GLORY WITHOUT END: RAMON LLULL AND RELIGIOUS INTERACTION IN THIRTEENTH-CENTURY SPAIN

A Senior Thesis

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"Since for a long time we have had dealings with unbelievers and have heard their false opinions and errors; and in order that they may give praise to our lord God and enter the path of eternal salvation, I, who am blameworthy, despicable, poor, sinful, scorned by others, unworthy of having my name affixed to this book or any other, following the manner of the Arabic *Book of the Gentile*, wish to exert myself in the utmost—trusting in the help of the Most High—in finding a new method and new reasons by which those in error might be shown the path to glory without end and the means of avoiding infinite suffering."

—Ramon Llull, *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*

Introduction:

A Complex Problem

In Naples in 1503, a learned Jewish aristocrat documented his sorrow in a poem to his son Isaac, then twelve years old and living in Portugal. Judah Abravanel, serving as physician to the Spanish Viceroy in Naples and himself son of the luminous biblical commentator Don Isaac Abravanel, bewailed in his Hebrew poem the exile of his people from Spain, the wickedness of the Portuguese king who forced the conversion of his young son, and the knowledge that he was unlikely to ever see his son again. He wrote,

> [Time] did not stop at whirling me around,
> exiling me while my days were green ,
> sending me stumbling, drunk, to roam the world,
> spinning me dizzy around its edge—
> so that I've spent two decades on the move
> ...I have no rest from constant thinking, planning—
> and never a moment's peace for all my plans.[1]

Judah's father Isaac had been a courtier and financier to king Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, rulers of the newly united kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, until in 1492 seemingly without warning, the monarchs issued the famous Charter of Expulsion of the Jews, condemning to exile the extensive and deeply rooted Sephardic Jewry. The Abravanel family, despite having close ties to Ferdinand, was forced to leave along with at least one hundred thousand others, and Judah sent his still-nursing infant son Isaac to Portugal for protection. His scheme backfired, however, and the Portuguese king held Isaac hostage, forcing the conversion of the boy to Christianity, leaving Judah to agonize in self-effacement:

> I rage, but only at myself;
> There's no one else but me to bear the blame.
> I chased him from mere troubles into a trap,

[1] Judah Abravanel, "Judah Abravanel, Poem to His Son," trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin, in *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim and Jewish Sources*, ed. Olivia Remie Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 357-358.

I drove him from mere sparks into a flame.[2]

The "flame" of which Judah speaks is his son's forced conversion and new Christian name, and the "sparks" were his fear of danger on the uncertain road ahead that would carry him into exile. Clearly this unwilling conversion weighed heavy on Judah's mind, but in his poem one also picks up on a note of incredulity, a shock that makes his calamities felt more acutely. Judah's family was a respected and wealthy member of the Castilian aristocracy, part of a long history of religious diversity on the Iberian peninsula, diversity contributing to a considerably rich cultural output along with the source of much consternation and violence through centuries of changing rulership. While Judah's family would never have achieved equal social footing with any Christian in Iberian society, they nevertheless were accepted members of a social and political framework which had lasted for centuries. How could they now be facing the hardships of forced conversion and complete social rejection?

Abravanel's situation is a dramatic example of the peculiar and contradictory situation in which the religious minority communities of Spain, those of the Jews and the Muslims, found themselves as part of the high and late medieval Iberian landscape. Non-Christian communities occupied a paradoxical social niche in which they were theologically deviant, grudgingly accepted as permanent communities in Western Christendom, yet expected to occupy demarcated boundaries of social, political and economic functions. These boundaries, as Abravanel was well aware, were not clearly defined, and it may have seemed nonsensical to attempt to delineate with precision the reasons why the Jews and Muslims periodically experienced episodes of persecution or violence, or conversely, the reasons why members of these minorities sometimes were able to transgress social boundaries and occupy positions in

[2] Abravanel, "Judah Abravanel, Poem to His Son," 360.

government that were technically prohibited to them, such as Abravanel's father in the court of Ferdinand. Were there indeed two realities in these societies, one that was codified, and the other understood but left unspoken? Were members of this society living in a duality, a constant tension between realities?

The answers to these questions are elusive, and have inspired a prolific scholarly conversation. Two narratives dominate nonspecialist historical literature about the nature of multireligious society in Medieval Spain. Either medieval Iberia represented relative acceptance and productive coexistence between Muslims, Jews and Christians, or it was an oppressive hierarchical society, with religious minorities subject to second-class status. Both of these perspectives are oversimplifications of a nuanced subject, and fail to account for the constantly changing political scene of the peninsula from the year 711, the year of the Muslim invasion, until 1492, the time of the destruction of the Muslim kingdom of Granada and the completion of *reconquista*. The peninsular kingdoms in the Middle Ages compel the interest of nonspecialists, and lead historians to the oft-repeated saying that "*España es diferente*" (from the rest of Europe). In part Spanish exceptionalism proceeds from the continued Arab influence during this time, and the presence of large populations of Muslims and Jews who lived in Spain, both of which factors are without comparison in other Latin European societies. The apparent divergence of Spain from other European societies in the Middle Ages gave rise in the twentieth century to the term *convivencia* ("living together" or "getting along") to describe it. Although the inventor of the term, historian Américo Castro, explored *convivencia* as a possible explanation for Spain's twentieth-century isolation from Europe, the term has since evolved beyond the context of Spanish identity and into a historiographical concept of multicultural interaction.[3] Specialist

