinople was also often addressed as *patriarchēs*. The catholic church thus had no single leader, and the four or five patriarchs - like all other bishops - were subject to the decisions of the ecumenical councils.

In the fifth century barbarian invasions cut off the Latin west from the Greek east. The Greek church continued with its several patriarchs, while in the Latin west all of the church looked for guidance to one man: the patriarch in Rome, affectionately called *Papa*. The role of "Papa," or of the pope, was formalized for the Latin church when Leo I was bishop of Rome (440-461). In 445, after a squabble between Leo and Hilary, the metropolitan bishop of Arles,

the emperor Valentinian III proclaimed that Leo and his successors as bishop of Rome were to have authority over all other bishops in the empire. Since Valentinian himself barely exercised authority outside of Ravenna, his edict was hardly noticed in the Greek east. In the west, however, Leo gained much respect from his successful negotiation with Attila, warlord of the Hunnic raiders, and by the time of his death Leo was clearly the leader of the catholic church in the Latin west. In 476, when a barbarian warlord forced the last emperor in the west to abdicate, the bishop of Rome was by default also the most influential temporal leader of what remained of the civilized Latin world. Thus the Latin church became de facto monarchical, while in the Greek east four patriarchs shared the highest honor in the catholic church, with the final authority being an ecumenical council of bishops.

As we have seen in Chapter 23, the pope not only was the leader of the Latin church but also wielded political power, which in the eighth century was formalized by the Donation of Pepin and the creation of the Papal States. The Church also had enormous economic power, ultimate control of which rested with the pope. By the tenth century most abbeys and cathedrals were wealthy, owning approximately a third of the arable land in central and western Europe, Britain and Ireland.<sup>3</sup> The ecclesiastical foundations were supported by tithes of the local Christians, and by special gifts on special occasions: baptisms, weddings, burials. Such tithes and special gifts could be depended upon, because it was agreed all round that if “good works” were not forthcoming the individual seriously delayed his or her entry into Heaven. The magnificent Gothic cathedrals built in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are the most conspicuous monuments to the wealth of the Church at this time.

### **The popes, the Romans, and the Holy Roman Empire**

As was the practice in other cities, in Rome the bishop was supposed to be chosen by the city’s clergy and laity. But as the powers of the bishop of Rome became enormous, the election of a new pope became a concern to all of western Christendom. By the ninth century the most powerful king north of the Alps typically exerted himself to confer the office on a favorite cleric. Transalpine involvement began with Charlemagne and the Carolingians, and continued with the Ottonian and Salian dukes of Franconia (what today is western Germany and northeastern France). Upon many of these Germanic rulers the popes conferred the title, “Emperor of Rome,” and German speakers began to take pride in having revived “the Roman Empire.”<sup>4</sup>

Toward the middle of the eleventh century a series of unusually bad popes, one of them a nineteen-year-old rake whose uncle (the Count of Tusculum) had purchased the office and given it to his nephew, prompted a reform in 1059. Pope Nicholas II gathered an “ecumenical” council at St. John Lateran to establish new rules for the election of a pope: henceforth the pope must be elected not by the general populace and clergy of Rome, but by the principal or “cardinal” clergy in Rome and its vicinity. The “cardinals” were the most important priests in Rome and the bishops of cities close enough to Rome that they could assemble on short notice and elect a successor when the incumbent pope died. In deference to the Germanic kings, it was stipulated that the man whom the cardinals elected as pope could not be consecrated until his appointment had been approved by the Holy Roman Emperor.

Despite that provision, in 1073 a pope was chosen who had no imperial support, was proud of his independence, and was determined to make the papacy stronger than any temporal monarchy. On the very funeral day of Pope Alexander II the cardinals in conclave chose as his replacement Ildebrando de Soana, who took the papal name of Gregory VII. Whether the cardinals themselves wanted “Hildebrand” is unclear, because they met in conclave while outside a huge crowd shouted that the cardinals should elect Hildebrand, a charismatic and commanding personage who under Alexander had served as arch-deacon of Rome. News of the election of Hildebrand as Gregory VII was carried across the Alps to Henry IV, Duke of Franconia. Henry did not approve the election at all, but had to accept it as a *fait accompli*.

Gregory’s reforms began when he issued papal bulls prohibiting simony and enforcing celibacy for the clergy. Efforts along those lines had been made by several of his predecessors, but Gregory made it clear that he was serious about enforcing the prohibitions. The new pope’s conflict with Henry IV became especially heated in the Investiture controversy: Gregory insisted that the appointment of bishops everywhere was a prerogative of the pope, and should not be decided by the king or duke in which the bishopric was located. This was a challenge that Henry could not allow and he gathered his own cardinals in a conclave that deposed Gregory. Gregory retaliated by excommunicating Henry, and because Henry had enemies of his own among the German princes he was forced to back down. In January of 1077 Henry famously sought out Gregory at the Apennine fortress of Canossa, standing in the snows outside the fortress until Gregory relented, invited him in, and re-admitted him to communion. The reconciliation lasted only a few years. In 1084 Henry brought an army into Italy and brought together cardinals who deposed Gregory and elected Wibert of Ravenna as Pope Clement III. Clement showed his gratitude by anointing Henry as Emperor of Rome.

What enabled Gregory to resist Henry IV was the new presence of Norman rulers in Sicily and southern Italy. The Normans were a counterweight to the Holy Roman Empire, but they were not ideal allies for the pope. When Henry advanced on Rome from the north in 1084 the Normans marched from the south to rescue Gregory. The Normans did temporarily rescue the pope but they also took the opportunity to sack the city of Rome. This greatly diminished Gregory’s popularity with the Romans, and he found it prudent to accompany the Normans back to southern Italy. While Gregory spent the last year of his papacy in Salerno, Henry’s creature - Clement III - reigned as the pope in Rome.

The story was similar from 1130 to 1137, as rival popes contested against each other. Innocent II was backed by transalpine kings, while Anacletus II had the support of Roger II and his Normans in Sicily, and of the Romans themselves. Temporarily in the ascendent, Anacletus rewarded Roger by proclaiming him not just “Count of the Normans in Sicily,” a title that Roger I had enjoyed, but as King of Sicily. In the end, Innocent prevailed, but he was unpopular and in his last year the Romans revolted against him, declaring themselves no longer under control of the papacy. The commune that the Romans created proudly proclaimed itself a revival of the ancient “senate and people of Rome” (*senatus populusque Romanus*).

The next two popes reigned each less than a year, and Eugene III (1145-53) spent most of his papacy on the run, from Rome to Viterbo to Siena and then finally to France, where he had

the protection of King Louis VII. The nobility and people of Rome soon recognized that with the pope living elsewhere the city was no longer the center of Catholic Christendom: even under a bad pope Rome attracted many more pilgrims than it did with no pope. For the rest of the twelfth century popes and antipopes oscillated between Rome and a variety of safe havens. Alexander III, for example, spent parts of his long reign (1159-81) in southern Italy and in France, and although he died in Rome it is reported that at his funeral the people of Rome hurled stones and curses at his cortege.

At the end of the twelfth century and well into the thirteenth the interests of the pope and of the emperor were often at odds. At least in some parts of central and northern Italy the supporters of the pope were called “Guelphs” while those who took the side of the emperor were known as “Ghibellines.” Despite their conflicts, the emperor and the pope were indispensable for each other. Pope and emperor were partners rather than rivals, but as often happens in a partnership the two were chronically quarreling about who had precedence.

### **The papacy’s move to Avignon, the “Western Schism,” and the Council of Constance**

The end of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in 1254 was followed by decades of instability in Germany, with no emperor and no king who had more than regional power. In France, on the other hand, the power of the Capetian monarchy greatly increased under kings Louis VIII and especially Louis IX (Saint Louis, ruled 1226-1270). The French kings presented the papacy with as many problems as had their German predecessors. Popes who defied the wishes of a French king were in danger of being removed by him. Contrarily, popes who cooperated too readily with the king were looked upon by both the people and the nobility of Rome as the king’s puppets. The situation was clarified, although from the Roman standpoint in an unfortunate way, by Pope Clement V. Before his elevation to the papacy Clement had been Bertrand de Got, bishop of Bordeaux. Because he was unpopular in Rome, and because he owed his election in large part to support from Philip IV (“the Fair”) of France, Clement decided in 1309 to transfer his papacy to Avignon, in the French Provence. Clement was the first of seven consecutive popes whose native language was French, who relied for their security on the French kings, and who resided at Avignon. The papacy’s sojourn in Avignon lasted from 1309 to 1378, and in retrospect the Romans referred to it as “the Babylonian Captivity of the popes.”

Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1378, but his death a few months later led to a crisis of a different sort. To succeed him the cardinals first elected the archbishop of Bari, who as Urban VI proved to be a disastrous choice. The cardinals met again, declared the election of Urban null and void, and elected Clement VII in his place. Both men believed themselves to be the legitimate pope, with Urban staying in Rome and Clement holding forth in Avignon. This “Western Schism” lasted from 1378 to 1417, by which time the Church had three rival popes.

The schism was finally resolved by a council. In 1414, the Holy Roman Emperor ordered one of the three competing popes to call a council. The emperor was Sigismund, king of Germany and Hungary. The call was to the city of Constance, in what is now Switzerland, and it was not limited to bishops but also included scholars (especially doctors of theology) and



ambassadors from the realms of Sigismund and other important kings. The Council of Constance, which did not finish its agenda until 1418, decreed that all three popes must resign their office, and declared that all members of the Church - including the several popes - must obey the council's decrees. In place of the three deposed popes the council elected Oddone Colonna. Although he was only a cardinal subdeacon at Rome, Oddone came from the Colonna family and therefore made up for shortcomings in his clerical background with the political strength necessary to survive in Rome. The Colonna family was one of the two (the other was the Orsini) most powerful noble families in Rome. They had for centuries wielded political power in the city, and were always represented by several members in its cardinal clergy. Oddone Colonna took the papal name of Martin V (1417-1431). As the Council of Constance had intended, Martin made Rome his papal residence and became, in effect, the ruler of Rome. Having worked out the political arrangements with Queen Joanna, who ruled the Kingdom of Naples and was then in control of Rome, Martin set in motion the city's reconstruction. The city was in bad shape, having been neglected for generations, and it was Martin who began the transformation of medieval Rome to Renaissance Rome. He ordered the rebuilding not only of the city's churches, but also of its roads and bridges. Papal rule of the city was to last, with brief interruptions, for more than four hundred years, ending only with the annexation of Rome into the Kingdom of Italy in 1870.

Although the Council of Constance (1414-18) resolved the problem of three rival popes, it also raised the possibility - not seen since antiquity - that a council of bishops was the ultimate authority in the Church. In fact, at Constance the councillors had decided that in order to keep the Church running smoothly another "ecumenical" council should be held five years later, and thereafter - if things were going well - once every ten years. Martin V dutifully called a council to meet at Pavia in 1423, but a plague that year caused it to be adjourned until 1431, when Martin called it to convene at Basle. Martin died before the council assembled, and his successor was not at all inclined to obey the dictates of a council. The successor was Eugenius IV (1431-47), one of four nephews of Gregory XII whom that pope had elevated to the rank of cardinal. A condition of Eugene's election, which he put into effect immediately, was that the cardinal clergy were entitled to receive half of the Church's income. Some of the clergy in the papal curia evidently feared that the Council of Basle would demand reforms that were not in the interests of the pope and the curia, and by the end of 1431 Eugenius had adjourned the Council of Basle. The bishops there, backed by the Holy Roman Emperor and several kings, refused to be adjourned and ordered Eugene and much of the curia to come to Basle. Eventually Pope Eugenius excommunicated all of the bishops meeting at Basle, and the council responded by deposing Eugene and setting up a rival, who took the papal name of Felix. Felix failed, however, to receive much support, and eventually abdicated from the papacy. Thus did Pope Eugenius triumph over the Council of Basle, and the brief experiment in conciliar government came to an end. The next ecumenical council was the Fifth Lateran Council (1512-1517) under Julius II, a pope so powerful that no one had to fear a conciliar coup.