[3] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "*Convivencia* in Medieval Spain: A Brief History of an Idea," in *Religion Compass*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (December 2008), 72-85, accessed April 10 ,2017, doi: 10.1111/j.1749.

scholars have offered numerous opinions on the character of *convivencia*, the nature and motivation of interactions between members of the three faiths; this paper will explore several of these viewpoints, and respond to the academic discussion concerning the status of religious minorities.

Indeed, *convivencia* is not a topic that offers a decisive resolution. Questions about the dominance of tolerance and acceptance in the Middle Ages are difficult to answer, because no clear narrative supports the dominance of either. In part this difficulty is due to the fact that the medieval worldview is drastically different from the modern. Moderns, as heirs to the Enlightenment ideals of individualistic conceptions of tolerance, view any codified social demarcation as evidence of persecution, since it restricts an individual's social potentiality. The notion of any kind of social determinism resulting from an involuntarily group identity is distasteful, since modern liberal notions hold that all people should be at birth free to choose their place in society. Medievals, however, had no such concept of absolute individualistic determinism. For them, the world was imbued with a purpose, which was indicated by the revelation of divine history, although that history does not make clear what that purpose is. As part of the order of the created world, from the medieval perspective, people are divided into different groups, communities which each have an appointed place in society. Roles in communities rather than personal freedoms framed the lens through which they saw civilization. Medieval Christians had no notion that assigning a place to a particular community constitutes an unfair restriction of personal freedom, since they understood that each community has a role to fulfill.

For this view to superimpose an interpretive duality of tolerance and intolerance on medieval societies is an anachronistic understanding of medieval people who did not think about

their actions in this way. Rather, a more accurate way to frame an investigation into acceptance and persecution is to ask not "how tolerant were medieval societies?" but "what were the perceived roles of each community in these societies?" This framework offers a scale among societies which share the same belief in the role of certain communities as to the toleration of practices among those communities. For example, if it were commonly accepted that Jews were allowed to follow their own rituals without attempting to influence the beliefs of Christians, opinions might fluctuate as to what constituted unreasonable influence. Questions of tolerance and intolerance then become useful in discussion of medieval Europe, but only inside the recognition of a larger teleological framework.

Adding a further layer to this discussion is the awareness that classification of a community as Jewish or Muslim does not indicate that the role of each community is solely religious. Jews and Muslims occupied social, economic and political functions in Christian societies that existed outside of religious demarcations. For example, Jews in Europe often had occupations as moneylenders, as this occupation was considered beneath the dignity of Christians. Then again, in Iberian societies, Jews were often known for their skills in medicine. James I, king of Aragon for much of the thirteenth century, imposed taxes on conquered Muslim cities in return for protection and minimal interference with governance. In short, multireligious societies were built around complex social dynamics in which different religious groups also performed certain social functions.

Spain Enters Europe

In the thirteenth century there was no dominant power in the Mediterranean. Long gone were the days of Frankish or Byzantine dominance in the lands of the former Roman Empire, and political, economic and cultural influence was scattered among regional hegemons. In Europe,

the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire scattered Germany and northern Italy into numerous petty kingdoms, while the simultaneous rise of efficient and well-organized kingdoms in France and England shifted the political epicenter westward. In the east, the siege of Constantinople by the Venetian-led fourth Crusade culimanted in 1204 with the destructive sack of the city, leaving the Byzantine Empire in a weakened state from which it would never fully recover. Neither the Latin colonial empire of Constantinople nor the Egyptian Sultanate could muster the strength to overpower the other, and the onslaught of the Mongol invasions ensured that power in the Mediterranean would no longer be centered in the East.

In the far west of the Mediterranean, the Iberian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon, which had long existed as peripheries in the economic and political spheres of Latin Europe, were emerging as the dominant powers on the peninsula, and were quickly absorbing territories of their Christian and Muslim neighbors. The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 broke the back of the mighty Almohad empire, leaving al-Andalus in a power vacuum into which the Christian kingdoms would expand. With the conquest of Seville in 1248 by Ferdinand III of Castile, the peninsula settled into a demarcation that would last for the next two hundred and fifty years. The kingdom of Castile occupied the central highlands, the northwest regions, and the arid plains in the south; Aragon constituted most of upland Spain to the Pyrenees, and the Catalonian coastal regions, as well as the Balearic Islands. These two kingdoms dominated the political, military, and economic scene of Iberia, and exerted considerable influence in Mediterranean trade and politics.[4]

[4] Robert I. Burns, “Castles of Intellect, Castles of Force: The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror," in *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror*, ed. Robert I. Burns, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), accessed February 8, 2010, http://libro.uca.edu/worlds/worlds.htm.