Bishops may have looked with favor on conciliar government of the Church, but the strengthening of the papacy had wide support among the laity in Catholic Christendom. That a council of bishops could dictate to three popes was acceptable as a last resort in 1417, but that councils should regularly be the ultimate authority disturbed most lay Catholics. For almost a

thousand years the great majority in Latin Christendom had regarded monarchical government in succession from St. Peter as fundamental for the Church (or even as synonymous with the Church).

Contributing to the desire for papal rule was the long tradition of political monarchy. From the collapse of the Roman Republic until the beginning of modern times the average European (although not the members of the wealthy class) preferred a monarchy to an oligarchy or aristocracy. While subjects might hotly disagree about the merits of their ruler, most of them agreed that monarchy as an institution was natural and God-pleasing. A king's sovereignty was in fact regarded by the many as a pale earthly reflection of God's rule in Heaven. So far as the Church was concerned, medieval Europeans found great comfort in knowing that just as a "Heavenly Father" ruled in Heaven, so "Papa" in Rome was in charge of the Church. A robust republicanism and doubts about God re-emerged in the seventeenth century, and both can be seen in Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*.<sup>5</sup> In the early fifteenth century God and monarchy were hardly questioned by most Europeans.

### **Glimmerings of the Reformation: John Wycliffe**

Because of the papacy's chronic troubles, however, a few Catholics looked elsewhere for authority: to the Bible. Criticism of the papacy found support especially in those parts of Catholic Christendom in which the vernacular languages had not evolved from Latin. John Wycliffe (1325-1384) and Jan Hus (ca. 1370 -1415) were precursors of the Protestant Reformation. Both were prominent university men, but Wycliffe was the more scholarly of the two and the more original thinker. He became Master of Balliol College at Oxford University in 1360. Although Wycliffe was an important theological advisor to King Edward III, his main supporter was John of Gaunt. Wycliffe came to wide public attention in the 1370s, as a critic of the Church's temporal possessions. He demanded that the Church embrace the poverty of the earliest Christian church, and he preached that although the pope and bishops are spiritual authorities their temporal authority is a usurpation. Such opinions had been voiced since the twelfth century but Wycliffe made doctrines out of them, deriving them from the Bible. When the Church (or the pope) was in conflict with the Bible, so Wycliffe insisted, the Church (or the pope) was in error. Pope Gregory XI responded in 1377 with a bull directed against Wycliffe, condemning eighteen of his theses.

In the last seven years of his life, Wycliffe was in constant controversy. He advocated the abolition of the monastic orders and the transfer of their property to the state. He began his project of translating the Bible from the Vulgate into English only ca. 1380. He himself translated much of the New Testament, while collaborators translated the Old Testament. For uncertain reasons, detractors called Wycliffe's followers "Lollards." They were characterized not only as heretics but also as ignorant (as contrasted with the ordained clergy of the Church), in part because of their difficulties in reading Latin. Their number included not only university men at Oxford, but also uneducated townspeople and even peasants. Lollards continued to be a zealous minority until the Reformation, at which point the last of them were absorbed into the Church of England or one of the new Protestant churches.

Despite the furor he caused, not only in England but also on the European continent, Wycliffe was not excommunicated during his lifetime (he died in 1384, after a series of strokes). After his death, however, he was condemned as a heretic and his writings - including his translations of the Bible into English - were burned. Nevertheless, more than a hundred manuscripts of those translations are extant. In 1427, on orders from Pope Martin V, Wycliffe's bones were exhumed and they too were burned.

## **Jan Hus and the Hussite revolution**

Marriage connection between the royal houses of England and Bohemia brought Wycliffe's writings to the attention of Czech university students, among them Jan Hus. Eventually Hus translated Wycliffe's works into Czech. One of Wycliffe's most emphatic criticisms was the Church's accumulation of wealth, and that was especially well received in Bohemia, where almost half the landed property belonged to the Church.

Jan Hus was a master at Charles University in Prague, and in 1402 was appointed rector of the university. Hus, like Martin Luther, condemned indulgences and much else that had papal approval. He translated parts of the Bible into Czech, revising the Czech script for the purpose, and performed the mass in Czech rather than in Latin. He also distributed wine as well as bread in the mass. To cool the fervor in Prague, Pope Gregory XII in 1409 ordered that all of Wycliffe's writings be collected and burned. Hus was excommunicated in 1411, and was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. Wenceslas IV was king of Bohemia from 1378 to 1419, and for a while (1378-1400) was also Emperor of Rome. Initially friendly to Hus, Wenceslas was eventually frightened by the confrontation with consecutive popes and abandoned the "heretic." But the Hussite revolution did not stop with Hus's death. Like the Lollards in England, the Hussites in Bohemia included not only university teachers and students but also thousands of artisans and peasants. In 1419 a Hussite mob committed the First Defenestration of Prague, killing seven city councillors by throwing them down from a window in the upper floor of the city's curial building. The violence set off an armed revolution, and in the next fifteen years the papacy in Rome (but not in Avignon) declared six crusades against the Bohemian heretics. None of the crusades was successful, and the Hussites continued to find opportunities to sack monasteries and appropriate land. Hussites were still a presence in central Europe and were both an inspiration and a warning when, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the castle-church in Wittenberg.

## **Judaism in the later medieval period: the Kabbalah and Jewish mysticism**

In the twelfth century, at about the same time that Catharism began to stir the Catholic church, Judaism was beginning its mystical period. As with Catharism, the stimuli came from the east, and owed something to the First Crusade. The Kabbalah originated as a shady *Doppelgänger* of Jewish philosophy and theology. Its position within Judaism is in some respects similar to the position of Sufism within Islam (although Kabbalists are seldom either mendicant or ascetic): for the mystics themselves Sufism and Kabbalah are the highest forms of Islam and Judaism respectively, while outsiders condemn the mystical traditions as incompatible with the mainstream. For a time the Kabbalah was not of much importance outside of Spain, but

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it deeply affected all of Judaism. Since the Enlightenment it has been dismissed and even denounced by many Reform and Conservative Jewish scholars. In Orthodox Judaism, however, it still has great authority. Academic study of Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah did not begin until the twentieth century, when it was pioneered by Gershom Scholem.<sup>6</sup>

The mystical books of Judaism were medieval pseudepigrapha that purported to provide the “secret meaning” of the Hebrew Bible, and they succeeded in bringing to mainstream Judaism some of the questions asked and the answers given from the early Neoplatonists to such later philosophers as Ibn Bajja, Ibn Rushd, Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Maimonides. Instead of the rationalism and humanism of the philosophers, however, the authors of the mystical books claimed to depend on divine inspiration. They passed off their books either as transcriptions of ancient texts, recently discovered, or as the long overdue writing down of what had been transmitted orally for a thousand years. The books, which also deepened the readers’ contempt for Gentiles, came to be known collectively as *kabbalah* (which in modern transliteration would be spelled *qabbalah*), a word meaning “tradition,” or “what has been received.” This prestigious word, which in earlier times had been used for the Tanakh and the Mishnah, was in late medieval Europe extended to three much more recent works - the *Sefer yetzirah*, the *Sefer ha-bahir* and the *Zohar* - and eventually came to be synonymous with those works. The word *kabbalah* reflects the assumption - almost unchallenged in the Judaism of the time - that the mystic books were no less reliable than the Tanakh and Mishnah, and merely made public what had been transmitted orally and in secret over the millennia.

The earliest mystical text of Judaism was the *Sefer yetzirah* (“Book of Creation”), a short pamphlet which seems to have been composed in Iraq some time before the tenth century and possibly as early as the fifth or sixth. Although influenced by the Neoplatonism of Late Antiquity, the *Sefer yetzirah* purports to have been written by Abraham, and to be the very book that guided the rabbis of the Tannaitic period in their miraculous creation (hence the name) of animals to be sacrificed at Passover. The *Sefer yetzirah* set forth the esoteric meaning of the numbers one through ten, and of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet (the letters of the Hebrew alphabet also have numerical values): it was through the instrumentality of these thirty-two mystical letters and numbers that God created the world, and that the devout can continue to create living creatures. Greek and Arabic numerologists had earlier engaged in fantasies about *gematria*, but in medieval Hebrew it became a pseudo-science.

Early in the tenth century the *Sefer yetzirah* was translated from Hebrew into Arabic by Saadi ben Joseph, the pioneer of Jewish theology. Despite - or because of - its weird and cryptic contents it attracted considerable attention, especially from Judaeans who were drawn to mysticism. The spread of Sufism in the Dar al-Islam encouraged experimentation with mystical practices in Judaism, and the *Sefer yetzirah* served as a guide for Judaeans to reach the same heights achieved by the Sufis. With the growth of Kabbalah, for some Judaeans in Spain the *Sefer yetzirah* became almost as important as the Tanakh. One of its most avid readers was Abraham Abulafia, the last of whose writings was composed in 1291. Abulafia was a pioneer of what he called “prophetic Kabbalah” but which is now more often called “ecstatic Kabbalah.” In his “prophecy” Abulafia did not reveal new messages from God, but rather had visions of the

divine. He claimed also that by endless repetition of Hebrew names and words, and of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (especially of the four radicals in the Tetragrammaton), he was transported into union with God.

The Neoplatonism of Solomon ibn Gabirol's "Fountain of Life," in the eleventh century, was another stimulus for Kabbalah. Although Saadia ben Joseph, ibn Gabirol, and Abraham Abulafia helped to create the climate in which Kabbalah could thrive, these writers did not produce the bogus Kabbalistic texts. That was done by writers who took great pains to cover their tracks. Apparently in the second half of the twelfth century and in the Languedoc of France (Provence) appeared the *Sefer ha-bahir*, or "Book of Brightness," again a relatively short work. Written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic, the *Sefer ha-bahir* claims to have been an ancient *midrash* on the Books of Moses: a *midrash* written by Rabbi Nehuniah ben ha-Kana, who lived in the first century CE and who had received his secret wisdom through a long line of oral transmission. Even so philosophic a thinker as Maimonides regarded the *Sefer ha-bahir* as an ancient text, recently discovered.<sup>7</sup> To critical historians today the *Sefer ha-bahir* seems to be an anonymous twelfth-century work, and a sign of the new creativity of Jewish writers (especially those touched by Neoplatonism) in Spain and southern France. The text expounds, among other things, the hidden meanings of letters in the Hebrew alphabet, and shows their significance in the Torah, relentlessly extracting significance from numbers of all sorts.<sup>8</sup> Although numerological mysteries and their solutions were fascinating in themselves, they were merely the means toward a much more serious end. The author or authors of the *Sefer ha-bahir* supposed that the "secrets" of letters and numbers in the Hebrew Bible provided clues to questions that troubled many thoughtful people. Most important of these questions were, What is the true nature of God, and how is humankind and the human soul related to God? The answers given by the *Sefer ha-bahir* in fact came from Neoplatonism, although the author or authors of the text could of course not acknowledge that debt without unmasking the entire project.

The success of the *Sefer ha-bahir* inspired a much more ambitious work in the same genre. Toward the end of the thirteenth century Moses de Leon, a gifted Jewish writer whose father came from the city of León in northwestern Spain, presented to the world a group of texts written partially in Hebrew and mostly in an unusual form of Aramaic and collectively called the *Zohar*, a word also meaning "brightness" or "brilliance." The texts of the *Sefer ha-zohar* were a commentary on - or a mystical explanation of - the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>9</sup> They quickly became, and still remain, the heart of the Kabbalah.

Moses de Leon claimed merely to have made a legible copy of the texts, which were purportedly written in the second century by students of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, another hero of rabbinic Judaism, and his learned colleagues. In the aftermath of the Bar Kochba revolt, so it was said, Rabbi Shimon had fled with his son to a cave. Over the years, and aided by the luminous appearance of Moses and Elijah, Shimon ben Yohai absorbed the great wisdom that had once been granted by God to Adam, to Abraham and to Moses. In the *Zohar* Rabbi Shimon and other rabbis discuss the secret meaning of the Biblical texts. The text begins, for example, with Rabbi Shimon observing that thirteen words intervene between the first and the second mention of *Elohim* in the creation story. What does this mean? It means that Israel is like a rose among thorns, because the rose has thirteen petals. The number thirteen also corresponds

to the “thirteen qualities of compassion” that surround the Assembly of Israel on every side.<sup>10</sup> The rabbi’s students - so it was believed - wrote all of this wisdom down, but for more than a thousand years the written text remained a secret until it was discovered and copied by Moses de Leon. Such is the myth of how the *Zohar* came into being.

Modern scholars are generally agreed that although many centuries of speculation, imagination and play lie behind the text, Moses de Leon was himself the author of the *Zohar*. His brilliant and poetic language, which betrays influences from several medieval sources and from Castilian Spanish, was itself a powerful attraction for those who heard the text read aloud.<sup>11</sup> In the thirteenth century, neither Jewish nor Christian scholars had the critical tools to distinguish a pseudepigraphon from a genuinely ancient text. As a result, the *Zohar* was eventually able to make its way into the mainstream tradition of Judaism.

The *Zohar* and its predecessors offered Judaism a Neoplatonic conception of God. Ten *sefirot* - Moses de Leon seems to have connected the ancient Hebrew word *sefirah* with the Greek word *sphaira*, or “sphere” - emanate from God. The first three of these *sefirot* are connected with the intellect, the next three with the soul, the last three with matter, and the tenth *sefirah* is called “Kingdom” and is the totality of the other nine. The ten *sefirot* or “potencies” conceived by Moses de Leon have striking similarities to the Neoplatonic doctrine - articulated by Plotinus in the third century - of Intellect, Soul and Matter as emanations from the One. In the *Zohar* God is revealed to be not the personal deity that one finds at the literal level of Genesis and Exodus, but an impersonal and ineffable power at the center of reality. And the human soul, because it is a distant emanation from God, has the potential to be reunited with God. Although this happens at death, according to the *Zohar*, it also happens repeatedly during one’s lifetime. The soul has three parts: the *nephesh*, the *ruach*, and the *neschama*. The *nephesh* is active during sleep, the *ruach* takes charge when a person is awake, and the *neschama* governs both of these lower parts. When a pure and righteous man is asleep, his *nephesh* can ascend to God, while the *nephesh* of an unrighteous man fritters away the night in “false and deceitful dreaming.”<sup>12</sup>

As Moses de Leon and other writers of Kabbalist texts saw it, only the Jewish soul is capable of the divine ascent. The Gentile soul is deficient, making it impossible for the Gentile to achieve the higher forms of spirituality (the Kabbalists had no idea that much of their doctrine came from Plotinus, a Hellenized Egyptian). As summarized by David Halperin, a specialist on the Kabbalah and its legacy, “the Kabbalah insisted, with a radicalism unprecedented in the history of Jewish thought, on the absolute abyss that separates Jews from Gentiles. The Kabbalists saw Jews and Gentiles as practically two different species, gifted with qualitatively different souls.”<sup>13</sup> Especially in Christendom, the gulf between Gentiles and Judaeans was deep and wide by the late thirteenth century. Even in language the gulf was substantial: the Christians spoke their local vernaculars, while Sephardic Judaeans spoke Ladino and Ashkenazic Judaeans spoke a Yiddish dialect.

Blossoming in Spain, Kabbalah was influenced by the Sufism of Muslim mystics. This was especially true of the ecstatic Kabbalah practiced by the students of Abraham Abulafia.<sup>14</sup> Like the Sufis, the Jewish Kabbalists aimed for union with God, and tried to effect it through meditation and ecstasy. The Hebrew *merkavah* parallels the Arabic *muraqaba* (“meditation” or

“concentration”), although the Hebrew *merkavah* literally means “chariot” and supposedly refers to the chariot of God described in the opening chapter of Ezekiel. The power of poetic language and of the many names of God - sometimes repeated by the mystic for hours on end - was exploited to place the Sufi and the Kabbalist in a trance. The goal for both the Sufi and the Kabbalist was the *unio mystica*, the “mystical union.”

In addition to its mysticism and its theology the *Zohar* promoted a wide range of superstitions that paraded as occult “sciences.” Astrology came close behind gematria as a so-called science that Moses de Leon took seriously. The *Zohar* also offered instruction in necromancy, magic, and theurgy or the working of miracles. The most sensational of these was the creation of a *golem*, a living animal or man (because the *golem* was without a soul or a mind of its own, it could be depended upon to do the bidding of its creators). Moses believed in Satan and the Powers of Darkness and was confident that these powers could be manipulated to the mystic’s advantage.

Kabbalah attracted much attention in Jewish communities, first in Spain and later in the rest of Europe and throughout the Dar al-Islam. Although the influence of Kabbalah on Judaism has been profound and lasting, it also affected Renaissance Christianity. Once they learned of its existence and contents, Christian thinkers and writers - especially those who were attracted to Neoplatonism - took the Kabbalah very seriously. In the late fifteenth century Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was especially fascinated with the Kabbalah, believing that it provided the answers to many of the questions he had about God, the soul, and the source of evil. Evidently it was he who made the arrangements for Raimundo Moncada (*alias* Flavius Mithridates) to translate an entire library of Kabbalistic texts into Latin. Raimundo, a Sicilian who had converted from Judaism to Christianity, was Pico’s tutor in the Hebrew and Aramaic languages. At Pico’s death in 1494 the translations were brought to the Vatican library, but for more than five hundred years they remained unpublished. Only now has the publication of these Latin texts begun.<sup>15</sup>

## **Maimonides**

At almost the same time that the pseudepigraphic and sensational Kabbalah began to attract attention, lived an honest intellectual and the greatest Judaeo writer of the Middle Ages. This was Maimonides, whose Arabic name was Musa ibn Maimun and whose Hebrew name was Moshe ben Maimon. His title, “Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon” was often shortened to the honorific acronym, “the *rambam*.” Born in Cordoba ca. 1135, and trained there as a physician, Maimonides left Spain when the Almohad regime threatened non-Muslims with violence. He spent his young adult years in Morocco, studying under various learned men at Fez. Moving then to Egypt, Maimonides became court physician to Saladin and to his Ayyubid successors as rulers of Egypt, in their palace at Fustat (Cairo). He remained in Egypt until his death in 1204.

Maimonides wrote all of his works with Hebrew characters: some of his works are in the Hebrew language, but most are in Judaeo-Arabic. As a physician, Maimonides wrote several tracts on medicine, but more importantly he was a rabbi and a philosopher. In Hebrew he wrote a work called *mishneh torah* (“repetition of the *torah*”), which was a short guide to Jewish law.

For Judaism, next in importance to his *mishneh torah* was his commentary on the Mishnah. Here, writing in Judaeo-Arabic, Maimonides boldly reduced the cardinal beliefs in Judaism to thirteen (except for the seventh, eighth and ninth, these thirteen principles of belief would have been equally applicable to Islam). For Christian Europe the most important work of Maimonides was his brief *Guide to the Perplexed*, which originated as a personal letter and which aimed to reconcile the theology of the Tanakh - the Christian Old Testament - with Aristotelian philosophy. Steeped as he was in Greek philosophy, by way of its translation into Arabic, Maimonides insisted that many passages in the Tanakh must be read metaphorically: what God did, what he thought, what he felt, are simply human projections. God is beyond all human understanding. Maimonides' main disagreement with Aristotle was on the question of matter: is it eternal, or was matter created *ex nihilo*. Aristotle had argued the former alternative, and Maimonides defended the latter.

One of Maimonides' conclusions that went counter to traditional Judaism was his quiet rejection of the old doctrine of physical resurrection at the End of Time.<sup>16</sup> Earlier Jewish writers - Isaac ben Solomon, Judah ha-Levi, and others who had been influenced by Neoplatonism - had in their eschatology relied on the immortality of the soul rather than on the resurrection of the body. Maimonides was therefore extending a philosophical trajectory that had begun centuries earlier. Nevertheless, his writings offended many Jewish traditionalists, and for a time were banned by the rabbis. During the Renaissance, however, his understanding of Judaism began to be widely appreciated, and in modern times his "thirteen principles" have served as something of a creed in many synagogues. Maimonides' starting point and conclusion - that Judaism must somehow accommodate philosophy - is his lasting legacy.

### **Increasing hostility between Christians and Judaeans**

The crusade that Pope Urban called in 1095 - and especially the preachers who recruited for it - galvanized religious militancy in much of Catholic Christendom, making a virtue of physical violence in the cause of religion. Since the days of Constantine and Theodosius the Great, official policy had been that Judaism was a permissible religion, a *religio licita*, and Pope Urban's call obscured that policy. Although directed primarily against Muslims in the Middle East, the new militancy also targeted Judaeans at home, as well as Christian heretics. A contributing factor to the anti-Jewish fervor of Christians in the late medieval period was the wealth of a significant number of Jewish families, and the perception that this wealth was ill-gotten gain. The interest rates charged by the moneylenders were often over 100% a year.<sup>17</sup> Christians did not profit from moneylending until the Protestant Reformation, when John Calvin taught that Moses' laws against usury were no more binding on Christians than were other laws of the Old Testament. By the end of the sixteenth century Protestant usurers (more often called "bankers") were becoming common, but Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* still was able to present the Jewish moneylender Shylock as a stereotype of greed.

Although envy of Judaeans' wealth added to Christian dislike of "the Jews," the more important factor was the religious divide, and the new enthusiasm for using force in order to bring unbelievers into the Church. As we have seen, before heading east in 1096 the People's Crusade attacked the Jewish quarters of several German-speaking cities along its route,



assaulting and killing those Judaeans who refused to become Christians. This was the first of a long list of pogroms in Europe.

Blood libels against Judaeans began late in the twelfth century. The earliest instance on record occurred in 1171, at the French city of Blois. A Christian soldier accused a Judaeans of throwing into the Loire river the dead body of a Christian infant. Theobald, Count of Blois, ordered a trial by ordeal, and when the ordeal “proved” the defendant guilty he was placed, along with two rabbis and as many other Judaeans of the city as could be found, in a wooden house which then was set afire. So perished thirty-two of the forty Judaeans then living at Blois.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath, it came to be widely believed in Catholic Europe that at every Passover the Judaeans killed a Christian infant and used its blood in the making of unleavened bread. The Christians’ accusation seems to have been inspired by a medieval Jewish story that at the first Passover the wicked Pharaoh killed Israelite infants in order to use their blood as a cure for his leprosy.<sup>19</sup> The blood libel against Judaeans continued for centuries.