The chaotic situation of the twelfth-century Mediterranean and the growing power of Castile and Aragon meant that they were no longer societies that existed on the margins of European civilization. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they were important players in the sphere of western Christendom, and likewise were influenced by the larger European culture as they interacted with political, economic and intellectual spheres. For this reason I am drawn to focus my investigation into Christian interactions with communities of religious minorities in this time period, as it reflects both the circumstances endemic to Spain and the trends that were impacting Western European society as a whole. One particularly edifying trend that permeated Spain and was subsequently imbued with a distinctly Spanish character is that of religious polemical literature. Polemic is the practice of attacking other beliefs, through philosophy or rhetoric or otherwise. Its counterpart, apologetic, is the means of defending one's own beliefs. In religion, polemics are often written as an attempt to discredit rival religions or rival interpretations of scripture by exposing either logical fallacy or discordance with revealed Truth. Apologetics in religion can either prove central beliefs throughs similar means, or deconstruct the polemical arguments against one's assertions. The two are closely related, as polemical literature can often have apologetical purposes.

In particular I focus on a work entitled *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men* (in this paper referred to as *Book of the Gentile,* or simply *Gentile*) by Ramon Llull, a Catalan luminary from the kingdom of Aragon. As polemical literature gives an illumination of both particularly Spanish and generally European characteristics, Ramon Llull is equally a figure that belongs to both classifications. Raised on the island of Mallorca, with regular exposure to Jews and Muslims, Llull was deeply concerned with the fight of Christendom against Islam, and traveled widely in his lifetime to missionize among the Arabs and to spread his philosophical

writings among European intellectual circles. He composed over two hundred literary works in his lifetime, all in his native Catalan, some novels, others concerning theology, philosophy or logic. The *Book of the Gentile* is a short work, composed probably between the years 1272 and 1276, which takes the form of an imagined theological debate between a Christian, Muslim and Jewish philosopher. A close look at the arguments presented in *Gentile* exposes the attitude of Llull, a Christian, towards the two religious minorities in European society, and the complications of both their assigned status in Christian doctrine, and the interactions that took place on the ground.

I argue that, according to Ramon Llull, Jews and Muslims were generally seen as communities which had nearly accepted the Faith, but were mired in theological error. In Llull's time there was a growing belief that the use of coercion to discredit and convert the dissenting communities was both justified and necessary, moving away from the policy of accepting those communities as deviants within a social framework. This shift in doctrine-driven policy created tension between theory and practice, as Muslims and Jews maintained assigned religious identities that were intricately woven in with social and political functions. These functions were all the more complex in Iberia, where the conquering Christian societies inherited from their Islamic predecessors a cosmopolitan urban economy comprised of members of all three faiths, further complicating their engagement with the people of other Abrahamic faiths.

The first chapter of this paper will outline the life, purpose and method of Ramon Llull, showing why he is a superb figure to give us insight into the European and Iberian trends concerning religious minorities in the thirteenth century. The second chapter will address the first part of the thesis, looking carefully at the text of the *Book of the Gentile* to show that Jews and Muslims are seen among intellectuals during this time as groups who accept revelation but who

cling to misguided interpretation. Jews and Muslims were understood to not have nefarious intentions, as do heretics, and are certainly not as dangerous to Christians as heretics, but rather are misled through ignorance, and so can be saved by careful reasoning.

The third chapter will delve into the doctrinal conceptions of the Jews by Christians since the time of Augustine, and of Muslims after they appeared on the European scene. The main assertion here is that the apparent preoccupation with the status of Jews and Muslims in the thirteenth century indicates that there was uncertainty as to what their status should be. I believe that after the Muslim invasions of the seventh and eighth centuries, religious minorities became a much larger concern for Christian societies than they had been previously. Before the appearance of Islam, the role of non-Christians was largely set, mostly along the lines of the roles articulated by St. Augustine. But the appearance of a new group that was unable to be classified with Augustine's categories led to a renewed debate as to what place minority communities occupied. As well, an intellectual revival in Europe in the twelfth century brought about a revived interest in the ability to convince the Jews of their theological errors. The combination of these two factors resulted in an increasingly hostile church attitude toward the role of Jews and Muslims in European societies, evidenced by aggressive papal decrees and forced sermon attendance.

The fourth chapter addresses the tensions that were were brought to light by these doctrinal debates. Many secular leaders expressed reluctance to comply with papal decrees that restricted the roles of Jews and Muslims in their kingdoms, as they undermined the complex social interactions that had been a part of their functioning societies for several centuries.

Looming over discussions of religious interaction in Medieval Spain is the ultimate expulsion of the Jews at the dawn of the modern era, the most large-scale of all the expulsions that were promulgated by western European countries in these centuries. This paper does not,

however, attempt to give an explanation as to why the expulsion took place, but to explore the enigmatic nature of pre-modern religious societies through the work of a colorful and dynamic individual. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder if Judah Abravanel had an explanation for his situation ready at hand, or if he was as compelled to wonder at the contradictions as we are.

Chapter I:

Life, Purpose and Method of Ramon Llull

Few Mediterranean cities in the 1300s could have provided a taste of as many different cultures as Palma. A port city situated almost exactly halfway between Algiers and Barcelona, the bustling trade town served as a point of diffusion for Catalan language and culture. King James I of Aragon, given the appellation the conqueror, acquired the town as part of his conquest of the Balearics in 1235, bringing it under control of the Aragonese monarchy. But although the monarchs from the tiny kingdom in upland Spain retained their rulership, culturally and linguistically their society was dominated by much larger Catalonia. Barcelona become the cultural, administrative and economic center of Aragon, and as the kingdom expanded its dominance of sea trade, Catalan culture spread with it. In a relatively short period of time, Catalan trade came to dominate the Mediterranean, capitalizing on the weakening of Alexandria and the dissolution of political unity in the western Muslim lands. By 1300 Catalan was considered to be one of the international languages of diplomacy and trade, and Palma was a cosmopolitan town of many ethnicities, and of course, religions.[5]

Ramon Llull was born into this dynamic setting around the year 1232 or 1233. Most of his life we know about from a work entitled *vita coetanea* ("contemporary life"), an autobiography that Ramon dictated five years before his death to the monks in the Vauvert Monastery in France, who wrote down his recounting in the third person. The work begins:

> to the honor, praise, and love of our only Lord God Jesus Christ, Ramon, at the insistence of certain monks who were friends of his, recounted and allowed to be put into writing what follows concerning his conversion and penitence and other deeds of his.[6]

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[5] Burns; Anthony Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramón Llull reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6-8.
[6] Ramon Llull, *vita coetanea,* trans. Anthony Bonner, in *Doctor Illuminatus*, 11.

The account that follows begins with a vision that Llull received about the a third of the way through his life. Before that, we know from his account that he was a seneschal, or head of household, to James II, heir to the Aragonese throne. From other sources we guess that he probably belonged to a noble family, and that he also served as courtier in the court of James I, traveling extensively through Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia. Llull is mostly silent on this period of his life, only telling us that he was married with children, and he seems to have enjoyed troubadour poetry, as he was "very given to composing worthless songs and pursuits."[7] Little more is known about his early life.[8]

A turning point that was to shape the course of his unusually long career came with a vision he received one night in his bedroom while composing a song. Suddenly there appeared to him an image of Jesus, "on the cross, as if suspended in midair."[9] Alarmed, Llull ignored it, until several nights with the same experience convinced him that he must enter the service of Christ, and he decided that the best way to do this was to undertake the task of missionizing, "converting to His worship and service the Saracens who in such numbers surround the Christians on all sides."[10][11] Upon further contemplation, he decided that the execution of this task would be threefold: to devote his life to preaching to the Muslims, to write a polemical book about their theological errors, and to advocate for political support wherever he could get it in establishing monastic schools to teach Arabic and about the Muslim faith. True to his pledge, these three tasks occupied him for the rest of his life.

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[7] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 11.
[8] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 9-10.
[9] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 11.
[10] "Saracens" is a medieval term used to describe Muslims. In this paper I will use the two interchangeably.
[11] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 12.

Llull joined the Franciscan order as a tertiary, and undertook the study of Arabic, buying a slave to teach him. He spent nine years studying the language and the various subjects he would need to missionize effectively, including philosophy, dialectical argumentation, the natural sciences and the religious texts of Islam and Judaism. We know that he read the works of Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Qur'an and the Talmud, among others, and that he became familiar with many aspects of Arab culture.[12] At the end of these nine years, Llull received another vision, this time on a quiet hilltop outside of Palma. While in contemplation, he tells us, "the Lord suddenly illuminated his mind, giving him the form and method for writing the aforementioned book against the evils of the unbelievers."[13] This epiphany triggered the beginning of his *Ars*, a complex ontological system which sought to use natural laws of the universe to guide readers towards and understanding of the irrefutable truth of Christianity. The *Ars* was a project which consumed Llull's life, going through constant revision and new editions in his lifetime, and providing structures for the majority of his more than two hundred and fifty written works, including his fiction.[14] Llull wrote several books as quasi-algebraic explanations of the *Ars*, writing the first one immediately after his epiphany. Realizing the *Ars* was an esoteric subject even to other intellectuals, he cast most of his books as allegory, " in accordance with the capacities of simple people."[15]

It is worthwhile to pause for a moment to discuss the Latin word *ars*. This term translates directly into English as "Art," but carries a far more extensive definition than is today used. "Art" in the ancient or medieval sense of the word can be used broadly to mean "preoccupation" or "profession," either the *artes liberales* that were the activities of the upper classes, such as

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[12] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 15-16.
[13] Llull, *vita coetanea,* 18.
[14] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 47-49.
[15] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 18.

music, medicine, and other sciences; or the *artes illiberales*, the menial occupations of the lower classes. In medieval usage, the *artes liberales* coalesced to consist specifically of the *trivium* of rhetoric, grammar and logic, and the *quadrivium* of geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. *Ars* also carried a definition as “skill," in reference to skill in building or joining material things, or skill in the advancement and cultivation of personal and intellectual character. Thus when Ramon Llull referred to his entire logical system as his “Art," the term carried a meaning commensurate with the vast scope and purpose of his project. Not only was it a preoccupation that directed his intellectual career, but it was an enterprise created with an ultimate aim of explaining faith with reason, and bringing Christians and non-Christians alike to a greater realization of the Christian truth.