The atrocity at Blois was immediately followed by the first expulsions of Judaeans from Christian cities and kingdoms. In 1172 the Judaeans of Bologna were expelled from their city, but the expulsion was soon cancelled. More sweeping was the expulsion ordered by Philip II Augustus, king of *Francia* (which at that time included much of northern France). In April of 1182 the youthful Philip decreed that by the feast day of St. John the Baptist (June 24) all Judaeans were to have left his realm.<sup>20</sup> Philip justified his order with the libel that in their secret Passover rituals “the Jews” killed Christian infants, but his actual motivation was probably financial. Many Judaeans in his kingdom, and especially in Paris, had grown conspicuously rich, and in his expulsion Philip confiscated all Judaeans land and homes. In 1198 he permitted Judaeans to come back to his cities but imposed on the bankers strict regulations, which channeled much of the profit to the crown.

The social isolation of Judaeans throughout central and western Europe was hastened by Pope Innocent III in 1215, when his Fourth Lateran Council ordered that all Judaeans and Muslims (“Saracens”) living in Catholic lands must henceforth wear clothing that identified them as Jewish or Muslim. For some time this had been the practice in Christian Spain and southwestern France, and in the Dar al-Islam Judaeans and Christians had all along been required to identify themselves by dress. But in most of the Catholic kingdoms Judaeans, Muslims and Christians dressed alike, and Innocent complained that “such a confusion has grown up that they cannot be distinguished by any difference. Thus it happens at times that through error Christians have relations with the women of Jews or Saracens, and Jews or Saracens with Christian women.”<sup>21</sup> Innocent left it to each king, as the temporal authority, to decide what sort of “badge” his non-Christian subjects should wear. A yellow circle, worn in front and back, became one of the more common identifiers for Judaeans. In some kingdoms a specified kind of hat was also required. From the early thirteenth century onward, these “badges of shame” were mandatory in most of Europe, and the requirements generally remained in force until the Enlightenment. After a long lapse the practice was revived by the Nazis, who ordered every Jewish person under their authority to wear a yellow Star of David inscribed with the word *Jude*.

### **The *Toledoth yeshu* and the Talmud controversy**

A latent danger for rabbinic Judaism was the denigration of Christianity in the Talmud and other rabbinic texts. The Babylonian Talmud had been compiled in Sassanid Mesopotamia. There Judaeans had been at least as numerous as Christians, and the Sassanid rulers were Mazdians who protected Judaeans and often supported them. As a result, the Amoraim whose opinions are compiled in the Babylonian Talmud felt little compunction about denouncing both Jesus and his followers.<sup>22</sup> The offensive passages are not prominent in the Talmud, and only a thorough search would discover them.

Much more blatant was a short rabbinic tract, the *Toledoth yeshu*, which purported to be the story of Jesus the so-called Messiah. Only a few pages long, the *Toledoth yeshu* was perhaps composed in Aramaic in the sixth century, not long after the Babylonian Talmud was completed, but by the eleventh century it was also available in Hebrew and Arabic. Peter Schäfer's analysis of this and other rabbinic texts about Jesus and about Christianity concludes that "the most prominent characteristic that dominates quite a number of the rabbinic stories is sex, more precisely sexual promiscuity."<sup>23</sup> In the rabbinic tradition Jesus is a *mamzer*, a bastard son of Miriam, a beautiful virgin, by Joseph Pandera (or Panthera). One of the most disreputable men in Bethlehem, Pandera steals into Miriam's bedroom and rapes her. The *Toledoth yeshu* describes Jesus as a miracle worker who makes the lame walk and even revives the dead, but his miraculous power comes from his discovery and misuse of a secret Divine Name. Claiming to be the Messiah, he is unmasked as an arch-deceiver and a magician, and is then executed (by stoning!) on orders from Queen Helene.<sup>24</sup> In the Talmud known to medieval rabbis Jesus was one of the three great sinners against Israel, the other two being Balaam and the emperor Titus.<sup>25</sup> Jesus' punishment in the netherworld is to be eternally boiled in excrement.

As rabbinic Judaism spread through the Mediterranean world and Europe, these texts created little stir. The typical rabbi was discreet enough to share them only with fellow Judaeans, and if Christians heard a rumor about something slanderous in a Jewish sacred book they would have been unable to verify it. This changed in the twelfth and thirteenth century. Learned Jewish converts to Christianity brought with them a familiarity with the Talmud and other rabbinic texts, and some of the converts detailed for Christians what derogatory statements these texts make about Jesus and about Christians. In addition, a few Christian scholars began to learn enough Hebrew and Aramaic to read the Talmud, and to make public what they found there.<sup>26</sup> In particular, Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), who had heard about the blasphemous material in "the sacred books of the Jews," ordered his scholars to examine the books. After the scholars reported their findings Gregory instructed the Catholic kings to confiscate the offensive books. Although most of the kings ignored the instruction, King Louis IX carried out a confiscation in France on March 3 of 1240. A person much involved in the project was the papal legate to the king's court, Odo of Chateauroux. A letter sent by Odo to Pope Innocent IV in 1247 provides considerable detail about the entire episode.<sup>27</sup> Odo first describes for Innocent what the Talmud is, and his description suggests that until the thirteenth century the Catholic clergy, including the popes themselves, scarcely knew of the Talmud's existence. Having informed Innocent about this "different Law, which is called 'Talmud', that is, 'Teaching,'" and noting that it was not written down until long after the Old Testament, Odo summarizes what Pope Gregory's scholars found in it:

In this are contained so many unspeakable insults that it arouses shame in those who read it, and horror in those who hear it. This too is the chief factor that holds the Jews obstinate in their perfidy [That is, the Talmud prevents Jews from becoming Christians].<sup>28</sup>

Odo reports that because the Talmud was responsible for the Judaeans' persistence in their unbelief, Gregory ordered that all copies of the book be seized and burned. Such copies as the French agents were able to get their hands on were apparently burned in 1242.

Particulars of the Jewish "blasphemy" against Jesus and the Church were eventually supplied in the *Pugio fidei contra Mauros et Iudaeos* ("Dagger of faith against the Moors and the Judaeans") of Ramón Martí, a Spanish Dominican who wrote under the Latin name of Raymundus Martini. Raymundus seems to have died ca. 1286, and his *Pugio fidei* may therefore have been composed in the 1270s. Because he spoke both the Arabic and the Hebrew of his day, Raymundus had accepted from the Dominicans an assignment to do missionary work among the Muslims and Judaeans of Spain. In preparation for his task he learned Classical Arabic and Aramaic and then studied the Quran and the Talmud. In the *Pugio fidei* he confronted the anti-Christian passages in the Muslim and Jewish sacred books. How he responded to the Quran is not known, since that part of the *Pugio* has not survived.<sup>29</sup> His detailing of the rabbinical stories about Jesus contributed to the anti-Jewish movements in the late thirteenth century.

## **The Rindfleisch massacres and the expulsion of Judaeans from France and England**

As they suffered increasing violence from Christians, Judaeans began to compose memorial books that eventually were used in the liturgy of many synagogues. A memorial book was known by its first two words, *yizkor Elohim* ("Remember, oh God..."). The introductory words were followed by the names and numbers of martyrs, and a brief statement of where and how they met their death. The first of the *yizkor* books seems to have been composed at Nürnberg (Nuremberg) and was read at the Shavuot (Weeks) service in 1296. This was the two-hundredth anniversary of the first pogrom, the People's Crusade in 1096, and the book was thus a memorial for the Judaeans who had died at the hands of Christians during the preceding two hundred years.

The hostility associated with the anniversary, along with the anti-Jewish feelings stirred up by the Talmud controversy, probably contributed to a massive pogrom in southern Germany during the summer of 1298. This pogrom is known as "the Rindfleisch massacres" (apparently the leader of the Christian mobs was a nobleman named Rindfleisch). The massacres began in Röttingen, a town twenty miles south of Würzburg, in April of 1298. Judaeans were accused of "desecrating the host," or torturing the body of the Christ (bread that had been consecrated for use in the Christian mass). Rindfleisch and his mobs seized the Judaeans of Röttingen and burned them at the stake. The pogrom then spread to the other towns of Franconia, Bavaria and Austria, and by the end of it 146 Judaeans congregations were wiped out. One of the largest of the congregations was the synagogue at Nürnberg, where 728 people are said to have been killed.

Altogether, the number of Judaeans killed was at least 20,000 and estimates have ranged as high as 100,000.

As a result of the pogrom many Judaeans fled from German-speaking cities. Bringing their Yiddish dialect with them, many settled in Poland while others sought safety in France. The latter refugees, however, were soon displaced again. In 1306 Philip the Fair (Philip IV) ordered a second temporary expulsion of Judaeans from *Francia*, which by that time was considerably larger than it had been in the reign of Philip II. In this expulsion Judaeans were stripped of personal as well as real property. The profligate ways of Philip the Fair left him chronically in need of money, and in 1307 - a year after his expulsion of Judaeans - he arrested and executed all of the Knights Templar in his kingdom, again confiscating their property. The expulsion of Judaeans from France, coupled with the earlier flight from Germany, must have resulted in the arrival in Poland of tens of thousands of Judaeans immigrants.

Less noticeable than the expulsions of Judaeans from France, because the numbers were much smaller, was the single expulsion of Judaeans from England. Judaeans are not attested in England until after the Norman Conquest, and they evidently crossed the Channel in order to set themselves up as moneylenders to the English and their Norman lords.<sup>30</sup> Tiny Jewish minorities sprang up in the cities of England, but opposition to the practice of lending and usury was strong and culminated in 1290, when Edward I expelled all Judaeans from England. Unlike the two expulsions ordered in France, the English expulsion was not temporary. It lasted for centuries and perhaps because of this anomalous situation it was in England that usury was first permitted for Christians. In 1544 Henry VIII (who by then had broken with the Catholic church and was himself head of "the church" in England) issued his Act in Restraint of Usury, which allowed his Christian subjects to make loans at interest. It was not until the 1650s, under Oliver Cromwell, that Judaeans were once again permitted to live in England. Even then, however, the permission was informal and was contingent upon the immigrants making no public display of their Judaism.

## **The Black Death**

Christian suspicion and hatred of Judaeans was greatly increased by the Black Death, one of the worst plagues that humankind has experienced. It devastated Europe and the Middle East in the years 1347-1351, and seems to have begun in eastern Asia in the 1330s. Whether it reached the western hemisphere is not known. In all of Eurasia the Black Death took the lives of perhaps a hundred million people, or approximately half of the population. In Europe at least, and evidently in Asia as well, the plague was a new disease in the fourteenth century. Over the next three hundred years it recurred many times, although with less virulence and over narrower ranges, and therefore with much lower mortalities. Over most of Europe its last outbreaks were in the second half of the seventeenth century (e.g., the Great Plague of London in 1665-66). Like its appearance, the plague's disappearance has never been satisfactorily explained.

The disease was characterized by high fever, vomiting, and most strikingly by hemorrhagic swellings, usually at the neck but also elsewhere on the body. Approximately half of the people who contracted the disease died from it, almost always within a week of the first

symptoms and sometimes within a day. Through most of the twentieth century historians of medicine generally supposed that the Black Death was bubonic plague, and that is still a widely held opinion. Bubonic plague is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, which is carried by black rats and is communicated to humans by the Indian rat flea. Recent studies have argued, however, that the disease responsible for the Black Death was not bacterial but viral.<sup>31</sup> In any case, the Black Death was far and away the worst epidemic that Europe and the Middle East had seen since the so-called "Plague of Justinian" in the sixth century. Late in 1347 the disease was brought from the Crimea to the Sicilian city of Messina by Genoese ships (many of whose crewmen and passengers had already died), and early in 1348 the plague reached northern Italy and France. By summer of that year it had reached England, and in 1351 Russians were dying from it.