At this point in Llull's life, several political changes brought him into the larger European sphere, away from his native island of Majorca and the Iberian Peninsula. When James I died in 1276, he divided his kingdom into two sections for his sons, Peter III and James II. The Balearics were part of the area given to James. In 1282 Peter intervened in the Sicilian Vespers, a complicated rebellion that involved many foreign powers, and captured the island, usurping it from the French Angevin dynasty. France invaded Aragon in response, and was promptly driven out by Peter. James, who had sided with the French against his brother, was driven from the Balearics. Llull, who retained close ties with James II, and who was in Montpellier writing the landmark Catalan fictional account *Blanquerna* at the time of these political changes, would scarcely return to his native island until his old age, and instead use Montpellier as a base for his travels. He apparently developed ties with the monarchies of France and Naples. For the rest of his life, with a few exceptions, he never traveled east of Montpellier, closing off interactions with

the Iberian peninsula.[16] For us, therefore, Llull is a figure of a thoroughly Iberian upbringing who was well-connected with the intellectual and cultural currents of Europe.

A few years later Llull made the first of several trips to Paris, where he lectured on the *Ars*. By his own account, the attempt was a failure, as the "weakness of human intellect" could not understand the complexity of his scientific system.[17] Although frustrated, Llull adapted, reducing the number of quasi-algebraic figures from sixteen to four. From there he went briefly to Genoa, and then to Tunis, his first foray into the Muslim world. Upon arrival, Llull invited the Saracens who were most knowledgeable in their religion to debate with him, promising that if they proved his knowledge to be false he would convert to their religion. After a short time he was brought before the king, apparently on account of his unacceptable success in arguing against the Saracens' religion. The king ordered him to leave the country, threatening him with death if he returned. Having thus become acquainted with the "madness of the Saracens," Llull left North Africa and traveled to Naples.[18] This episode is a good example of Llull's temperament and methods.

From there Llull made numerous trips in the next fifteen years of his life, including a return to Palma to preach among the Muslims there, a trip which was probably precipitated by the return of the Balearics to James II in 1298. He held periodic audiences with several monarchs, including the kings of France and Cyprus, to convince them of the importance of his mission and the *Ars*. These meetings were all unsuccessful. After two more trips to Paris, which were little more successful than the first, Llull finally achieved great success lecturing there in 1309-1311. On this trip he also became acquainted with Latin Averroism, an intellectual trend

[16] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 20-22.
[17] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 24.
[18] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 22-31.

that alarmed him enough to categorize it as a heterodoxy on the same level as Judaism and Islam. He also made a second missionizing trip to the Arab world, time time to Bougie, which ended in a similar fashion as the first.

All these events are attested to in the *vita coetanea*, but here it ends, and information about the remaining five years of Llull's life comes from other sources. After trying several times throughout his life to gain an audience with the pope, Llull was finally successful at the Council of Vienne in 1311, presided over by Pope Clement V. Here Llull advocated a threefold agenda: the establishment of language schools for missionaries, the unification of Christian military orders into a single drive to reclaim the Holy Land, and to take measures against the teachings of the Latin Averroists in Paris. The first agenda item was successful, as Canon 11 of the Council established language schools for missionaries in several locations around Europe. The second item achieved a partial success (the complexities involving the Templar Knights need not be dragged out here), and the third was not addressed, although measures taken by the Parisian authorities attempted to stem the influence of the Averroes at the university.

For his last journey, at age 81, Llull travelled to Tunis again, this time with better auspices. A usurper king in Tunis in 1311 sought the help of Aragon and Sicily in defending himself against challengers, offering as incentive a proposed interest in converting to Christianity. The king of Aragon sent Llull, and there he spent the last years of his life, finally dying in 1315 or 1316, either in Tunis, in transit to Majorca, or in his native Palma, where his body remains in a tomb in the church of San Francisco.[19]

A European Case Study

[19] Llull, *vita coetanea*, 31-40; Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus* 40-44.

Several aspects of Llull's life suggest that he exemplifies Iberian and European trends in the thirteenth century. First is his knowledge of not only Judaism and Islam in their textbook form, but the habits and lifestyles of the Jews and Muslims themselves, acquired with ease in Palma. Anthony Bonner, editor of *Doctor Illuminatus: A Ramon Llull Reader*, tells us that about one third of Majorca's population were Muslims, and that most had been enslaved after the conquest of the island by James I.[20] Not all of James' victories, however, resulted in enslavement. Perhaps Majorca's importance as a center of trade led James to believe that it was especially important there to import settlers and merchants from Catalonia and subdue the Muslim population to ensure Catalan commercial dominance. In any case, Llull's life was a result of the effort of colonization, as his father was a settler from Catalonia. Llull then grew up around many Muslims as well a Jews, and while he did not likely interact much with them in his early life, as these communities lived in proximity but did not necessarily intermingle, he was nevertheless able to learn Arabic and about Muslim life quite easily, something which would have been more difficult for a European living outside of Spain.

Second, Llull believed firmly that the best way to serve Christ was to become a missionary, thus reflecting a primary European trend of the time. The proliferation of movements deemed heretical by the church in the thirteenth century occasioned the perceived need for a spiritual front to combat it. The Dominican order was created specifically to combat the Cathars in southern France. Franciscans were soon drawn into the fray, and both orders soon evolved to include Muslims and Jews as targets of conversion.[21] Robert Chazan, a noted historian of medieval Jewry, asserts that the increased interest in converting Muslims and Jews in the twelfth

[20] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 18.
[21] Kevin Madigan, *Medieval Christianity: A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 211-12.

and thirteenth centuries was partly a response to discouragement over a realization of the vast expanse of Muslim military power. If the Christians could not defeat Islam through force, perhaps they could defeat it through spiritual means. By association, Jews were drawn into this discussion.[22] In light of Chazan's argument, it makes sense that Ramon Llull, living in a time when Christendom was increasingly aware of its internal and external enemies, believed that missionizing was imperative for one entering the service of the Faith, for in such important times one could not be idle.

In fact, Aragon was the most active setting in Europe for missionizing by Latin Christendom, as it was the only place with large numbers of Muslims living under Christian rule. Ramon de Peñafort, who served as director general of the Dominican order, and his disciple Ramon Marti were key figures in establishing a missionizing culture around Muslims and Jews in Iberia in the thirteenth century.[23] As Bonner points out in his introduction to *Book of the Gentile*, the tiny kingdom of Aragon, even when augmented by sparsely populated Catalonia, only had a combined population of half a million—a smaller number than the Muslim populations that were brought under its control through conquest.[24] Llull's comment that the Christians were "beset on all sides" by Saracens therefore makes more sense, and underscores the importance that he must have felt in the task of conversion. Whether the mission that drove him was to save the souls of the unbelievers or to protect Christians from the falsehoods which they were (in Llull's mind) constantly exposed to is a question that will be explored in chapter 3.

Llull's life suggests an obsessive belief that reason is able effectively to prove the truth of the Christian faith and expose the misconceptions of others, another decidedly European trend at

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[22] Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (London: University of California Press, 1989), 27-29.
[23] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 28-29.
[24] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 75.

this time. With the re-introduction to the West of the works of Aristotle through the translation centers of Toledo, the twelfth century in Europe heralded a belief in the promise of reason to win the spiritual battles against the nonbelievers. Thomas Aquinas, Peter Abelard, and Ramon Llull are some of the notable intellectual luminaries of this movement. A belief in the logical sufficiency of Christianity was essential to the missions of the Mendicant orders. Llull's *Ars* is one of the most involved and sophisticated attempts to methodically employ reason to corroborate faith. With charts, illustrations, concentric circles inscribed with symbols, and many algebraic-looking formulas, the *Ars* remains to this day a formidable nut to crack, and as Bonner has noted, few modern studies delve into the complexity of the *Ars* extensively enough to allow a reader to actually use it.[25] Partly as a result of its complexity, the *Ars* never entered the mainstream intellectual currents of Europe, either in Llull's lifetime or after, although the number of extant medieval manuscripts of Llull's works testify to a reception that is not to be discounted.

Polemical literature experienced a resurgence in this time as an expression of the belief in missionizing through reason. The confidence in these works to succeed was rooted in an understanding that Jews and Muslims accepted the same revelation as the Christians, but did not understand it correctly. Ramon Llull's *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, then, is a work that demonstrates both the unique circumstances of his life, and the framework of the European civilization of which he was a part.

[25] Anthony Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull: A User's Guide* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 12.

Chapter II:

Jews, Muslims and Religious Contest as Portrayed by Llull

The *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men* was written between 1274 and 1276, while Llull was in Montpellier.[26] In this short work Llull builds on a long tradition of Christian polemical literature against Judaism and Islam. What sets Llull apart, however, is that where previous argumentation strategies had attempted to refute directly the teachings of these two rival faiths by finding errors in their literature, his work does not go into exegesis of any religious text. Rather, he presents a new method of discourse, often entirely dependent in its structure on his *Ars*. Llull uses the *Ars* to set up an objective system of ontological truths, which supposedly can be accepted by members of all three faiths. The three wise men each explain their own faith using the methods of the *Ars*, and in this way the errors in their beliefs are meant to become apparent. The errors are sometimes demonstrated implicitly through certain claims made in the arguments of the Jew and Muslim, and we as moderns must understand how those passages would sound to a thirteenth-century Christian. At other times the errors are pointed out by the Gentile, whose character is meant to give objective testimony to the errors of the Jews' and Muslims' beliefs.