The losses in the Dar al-Islam paralleled those in Christendom.<sup>32</sup> Casualties in Egypt and the Levant were already high in 1348, and Baghdad was struck in 1349. In the same year the plague came to Tunis. Among its thousands of victims there were both parents of seventeen-year-old Ibn Khaldun, who would become the best historian whom the Dar al-Islam produced. The theological responses to the plague differed from Christianity to Islam. While the most common Christian view was that the plague was a punishment from God, theology in Islam held that God does not punish the faithful. Although the plague was a punishment for the infidel, for the faithful Muslim - who would awaken to Paradise - it was God's act of mercy.

In Christian Europe Judaeans seemed to suffer less from the Black Death than did the rest of the population, possibly because their settlements were less infested with rats. But whatever good fortune Judaeans had in that regard was immediately offset by the accusation that they were responsible for concocting and spreading the disease. Although even brief reflection should have shown how preposterous was the accusation (the plague was as deadly in villages and in the countryside, where no Judaeans lived, as it was in cities), many Christians were able to believe that "the Jews" were spreading poison, perhaps by throwing it into wells in the Christian parts of a city. Other Christians supposed that the Black Death was a punishment sent from God because he was angry at Christian kings and magistrates for tolerating or even encouraging Jewish communities in their cities. In dozens of European cities Christian mobs invaded the Jewish quarters, vandalizing the synagogues and assaulting and killing Judaeans. Although municipal or royal authorities typically tried to defend the Jewish quarters from such violence, they were seldom able to constrain the mobs.

A detailed account of an attack upon Judaeans by a Christian mob in 1349 is available for the city of Strasbourg. Although taken from the Latin chronicle of Strasbourg written by Jacob von Königshofen (1346-1420), this author seems to have found it in the work of an earlier chronicler who had himself witnessed the pogrom.<sup>33</sup>

**ABOUT THE GREAT PLAGUE AND THE BURNING OF THE JEWS.** In the year 1349 there occurred the greatest epidemic that ever happened. Death went from one end of the earth to the other, on that side and this side of the sea, and it was greater among the Saracens than among the Christians. In some lands everyone died so that no one was left. Ships were also found on the sea laden with wares; the crew had all died and no one

guided the ship. The bishop of Marseilles and priests and monks and more than half of all people there died with them. In other kingdoms and cities so many people perished that it would be horrible to describe. The pope at Avignon stopped all sessions of court, locked himself in a room, allowed no one to approach him and had a fire burning before him all the time. [This last was probably intended as some sort of disinfectant.] And from what this epidemic came, all wise teachers and physicians could only say that it was God's will. And as the plague was now here, so was it in other places, and lasted more than a whole year. This epidemic also came to Strasbourg in the summer of the above mentioned year, and it is estimated that about sixteen thousand people died.

In the matter of this plague the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells - that is what they were accused of - and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany, but not in Avignon, for the pope protected them there.

Nevertheless they tortured a number of Jews in Berne and Zofingen [Switzerland] who then admitted that they had put poison into many wells, and they also found the poison in the wells. Thereupon they burnt the Jews in many towns and wrote of this affair to Strasbourg, Freiburg, and Basel in order that they too should burn their Jews. But the leaders in these three cities in whose hands the government lay did not believe that anything ought to be done to the Jews. However in Basel the citizens marched to the city-hall and compelled the council to take an oath that they would burn the Jews, and that they would allow no Jew to enter the city for the next two hundred years. Thereupon the Jews were arrested in all these places and a conference was arranged to meet at Benfeld [Alsace, February 8, 1349]. The bishop of Strasbourg [Berthold II], all the feudal lords of Alsace, and representatives of the three above mentioned cities came there. The deputies of the city of Strasbourg were asked what they were going to do with their Jews. They answered and said that they knew no evil of them. Then they asked the Strasbourgers why they had closed the wells and put away the buckets, and there was great indignation and clamor against the deputies from Strasbourg. So finally the bishop and the lords and the Imperial Cities agreed to do away with the Jews. The result was that they were burnt in many cities, and wherever they were expelled they were caught by the peasants and stabbed to death or drowned....

[The town-council of Strasbourg which wanted to save the Jews was deposed on the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> of February, and the new council gave in to the mob, who then arrested the Jews on Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup>.]

**THE JEWS ARE BURNT.** On Saturday - that was St. Valentine's Day - they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand people of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. [Some say that about a thousand people accepted baptism.] Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had

taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor, and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans, some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors.

Thus were the Jews burnt at Strasbourg, and in the same year in all the cities of the Rhine, whether Free Cities or Imperial Cities or cities belonging to the lords. In some towns they burnt the Jews after a trial, in others, without a trial. In some cities the Jews themselves set fire to their houses and cremated themselves.

**THE JEWS RETURN TO STRASBOURG.** It was decided in Strasbourg that no Jew should enter the city for a hundred years, but before twenty years had passed, the council and magistrates agreed that they ought to admit the Jews again into the city for twenty years. And so the Jews came back again to Strasbourg in the year 1368 after the birth of our Lord.

### **Karaite Judaeans of the Crimea**

An unusual religious community was to be found just north of the Black Sea, in the Crimea. A prominent religion in the Crimea, and possibly the established religion, was Karaite Judaism. This may have been an offshoot of the Khazars, but because the Khazars were rabbinic it is more likely that the Judaeans of the Crimea had other origins. Their language was Kipchak Turkish, and we may therefore assume that most of them were descended from Kipchaks. The Kipchaks were Turkish-speaking warriors from central Asia, who migrated west of the Volga in the tenth century, and because of their military prowess were able to establish themselves as rulers of various communities in eastern western Eurasia. Although many of the Kipchak tribes converted temporarily to Christianity and then permanently to Islam, the Kipchaks who took over the Crimea presumably converted to Karaite Judaism. In the thirteenth century the eastern Crimean city of Solkhat, more accurately known as Staryi Krym, was mostly Karaite.

From this base along the Black Sea the Crimean Karaites spread eastward into Europe. Groups of them settled in Romania, and in the latter half of the fourteenth century the Grand Duke of Lithuania invited a significant number of Crimean Karaites to settle near Vilnius. In the sixteenth century the influential Karaite writer, Isaac ben Abraham of Troki (Trakai), was a member of this Karaite community in Lithuania.

### **Anti-Jewish riots in late fourteenth-century Spain**

In Spain, Judaeans were for a time enlisted as allies by the Christian kings of the north against the Muslim amirs of the south, but by the late fourteenth century the kings no longer needed Judaeans help. The city of Seville provides an illustration of this pattern. Ferdinand III, a Christian king of Leon and Castile and one of the great heroes of the Spanish *Reconquista*, took Seville from the Almohads in 1248. In an effort to dilute the Muslim character of the city Ferdinand and his successors invited a great many Jewish immigrants to Seville, and by the

fourteenth century Seville had a larger Jewish population than any Spanish city other than Toledo. The Judaeans were nevertheless a minority in what was by then a mostly Christian city, and on June 9 of 1391 the Christians of Seville rioted against the Jewish minority. A contemporary estimated that four thousand Judaeans were killed in the rioting. The Christian mobs in Seville had been inflamed by the anti-Jewish preaching of Ferrán Martínez, the judicial representative of the city's archbishop. Although the Christian rulers condemned the riot they did nothing to prevent it or to punish the perpetrators, and the pogrom spread to other cities in Spain.

Their lives in danger, many Sephardic (Spanish) Judaeans fled to France, but they were scarcely welcomed there. In 1394 the king of France, Charles VI, once again expelled "the Jews" from all the lands under his control, and this third expulsion was enforced for over two hundred years. Many of the Judaeans headed east into the Catholic kingdoms of central and eastern Europe - what is today Austria, Hungary, the eastern part of Germany, and Poland - where they were more welcome. The nobility and rulers of Austria appreciated the skills of Jewish artisans, and other Judaeans played important roles in the minting of coins and the lending of money. In 1244 Duke Frederick II, who ruled most of Austria from Vienna, had issued a charter guaranteeing various protections to the Judaeans and imposing stiff fines and corporal penalties on Christians who failed to repay the loans they had received from moneylenders. Although by the late fourteenth century anti-Jewish sentiments were beginning to rise also in central Europe, the dukes and kings of the region still regarded their Jewish subjects as vital to the state and tried to provide for their safety and well-being.

The Jewish exodus to the east peaked in the late fifteenth century. In 1492, immediately after their conquest of Granada and their consolidation of power over most of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled from their kingdom all those Judaeans who refused to convert to Christianity. This edict by Ferdinand and Isabella, *los Reyes Católicos*, was part of a broader agenda: to make their entire realm Catholic. In 1502 they completed the project by ordering the expulsion of all Muslims (at the surrender of Granada in 1492 the Muslims had been promised freedom to continue practicing their religion).

### **The tradition of religious tolerance in medieval Poland and Lithuania**

Geographically opposite from Spain in Catholic Europe were Poland and Lithuania, and religious policies in these lands were also in sharp contrast to those of the Iberian peninsula. We have seen that what was to become Poland became Catholic in the tenth century, when King Mieszko (962-92) and his Polans tribe renounced their traditional paganism to become vassals of the Holy Roman Emperor. Apparently, however, paganism was not violently suppressed in Poland, the Piast dynasty allowing the old pagan traditions to coexist with the Catholic church.

Paganism and some degree of religious indifference were even more common in Lithuania. Almost all Lithuanian and Latvian speakers were pagans until the thirteenth century, when a few of them living along the Baltic coast were converted to Catholic Christianity by crusaders from Germany: the Teutonic Order of Knights. Far to the southeast and far from the coast, other Lithuanians were converted to Orthodox Christianity at about the same time. The



majority of Lithuanians, however, remained pagan through most of the fourteenth century. They were separated from their Polish neighbors not only by religion but also by language. Although both Polish and Lithuanian are Indo-European languages, they are not closely related: Polish is a Slavic language, while Lithuanian (along with Latvian) belongs to a conservative Indo-European sub-group that linguists call “Baltic.”

The pagan Lithuanians were bellicose and, like their Scandinavian neighbors, prone to make their livelihood by raiding and collecting protection tribute from less warlike societies. The Lithuanians seldom had a king, but were loosely ruled by a Grand Duke. By the end of the fourteenth century the Lithuanian network of tributary “subjects” extended almost to Moscow in the east, and south through Belarus and Ukraine. Thus did the Grand Dukes rule an empire that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Most of the Lithuanians’ subjects were Slavic-speaking, Orthodox Christians.

In 1386 Grand Duke Jogaila of Lithuania, (in Polish, he is spelled Jagiello) was approached by Polish nobles, who requested that he marry the twelve-year-old Queen Jadwiga (or Hedwig) of Poland. He would thereupon be not only Grand Duke of Lithuania but also King of Poland, a small promotion for him, but the arrangement required him to convert to Catholicism. At the same time, Jogaila received an offer from Prince Dmitri Donskoi of Moscow: Dmitri promised his daughter to Jogaila if he converted to Orthodox Christianity. Given this historic choice, Jogaila chose Jadwiga, Poland, and Roman Catholicism. Although Jogaila was duly baptized into the Catholic church before his marriage to Jadwiga in 1386, many of his Lithuanian subjects remained pagans. His was a power-seeking dynasty, which did not scruple about including pagans and Judaeans in its realm along with Christians both Catholic and Orthodox.

Thus began the Jagiellonian dynasty of Poland and Lithuania, which was to last from 1386 to the death of Sigismund II Augustus in 1572. For almost two hundred years Poland and Lithuania were tied together in a personal union: the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (when the last of the Jagiellonians died in 1572 the personal union was transformed into a constitutional republic: the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). In the late medieval period the religious diversity of the Jagiellonian realm distinguished it from all other kingdoms in Christendom.