While his method is new, Llull's arguments against the Jewish and Muslim faiths are repetitions of arguments deployed in western Christendom long before. Through a careful examination of the text of *Gentile*, we can isolate Llull's main arguments against the nonbelievers: for the Jews, that they are irrational and indigent, and for the Muslims, that they are unintelligent and given to carnal pleasures. Both of these depictions place the minority groups in categories firmly established by Christian polemicists. Despite the apparent nature of

[26] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 81.

these attacks as targeting certain character or circumstantial flaws, the underlying debate that Llull acknowledges is over the correct interpretation of God's Revelations. Given this belief, the problem of the existence of rival faiths lies with misguided teachings, and not the members of the faiths themselves. Therefore, if only they can be shown their misinterpretations of the received revelations, they can be brought to give up their absurd beliefs, hence Llull's *Gentile*.

New Methods

To establish the primacy of objective reason Llull begins *Gentile* with introducing first the character of the Gentile, a man who is well-versed in philosophy but with no knowledge of religion. Old age leads him to despair about death, and in his tribulations he wanders into the forest in search of consolation. He encounters the sensory beauty of the woods, described by Llull in evocative detail, but this only makes him despair further of his inevitable death. While the Gentile is wandering, Llull introduces us to the three wise men: the Jew, the Christian and the Saracen, who greet each other most amiably and politely and themselves wander into the forest, immersed in discussion of their respective beliefs. In time they come across a lovely spring, surrounded by five trees and a beautiful, noble-looking woman. She introduces herself as Lady Intelligence, and upon request of the wise men describes the function of the five trees, which each bear a certain number of flowers.[27] This imagery represents a simplified version of Llull's *Ars*, and her description offers an explanation for the basic workings of his complex system.

Lady Intelligence explains that the first tree contains twenty-one flowers, each inscribed with a combination of two of the seven virtues that can be attributed to God (hence twenty-one flowers). These are referred to as "uncreated" virtues. Examples of these combinations are "goodness-wisdom," "goodness-power," or "wisdom-perfection." The next tree contains forty-

[27] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 86-88.

nine flowers, each representing one of the uncreated virtues of the first tree combined with one of the seven "created" virtues. The flowers in the latter category represent the attributes that humans can use to escape infinite suffering, or "the means [by] which the blessed achieve eternal blessedness."[28] Examples of these virtues include faith, hope and temperance. The third tree likewise has forty-nine flowers, representing the seven virtues of the first tree and the seven vices, such as lust, avarice and envy, by which "the damned go to eternal fires."[29] The fourth tree contains twenty-one flowers of the seven created virtues, and the fifth has forty-nine flowers containing the seven created virtues and the seven vices.

Each tree has two rules ("conditions") concerning the attributes that can be assigned to its flowers. These conditions define the mutual relationships of the different attributes. For example, the two conditions of the first tree, which contains the seven uncreated virtues, are that "one must always attribute to and recognize in God the great nobility in essence, in virtues, and in action," and that "the flowers not be contrary to one another, nor be less than one another."[30] The conditions of the second tree, which contains the seven uncreated and the seven created virtues, are that "the created virtues be greater and nobler where they most strongly symbolize and demonstrate the uncreated virtues," and that "the uncreated and created virtues not be contrary to one another."[31] Lady Intelligence finishes her explanation by stating that someone who knows the attributes and conditions of the trees can use them to reach understanding of Truth, in her words: "for someone who knows how to pick their fruit—a person can escape infinite pain and achieve everlasting peace."[32]

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[28] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 89.
[29] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 89.
[30] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 88.
[31] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 89.
[32] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 90.

The description of the *Ars* provides a perfect representation of framework: reason, represented by the trees and flowers, is primal and objective, available to everyone and existing before everyone. But the utilization of the fruits—of reason—is only possible by one who has the guiding light of Faith. The novelty of Llull's system is that members of all three Abrahamic faiths can—in theory—accept this ontological system as being objectively true, inherent to the world without the filter of their faiths. Therefore an objective observer, a role which will be played by the Gentile, will be able to pinpoint which of the three faiths most closely adheres to this objective reason.

Llull likely saw that previous debates, where Jews, Christians and Muslims pored over each other's texts to look for either logical inconsistencies or references that proved the truth of their own faith, rested entirely on individual interpretation of the texts, differences which could never be objectively reconciled. The *Ars* is therefore his attempt to change the method of debate, by first establishing truths that everyone can agree are objective, and then turning to examine each faith's adherence, through their own arguments, to those truths. The Gentile will play the role of objective evaluator, pointing out the inconsistencies of various arguments with the system of the trees. Not surprisingly, his supposedly objective criticisms betray a decidedly Christian slant.