## **Judaism in Poland and elsewhere in Slavic Europe**

An important aspect of the religious diversity of Poland and Lithuania was the inclusion and protection of a Jewish minority. It is possible that already in the reign of Mieszko I, in the tenth century, small Jewish settlements were to be found in Poland and in other Slavic-speaking lands of eastern Europe. The number and importance of Judaeans in medieval Poland are much debated topics. Some historians believe that Judaeans were an insignificant minority in Poland until the late fifteenth century, when refugees from Spain and Portugal began to arrive. More historians are persuaded that Judaism was thriving in Poland long before 1500: they believe that the Rindfleisch massacres ca. 1300 sent many Judaeans eastward from the Rhineland, and that many more followed during the Black Death hysteria that began in 1349. A more radical thesis

is that a substantial migration of Judaeans to Poland had occurred already in the tenth century, when the Judaized kingdom of the Khazars collapsed. This thesis was pioneered almost a century ago by Yitzhak Schipper and has recently received increased attention.<sup>34</sup>

The first mention of Judaeans in Poland dates from the eleventh century. By the thirteenth century a Jewish minority was clearly playing an important enough role in the economy of Polish-speaking kingdoms that rulers were careful to protect it. In 1264, at Kalisz in south central Poland, Boleslaw V (the Chaste) guaranteed a wide variety of liberties and privileges to his Jewish subjects. Boleslaw's "Kalisz Privilege," which specifies forty-six protections for Judaeans, was not unique: it is paralleled by edicts issued by other petty princes and dukes in Bohemia and Silesia (as noted above, a charter protecting Judaeans had been issued in the Duchy of Austria by Frederick the Belligerent in 1244). Although Boleslaw was not the king of all that is today Poland, he was more than a petty duke: his realm extended over several thousand square miles in the district of Wielkopolska. Boleslaw's edict was confirmed in 1334 by Casimir III, the last king in the Piast dynasty, and again by the Jagiellonian rulers of Poland and Lithuania in the fifteenth century.

The movement of Judaeans from Germany and France eastward - to Poland and other Slavic-speaking lands - began during and after the First Crusade, which inspired violence against Jewish minorities. The murder of Judaeans during the Black Death, and the complete expulsion of Judaeans from France and various German principalities, intensified the eastward flight. Except for Poland, the established religion in eastern Europe was not Catholicism. In the thirteenth and most of the fourteenth centuries Ukraine and other lands "protected" by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had no established religion. The pagan Grand Dukes welcomed Jewish immigrants, in the expectation that they would materially increase the prosperity of the duchy. The immigrants brought with them their Yiddish language, which eventually became the language of Judaeans everywhere in Slavic lands.

## **Mysticism in Orthodox Christianity**

In the Byzantine empire, and in other lands where Orthodox Christianity was the established religion, a fourteenth-century controversy centered on mystical practices that had for some time been common in Orthodox monasteries. The practices are conventionally lumped together under the name, Hesychasm.<sup>35</sup> The medieval Greek word *hesychasmos* was an abstract noun derived from the ancient noun *hesychia*, which meant "silence." The Hesychasts were monks who spent long hours and entire days in silence and contemplation, with rigidly controlled breathing and posture. Their goal was to reach a mystical epiphany in which they could see what they called "the Uncreated Light," and what they understood to be an aspect of God. It was especially in the several monasteries at Mt. Athos, in eastern Greece, that Hesychasm was widespread.

A mystical tradition among Orthodox monks may have originated in Late Antiquity, and may be reflected already in the writings of John Cassian (ca. 360-435). Although so early a date for Hesychasm is unlikely, some of its practices were common for many centuries before they became the subject of controversy. In the early seventh century John Climacus, abbot of the Mt. Sinai monastery, wrote his *Ladder of Paradise*, in which he stressed the importance of absolute

silence (*hesychia*) and of correct breathing if a monk hoped to reach the pinnacle of devotion.<sup>36</sup> Simeon of Constantinople (1025-1092) articulated many of the principles of Hesychasm. Throughout these centuries the monks' mysticism never encountered serious opposition.

This changed in 1339, when Barlaam of Seminara visited Mt. Athos and was angered by what he found there. Although himself an Orthodox monk, Barlaam was a native of Calabria, in the toe of Italy, where the Hesychast tradition was apparently unknown. The chief defender of Hesychasm against Barlaam's assault was Gregory Palamas (1296-1359), a leading monk at Mt. Athos and eventually archbishop of Thessaloniki. In council the Orthodox bishops gave their blessing to the Hesychast tradition, and they ordered Barlaam to desist from his opposition (in response Barlaam left the Orthodox and joined the Roman Catholic church). In the eighteenth century the Hesychast texts were gathered together by Makarios of Corinth and Nikodemos of Mt. Athos, both of whom were sainted by the Orthodox church. Their collection was a multi-volume work which they called the *Philokalia* ("Love of beauty").

### **The Dar al-Islam: Mamluk Egypt**

We have seen (end of Chapter 25) that as the Mongolians cut their swath of destruction through the Dar al-Islam, they were finally stopped - in late summer of 1260 - at Ain Jalut ("Springs of Goliath") in Syria. The general who defeated the Mongolians was Baibars, a *mamluk* or "slave" general employed by the Mamluk sultan of Egypt. The Mamluks came mostly from the northern shores of the Black Sea and their vernacular was Kipchak, which belongs to the Turkish language family. Before their enslavement most of them were Karaite Judaeans or Christian boys, but after being brought to Egypt for training as soldiers they were required to convert to Islam. Mamluk troops had served the Ayyubid sultans of Egypt for a long time, but the first Mamluk to take power for himself was Aybak, who in 1250 put an end to the Ayyubid dynasty. The pattern set by Aybak was followed by Baibars: shortly after his historic victory over the Mongolians, Baibars overthrew his overlord and declared himself the sultan of Egypt, a position which he held until his death in 1277.

Baibars' reign marked the beginning of Egyptian prominence in the Dar al-Islam. This was the result not so much of the positive achievements of Baibars and his Mamluk successors, although these were not insignificant, but of a negative fact: Egypt and the southern Levant had been spared the devastation that the Mongolians had wrought in Iraq and in much of Iran and Anatolia. From the early 1250s until 1517 one Mamluk sultan followed another in Cairo, ruling not only Egypt but also Palestine and usually most of Syria. Among the refugees from Baghdad who fled to Egypt during the Mongolian invasion were several members of the Abbasid family, and Baibars and his successors made use of these guests by appointing one or another to the position of calif. Although no actual power went with the title, the presence of an Abbasid calif in Cairo gave to the Mamluk court a certain respect that it would otherwise not have had.<sup>37</sup>

By the thirteenth century almost all Egyptians spoke Arabic in daily life, but the old liturgical languages survived in worship. In the synagogues the liturgical language was of course Hebrew, and in the churches it was Coptic, the last relic of the ancient Egyptian language. Until the crusades Christianity had been the majority religion in Egypt, but during the crusades that began to change, and the change seems to have accelerated under Mamluk rule. Many

Christians, that is, converted to Islam, perhaps because during the crusades Muslim authorities had come to regard Christians as enemies of the Dar al-Islam. Nevertheless, the Mamluk sultans continued the traditional Muslim policy of “protecting” their Dhimmi subjects. The Jewish minority under Mamluk rule was under less pressure than the Coptic and suffered less attrition, although in the Cairo Genizah documents from the Mamluk periods were not so numerous as those from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Historians are generally agreed that by the end of Mamluk rule most Egyptians were Muslims. The Jewish and Christian minorities, however, were still significant.

## **The beginnings of the Ottoman empire**

After the Mongolians’ defeat of the Seljuk sultan at Köse Dağ in 1243, and their takeover of eastern Anatolia, several Turkish tribes fled westward. The chief (*beg*, or *bey*) of one of these tribes was Ertugrul, whom the Seljuk sultan appointed as the amir of a small province at the border of the Byzantine empire in northwestern Anatolia. The Byzantine empire was still recovering from the almost fatal blow that it had received in the Fourth Crusade, and Ertugrul was able to enlarge his amirate at the expense of the Byzantines. At his death in 1281 Ertugrul’s position was inherited by his son, Osman, whose name was the Turkish equivalent of the Arabic *Uthman* and is the root of the Turkish adjective *Osmanli* and the English *Ottoman*. Osman was ambitious to become something greater than an amir: he renounced his vassalage to the Seljuk sultan (who in any case was little more than a puppet of the Mongolian Ilkhanate) and proclaimed himself an independent ruler. Before doing this he greatly strengthened himself by the recruitment of several *ghazi* brotherhoods (a *ghazi* was a warrior for Islam) that had fled from the Mongolian onslaught in central Anatolia. In 1302 Osman won a decisive victory over the Byzantine army at Nicaea (Iznik).

At Osman’s death in 1326 his son Orhan assumed his powers and took over the large city of Bursa (ancient Prusa, or Broussa, a few hours walk from the southern shore of the Sea of Marmora). By 1338 Orhan’s realm extended to the Bosphorus. Ruler now of almost all of western Anatolia, Orhan looked across the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles to the heart of what had once been a great Byzantine empire. In a diplomatic ploy, Orhan married a Byzantine princess, by whom he begat Murad, the son who eventually succeeded him. In 1354, with his base in western Anatolia now fully consolidated, Orhan took his army across the Dardanelles and at Gallipoli established the first Ottoman outpost in Europe. The Byzantine empire, much diminished in the fourteenth century, was solidly Orthodox Christian, and Orhan was careful to present himself as a strictly military and political leader with no religious agenda. Although their troops were Turkish Muslims, the Ottomans made little effort to spread Islam among their new subjects, and instead tried to win the trust of the Greek Orthodox clergy. The Ottomans also presented themselves as friends of the peasants and the lower classes, giving to the latter much of what the conquerors had seized from the imperial estates.

Ottoman expansion in Europe was mostly the work of Murad I. In 1362 Murad took the great city of Adrianople (Edirne) and made it his capital. This meant not only that what had once been the Byzantine empire was now enclosed by the Ottomans on both east and west, but also that the Ottomans were especially intent upon enlarging their empire in Europe. Murad took the title of sultan and also created an elite professional army, the Janissaries. The Janissaries (“new soldiers”)

in some ways resembled the mamluks who had served the Abbasid califs. Like the mamluks, the Janissaries were usually the sons of non-Muslim subjects. As young boys they were taken or purchased from their parents and were then raised in military compounds, where they were given an intense training in weapons and were encouraged to convert to Islam. The Janissaries were a small part of the army of Murad I and his successors, but they were the sultans' most effective and reliable troops.

In 1366 Pope Urban V called yet another crusade, this time to save Constantinople and to expel the Ottomans from Europe. The kings of Hungary, Bosnia and Serbia responded, but their efforts were poorly coordinated. The Hungarians were Catholic Christians, while the Bosnians and Serbians were Orthodox and feared their Catholic "allies" as much as they feared the Ottomans. Even the Orthodox Christians were hardly united against Murad. The Serbians had recently become a great power in eastern Europe, Stefan Dušan (1331-1346) having created an empire that stretched from the Danube to central Greece. Because of their imperial aspirations the Serbian kings were energetically opposed by the Palaeologus dynasty in Constantinople, and the Palaeologi seem to have given some assistance to Murad.

After an initial success against Murad, the crusaders were driven back and their coalition collapsed. Murad proceeded to take over Thessaloniki and the rest of Macedonia and then pushed northward across the Balkan mountains. In 1371 the ruler of Bulgaria became an Ottoman vassal. Murad's last victory came on June 28 of 1389, when he defeated the Serbian army of Prince Lazar in what came to be called the Battle of the Blackbirds' Field, near Kosovo. Lazar and many Serbian nobles perished in the battle. Although he was the victor, Murad was murdered in the battle's aftermath, stabbed to death by a Serbian who pretended to be a defector with important information for the sultan. But the victory at Kosovo essentially established the Ottomans as the principal power in the Balkan peninsula, and the short-lived Serbian empire came to an end.

### **Mehmed II "the Conqueror," and Bayezid II (1451-1512)**

Ottoman expansion was temporarily halted when the Mongolians, under Timur the Lame, invaded central Anatolia and defeated and captured Sultan Bayezid I in the Battle of Ankara (1402). Under Mehmed II "the Conqueror" (1451-1481) Ottoman expansion resumed. One of the greatest sultans of this long-lasting dynasty, Mehmed II was only twenty-one when he besieged and took Constantinople. The taking of Constantinople had been a Muslim ambition since the seventh century, and in spring of 1453 Mehmed accomplished it after a two-month siege. What made it possible was the array of cannon that the Ottomans had acquired.<sup>38</sup> When the besiegers broke through the breached wall, on May 29 of 1453, the city suffered far less damage than it had when the troops of the Fourth Crusade broke into the city in 1204. Because Mehmed had long planned to move his capital from Edirne to Constantinople he ordered his officers to secure the great structures of the city. The splendid church of Haghia Sophia was immediately converted into a mosque (it remained a mosque until 1932, when Atatürk made it a museum). Once ensconced as ruler of Constantinople Mehmed took the additional title, "Emperor of Rome."

In Anatolia Mehmed pushed his empire far to the east. After annexing a series of small Turkish beyliks and Mongolian khanates, in 1461 Mehmed put an end to the "Empire of Trebizond"

(the last of the rump Byzantine states). From Trebizond his armies went south and in 1473 defeated the Turkoman rulers of Armenia, extending the Ottoman empire as far as Erzincan (Erzinjan), on the upper Euphrates.

Mehmed's primary focus after taking Constantinople was on Europe, beginning with Greece and the Aegean islands. As noted above, the Ottomans had taken Thessaloniki under Murad I. Although they lost it in 1403, during the chaos following the defeat by Timur the Lame, in 1430 they besieged the city and re-took it, pillaging and burning much of it. In order to escape that fate for their lands many of the local authorities in central and southern Greece declared themselves tributary vassals of the Ottomans. When first he assumed the sultanate Mehmed II was content to maintain such vassalage, but in 1456 he decided to take direct control of Greece and without much ado abolished the Duchy of Athens. In 1460 he breached a wall at the Corinthian Isthmus and entered the Morea (Peloponnesos), which had most recently been governed by princes of the Palaeologi dynasty. Thomas Palaeologus fled, and one by one the commanders of fortified places surrendered to the Ottomans. Thus began the Ottoman domination of Greece, which was to last for almost four hundred years.

In the Balkans Mehmed marched first upon Bosnia, which he subdued quickly, many of the Bosnians collaborating with him. Next he reduced Albania, and so gained a frontier on the Adriatic. This put Mehmed at loggerheads with the Venetians, who had heretofore dominated the Adriatic. Mehmed imposed a settlement on the Venetians and in 1480 his fleet made a surprise landing on the coast of southeastern Italy, seizing the fortress of Otranto on the heel of the Italian boot. Here, however, his ambitions were thwarted: Pope Sixtus IV led a great coalition to defeat the Turkish forces and evict them from Italy.

In May of 1481 Mehmed II suddenly took ill and died. Two of his sons battled for the throne and the victor was Bayezid II (1481-1512). Bayezid tried with limited success to extend the Ottoman empire into the Peloponnesos, most of which remained under Venetian control. He is remembered mainly for his invitation to the Jewish Sephardim to settle in his empire, when in 1492 they were expelled from Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella. Bayezid settled the immigrants in the Jewish quarter of the larger towns and cities of the Ottoman empire, most of which were at that time predominantly Christian. In at least one Ottoman city, however, the exiles were a majority. This was Thessaloniki (Selanik, in Turkish), which had been severely depleted earlier in the fifteenth century. In the 1490s Sephardic immigrants rebuilt the city and for the next four hundred years "Selanik" was predominantly Jewish and one of the leading cities of the Ottoman empire.<sup>39</sup>

## **Autocracy and brutality in the Ottoman empire**

The Turkish-speaking horsemen who subdued most of Anatolia in the eleventh century were part of the broad constellation of nomadic societies that stretched across the Eurasian steppe, from eastern Europe to western China. The typical social organization of these nomadic societies was tribal, but from time to time a military crisis or unusual ambition led several tribes to amalgamate and create a chiefdom. Whereas a tribe had no ruler, and was in some sense egalitarian and even "democratic," for military purposes the chiefdom concentrated power in the hands of a single man. If it was remarkably successful a chiefdom quickly became hereditary, and in military and political matters its power was virtually absolute. Although the chief was not a god, the nomads whom he

led gave him unquestioning obedience and were honored to die for him. Such was the position of Alp Arslan, great-grandson of Seljuk, when in 1071 he led his Turkish warriors to victory over the Byzantines at Manzikert. Other historical exemplars of this absolute personal rule were Attila in the fifth century and Chingis Khan and the other Mongolian khans in the thirteenth century. At the very beginning of nomadic society the immense kurgan burials at Pazyryk and Arzhan, on the northern slopes of the Altai mountains, show the same devotion of the nomadic warriors to their leader. When they buried their chief in the great kurgan known as Arzhan 1, erected in the late ninth or the eighth century BC, his subjects stocked the kurgan with treasures of gold and bronze. So that their lord would have companions in the Underworld the warriors slaughtered and placed in burial chambers at least a hundred and fifty of their finest horses, all buried with splendid accouterments, and sixteen men and women.

The Ottoman sultanate retained much of the primitive autocracy of the nomadic chiefdom. For almost six hundred years power passed from one generation to the next in the dynasty founded by Osman, and for most of this time the loyalty of the troops was firm, the troops and the dynasty being thoroughly interdependent. Although hereditary, power was not passed from one sultan to the next in an orderly fashion. All of a sultan's legitimate sons were eligible to succeed him, and during his lifetime all except the most unsuitable were given positions of responsibility. While he was still a boy a prince would be sent out, with his mother and a supporting staff, to act as the *bey* of a *sanjak* (province). When the sultan died, the Grand Vizier sent out from Constantinople a notice to each of the legitimate sons in their sanjaks, and a military free-for-all ensued. The winner was finally acclaimed as sultan and the losers were put to death. This "succession by fratricide" hardly violated family affections, because among the Ottomans a family in the modern sense of the word scarcely existed.

It was the sultan's prerogative to keep a huge harem. Most of the women in the harem came from the frontiers of the empire, where the sultan's governors were on the look-out for beautiful Christian and Jewish girls or women whom they might enslave or purchase and send as presents to their chief. Of the hundreds of women in a sultan's harem, most never rose above the status of concubine. Occasionally, however, a concubine pleased the sultan sufficiently that she was promoted to the status of *kadin*, which could be loosely translated as "wife." Because Muslim law allowed a man to have no more than four wives at any one time, the sultan regularly divorced a *kadin* after she bore him a son. Once the son reached boyhood he and his mother would be sent to a province, over which the child was nominally the *bey* while learning from his advisors the arts of governing, administration, and war. The sultan filled the position of his former *kadin* by promoting another favorite concubine from the *seraglio*. At the sultan's death, the woman whose son was able to make himself sultan rose to the pinnacle of prestige: she returned to the Topkapi palace as the new sultan's mother - the *valide sultan* - and thereafter presided over her son's harem and much else in the palace.

The sultan's immediate assistants were eunuchs. Castration of slave-boys for royal or imperial service, and in Christendom for religious and musical careers, was not uncommon in much of Eurasia. The Byzantine emperors had employed eunuchs both in administration and in their domestic affairs. Removed from the family of his birth, and unable to form one of his own, for almost four thousand years a eunuch was considered a king's "perfect servant."<sup>40</sup> As successors to

the Byzantine emperors, the Ottomans added to the eunuchs' responsibilities various tasks within the harem. Like the slave-girls who were purchased for the harem, the sultan's eunuchs generally came from newly-conquered Christian populations, where slave-boys could be purchased or requisitioned. Every year dozens of these boys were purchased and castrated, with the specific intention that they should become imperial servants. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Topkapi palace was staffed by several hundred eunuchs. Although eventually the institution of eunuchry lost much of its importance, vestiges of it remained almost to the end of the Ottoman empire.

Yet another brutal institution in the Ottoman empire was the *devshirmeh*. Every year, Christian populations in newly conquered lands were required to provide for the sultan a stipulated number of boys - at least twelve years of age, and free rather than slave - for the *devshirmeh*. The boys selected were kept by the empire not for a few years but for life. They were not castrated, and instead were destined - after a long period of training and education - for elite military service. The *devshirmeh* supplied, for example, most of the recruits for the Janissaries. During their training *devshirmeh* boys were allowed or even encouraged to convert to Islam, but Muslim boys were not eligible to enter the *devshirmeh*: the sultan's objective was to have a steady stream of young men who had no family or community and would therefore be devoted entirely to himself. Although the practice of *devshirmeh* was resented by the Ottomans' Christian subjects, its discontinuance in the seventeenth century was mostly the result of Muslim complaints: many Turkish families were envious of the military careers that the sultans had traditionally reserved for graduates of the *devshirmeh*.

### **Ottoman religious policies: the millets**

Because the main purpose of the Ottoman empire was to enhance the sultanate, it is not surprising that the sultan's policies on religious matters had the same objective. They were not, that is, designed to extend or strengthen Islam, but instead aimed to make all of the sultan's subjects - most of whom were not Muslim - acquiesce in his rule. In contrast to the barbarous practices described above, Ottoman religious policies seem remarkably enlightened and tolerant to the modern reader. Immediately upon taking Constantinople Mehmed II elevated to the city's patriarchate, a position that had been vacant for three years, a well-respected philosopher and judge named Georgios Scholarios. As patriarch, Georgios took the revered name of Gennadios (II), and assumed responsibility for overseeing the millions of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman empire. Eight years later Mehmed brought to Constantinople Joachim, the *Katholikos* of the Armenians' Gregorian church, and invested him with the same patriarchal authority and responsibility. For his Jewish subjects Mehmed relied first of all upon Moses Capsali, the leading rabbi of Constantinople. For the Muslims, most of them Sunnis, Mehmed himself took responsibility: in addition to his other titles he was the calif of the Dar al-Islam, the successor of the Prophet.

Thus the Ottoman empire was an amalgam of religious communities, of which five were paramount: the Muslim, the Greek (for all Orthodox Christians, regardless of their language), the Armenian (for all Monophysite Christians, again regardless of language), the rabbinic Jewish, and the Karaite Jewish. Over time each of these religious communities came to be known as a *millét*. The word was a Turkicized form of the Arabic noun *millāh* ("religion"). As the empire grew to include people of still other religions, Mehmed and his successors added more millets: for Roman



Catholics, for Protestants, for the Druze in the Levant, for Zoroastrians in Iran, and even for the Yazidi in the mountains of Kurdistan (this millet was headed by an “amir of the Kurds”).

Each of the millets enjoyed considerable autonomy. The millet collected taxes from its members and forwarded the revenue to the Sublime Porte, and when imperial funds were dispensed they were dispensed to the millet. It was the responsibility of each millet to adjudicate cases at law for all of its members, and when plaintiff and defendant belonged to different millets the case was judged in the plaintiff’s millet (except that all cases involving a Muslim were judged according to Sharia law).

It is important to remark that Mehmed II set up no millet for Shiite Muslims or for any other Muslim sect: all Muslims were included in a single Muslim community. This was especially resented by Shiites, who perceived the millet system as an attempt by the Ottoman government to stifle their tradition in favor of the dominant Sunnis. The discontent became significant when, in 1502, Ismail I made himself ruler of Iran. Ismail, whose own background was Turkish, was the sheikh of the Safavids, an unusually militant Sufi order. Once in power, Ismail decreed that Shiah Islam was the religion of his realm, and over the next two hundred years the Safavids succeeded in bringing most Iranians into the Shiite sect. As a result, in the wars that the Ottomans fought against the Safavids in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the sympathies of the Shiite minority in the Ottoman empire were often with the Safavids.

Mehmed’s and Bayezid’s administration was nevertheless remarkable for its formal accommodation of various religious traditions within a single state. Muslim califs had traditionally protected the *ahl al-dhimmah* and had seldom interfered with their religious practices, but the Ottoman sultans went further by institutionalizing the relationship of the sultan to his non-Muslim subjects. This was made especially visible in the investiture ceremony at which, for example, the sultan himself conferred upon the patriarch of Constantinople, leader of “the Rum millet,” the mantle and crozier (shepherd’s staff) symbolic of the Orthodox ecclesiastical office. In the fifteenth century a ruler’s formal and public respect for “other” religions was unprecedented, and in Christendom it would remain a rarity until the eighteenth century.

Although the millet system was not the “separation of church and state” that is characteristic of modern civilization it did represent a step toward the secular state. The virtues and limitations of the millet system have been assessed by Bernard Lewis:

Some modern apologists, in justly praising the religious tolerance of traditional Islamic regimes, have described it as a system of equal rights. It was not, and such equality would indeed have been seen at the time not as a merit but as a dereliction of duty. In refusing equality to the unbeliever, the Islamic state was following the common practice of religions in power. Where it differed from most others was in according to these unbelievers a recognized status in society, defined and maintained by Holy Law, and accepted by the mass of Muslim populations. This was not equal status, but it did provide a level of toleration which in states guided by other dispensations was not achieved until religion was disestablished or, at the very least, deprived of much of its influence in public affairs.<sup>41</sup>

The sultans wanted subjects, many of them. In order to discourage an exodus of Christians from Bosnia, Mehmed issued a *firman* (“decree”) pledging to the Franciscans that he would not disturb Christian worship in that newly conquered land. And it was for the same reason that Bayezid welcomed tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from western Europe to settle in his Ottoman empire. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century the Ottoman empire was in some ways a primitive state and it was by no means secular. But the sultans’ goals were essentially secular and in pursuing them Mehmed and his successors encouraged a religious pluralism diametrically opposite to the Catholic monolith sought by many European kings and realized in Spain by Ferdinand and Isabella. The Ottomans’ religious policies helped to make their empire for a long time the strongest state in western Eurasia.

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1. Mark 10:17-27 (OSB); cf. Matthew 19:16-26 and Luke 18:18-27.

2. Matthew 25:31-46. The discourse was given a spiritual interpretation in Clement of Alexandria’s tract, *Who is the rich man who will be saved?* (τις ὁ σοζούμενος πλούσιος). What we are to give to the poor, according to Clement, is nothing so mundane as money or actual food and clothing: what Jesus had in mind was spiritual nourishment.

3. On the medieval Church’s wealth see Ekelund *et al.* 1996.

4. The medieval “Roman Empire” - or from the sixteenth century onward usually the “Holy Roman Empire” - was a long-lived institution, more ideal and honorific than real. Although Charlemagne journeyed to Rome in 800 and on Christmas day was crowned by the pope as Emperor of Rome, this was an ad hoc and not yet an institutional position. The institutionalizing of the title, “Emperor of Rome,” began only with Otto I, or Otto the Great, who was so crowned in 962 after having been ruler of Saxony since 936. The “emperors” were elected by the regional rulers and archbishops of Germany, who were therefore known as “electors”. After Otto, it was expected that a powerful German duke would be crowned first as “King of Germany” and subsequently as “Emperor of Rome.” France, England and Spain were normally outside the so-called empire, which was primarily a German tradition. It lasted formally until Napoleon defeated the Habsburger Francis II at Austerlitz (December 2, 1804) and in 1806 forced him to abdicate and to abolish his “Roman” empire. After that, Francis was content to be the emperor of the Austrian empire.

5. Raia Prokhovnik, *Spinoza and Republicanism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

6. Gershom Scholem’s fields of study were Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah, which he saw as two different traditions. Scholem’s first book, on the *Sefer ha-bahir*, was written in German and published in 1923. Other books in Hebrew and German followed in the 1920s and 1930s. Scholem’s *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941) was his first book in the English language, and presented the lectures he had given in New York on the subject. Here he began his survey with Enoch and other pseudepigraphical books. Scholem’s *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), subsequently translated into several languages, described Kabbalah as a medieval

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novelty, which arose in Spain as a reaction against mainstream Jewish philosophy. In effect, Gershom Scholem pioneered a new academic discipline. A famous anecdote relates that once at a public lecture he was introduced with the deft compliment, “Nonsense is nonsense, but the history of nonsense is scholarship.”

7. A less fortunate Kabbalah text, the *Shiur Komah*, did not escape the Rambam’s critical eye: “Maimonides ... condemned the work outright, declaring it to be a forgery” (Epstein 1959, p. 226).

8. The Torah includes 613 commandments, for example, because there are 613 letters in the Ten Commandments. And all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet appear in the Ten Commandments, with the exception of the letter *teth*, which therefore stands for “belly.”

9. A new and superior English translation of the *Zohar* is now becoming available, thanks to the financial support of Margot Pritzker and the editorial supervision of Daniel Matt. Three volumes (of a projected twelve) have already been published. Matt 2004 = Daniel C. Matt, ed., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vols. 1-3 (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004).

10. Section 1a of the *Zohar*, p. 1 of vol. I in Matt 2004.

11. See Matt 2004, vol. I, p. xviii: “It was composed in Castile mostly in Aramaic, a language no longer spoken in medieval Spain. The author(s) concocted a unique blend of Aramaic and traditional sources, especially the Babylonian Talmud and *Targum Onkelos*.” Matt also (p. xix) describes the effect of the language: “Through the centuries, the potency of the *Zohar*’s language has mesmerized even those who could not plumb its secrets. While kabbalists delved deeply, the uninitiated chanted the lyrical Aramaic, often unaware of its literal meaning.”

12. Section 83a of the *Zohar*.

13. Halperin 1997, p. 288.

14. For a general study of ecstatic Kabbalah see Idel 1988b. On the influence of Sufism on the disciples of Abulafia see Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 14.

15. The project, carried out jointly by the Institut für Judaistik at the Freie Universität in Berlin and the Istituto Nazionale di Studi del Rinascimento in Florence, is making available the Latin texts along with an English translation, a critical edition of the Hebrew original from which Raimundo Moncada worked, and an introduction. The first two volumes appeared in 2004 and 2005, and five more volumes have been scheduled for publication. The general editor of the volumes is Giulio Busi.

16. Maimonides included a belief in resurrection in his “Thirteen Principles” of Judaism, but dispensed with it in a single sentence: “The thirteenth principle of faith is the resurrection of the dead, and we have already explained it.” In his writings he frequently referred to the immortality of the soul, and castigated belief in an eschatological resurrection of bodies as “foolishness.”

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17. The Charter of the Jews of the Duchy of Austria, issued in 1244 by Frederick the Belligerent, stipulated the upper limit of interest that could be charged on a loan: “Likewise we decree that Jews shall indeed receive only eight dinars a week interest on the talent.” For the document see Marcus 1938, no. 6, p. 32. Marcus comments on the interest rate: “This was 173.33 per cent annual interest. Such a high rate was not unusual because of the insecurity of the times.”
  18. In Marcus 1938 this is document no. 25 (pp. 127-30), a translation from the Hebrew *Book of Historical Records* written by Ephraim ben Jacob, a twelfth-century poet and Talmudist.
  19. Malkiel 1993 pointed out that five late medieval manuscripts of the Passover *haggadah* include among their illustrations a representation of the leprous Pharaoh killing Israelite infants.
  20. The episode was described in the *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, a chronicle written by Rigord, a monk and a contemporary of the events.
  21. Marcus 1938, no. 27, p. 138.
  22. The entire subject has now been masterfully explored by Schäfer 2007.
  23. Schäfer 2007, p. 97.
  24. The rabbis with whom this tradition originated were not well informed about Judaeon history and erroneously supposed that Jerusalem and Judaea had once been ruled by a Queen Helene. The rabbis were misled because just outside Jerusalem stood the tomb of a first-century queen named Helene. Although she chose to be buried in Jerusalem, during her lifetime she had ruled not Judaea but the remote land of Adiabene, east of the Tigris.
  25. The standard translations and the printed editions of the Talmud identify the third sinner anonymously as one of “the sinners of Israel,” but three manuscripts identify him as *Yeshu* or as *Yeshu ha-notzri*. The text is found in BT, Tractate *Gittin*, Folio 56b-57a. On this see Schäfer 2007, pp. 84-85, and endnote 11 on p. 173.
  26. Stow 1992, pp. 146-47 and 251-59.
  27. Marcus 1938, no. 29, pp. 145-49.
  28. Translation (and gloss) from Marcus 1938, no. 29, p. 146.
  29. Few copies of the *Pugio fidei* were made, and for two hundred years the text was lost. Manuscripts were discovered early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the first printed edition appeared in Paris in 1651. Another followed at Leipzig in 1687.
  30. Stow 1992, p. 216.
  31. See Herlihy 1995 and especially Scott and Duncan 2001.
  32. See Dols 1977.

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33. According to Paul Halsall, the editor and translator of this excerpt, the chronicler Jacob von Königshofen “incorporated considerable material from his Strasbourg predecessor, F. Closener, who was probably an eyewitness of the tragedy.” The account is included in the Jewish History Sourcebook, a subset of the Internet Medieval Sourcebook, edited and maintained by Halsall at Fordham University’s Center for Medieval Studies, and located at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>

34. Yitzhak Schipper, who died in the Holocaust in 1943, was one of the first to argue that Judaism in Poland began with the arrival of Jewish refugees after the Khazar khaganate was abolished by the Kievan Rus. Some of Schipper’s arguments were flimsy, but others were well supported. Because Schipper wrote in Polish, for decades his ideas were scarcely known in the western Europe and North America. On this see Jacob Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews in Medieval Poland - the Contribution of Yitzhak Schipper* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984). Litman’s book is mostly a summary of Schipper’s vast output, and is intended to alert scholars who do not read Polish to the range and quality of Schipper’s work.

35. On Hesychasm see Meyendorff 1983, pp. 70-78.

36. Meyendorff 1983, pp. 70-71.

37. Ochsenwald and Fisher 2004, p. 138.

38. When in 1396 the Ottomans first besieged Constantinople they did not yet have cannon, and their siege was foiled by the cannon of the Byzantine defenders.

39. In 1912, during the First Balkan War, the Ottomans surrendered the city to Greece, and an influx of Greek nationals began. A large Jewish population remained, however, until Thessaloniki fell to the German army in 1941. As the Nazis implemented their “final solution” of what they called *die Judenfrage*, they sent at least 50,000 Judaeans from Thessaloniki to their deaths at Auschwitz and other concentration camps.

40. On this see Ringrose 2003.

41. Lewis 1997, p. 321.