Commonalities

Having wandered long in the woods, the gentile finds the spring with the five trees, Lady Intelligence and the three wise men. After a short conversation, he asks the wise men to each explain in turn their respective beliefs using the flowers of the trees, so he may decide which is most in accord with truth. First, however, the wise men prove the existence of God and of the

Resurrection. This argument is an example of the type of Aristotelian syllogisms that Llull uses throughout *Gentile*.

One of the three wise men—it is not specified which—begins his proof of God with the axiom that all of the attributes inscribed on the flowers of the first tree (love, perfection, good, great, eternal, power, wisdom) are in accord with being. That is to say, everything which is in existence must possess these attributes to some degree. Because everything in existence contains these attributes, then the opposites of the attributes must accord with nonbeing, that is, that which is not in existence. Using the "goodness-greatness" flower of the first tree, the wise man builds his proof of God using the conditions of the tree as follows: all of the good that exists in this world exists in a "limited and finite" capacity of being. However, were this finite form of good all that existed, that is if finite good was the only form of good in accord with being, then it would necessarily follow that infinite good would be in accord with nonbeing. This cannot be the case because infinite being and greatness are in accord with each other, as demonstrated by the flowers on the first tree. Likewise, finite being and smallness are in accord with each other. Therefore, there must exist an infinite good in the form of being. This infinite good, the wise man concludes, is God.[33]

The Gentile is overjoyed at having his mind opened to the glory of God, and he asks the wise men how best to honor God, and thereby achieve salvation. To his utter bafflement, the wise men begin to argue among themselves about the best way to serve God. The Gentile, likely voicing Llull's view, expresses incredulity. For how could there be dissent on how to do this, when all faiths acknowledged the ontological nature of Him and His creation? But dissent does exist, and Llull turns next to elucidate it.

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[33] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 93-94.

Jews, Destitute and Irrational

The Jew presents his argument first, as his faith was the first one to come into existence. His argument comprises Book II, and there is actually little material in it that points to disagreements between Jews and Christians. Most of his arguments in fact explain beliefs that all three faiths hold, such as the Oneness of God, that the world was created and not eternal, and the existence of humans as imperfect beings. The implicit polemical arguments against Judaism that do appear concern the Jews' state of material poverty and their perceived irrationality, both lines of argumentation that were widely in use among Christian intellectuals.

The first argument is present in the Jew's description of the captivity of his people, in which he says "we endure and have long endured this harsh captivity in which we are so insulted and scorned by the Christian and Saracen nations to which we belong and by which we are humiliated and tormented."[34] Here lies a common line of argumentation against Judaism that was still active in the thirteenth century: that the material poverty of Judaism must indicate its spiritual error. As Robert Chazan notes, this argument had been around since the early days of Christianity.[35] That the argument was still popular in the thirteenth century is evidenced by its presence in the *Milhemet Mitzvah*, a collection of common Christian arguments against Judaism and the Jewish responses, written by Rabbi Meir ben Simon of Narbonne. This book is one of the most important sources of information about the Christian-Jewish debate for modern historians.[36] In it, Rabbi Meir writes:

> the priest said that, from the fact that we live in exile and degradation under their [Christian] domination and have remained so for such long a time, we must conclude that their faith is better and more correct than our faith.[37]

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[34] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 112.
[35] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 17-18.
[36] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 49-53.
[37] Rabbi Meir ben Simon, *Milhemet Mizvah*, as contained in *Daggers of Faith*, 53.

The Jew in *Gentile*, on the other hand, offers a defense which is likewise a typical Jewish counterargument. This is that material success does not indicate divine favor. God is in fact testing them with such hardship, and if they remain humble and devout, they will be rewarded, and "God will send a Messiah who will utterly destroy the pride of the Christian and Saracen peoples who hold us captive."[38] This argument is essentially a reflection of the typical Jewish counterargument to Christian superiority. In the *Milhemet Mizvah*, Rabbi Meir says

> "It is hinted in Daniel that men of proper faith will be subjugated, as is written…Thus you see that they have no proof from the greatness of their power and their domination over us that their faith is better than ours."[39]

According to evidence from Chazan, Llull's representation of this debate seems to be fairly accurate.[40] The Gentile, however, acting as a supposedly objective commentator, suggests that perhaps the Jews remain in captivity because they have not yet done penance for their sins. John Tolan, historian of Islam and the Mediterranean world, notes in his book *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* that the sin the Gentile is referring to is the murder of Jesus, which Christians often used as an additional argument for the Jews' worldly subjugation.[41] The Jew offers no response.

The second argument, that of the Jew's irrationality, is given only brief mention. The Jew laments that the philosophical tradition is not very strong in Judaism, saying "we do not have as many books on philosophical sciences and other subjects as we need."[42] This statement belies the common Christian attack which became popular in the intellectual revitalisation of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, that Christianity presents harmony with ultimate reason, while Judaism is

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[38] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 113.
[39] Simon, *Milhemet*, 65.
[40] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 20, 21, 64, 65.
[41] John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press), 266.
[42] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 116.

mired in irrationality, perhaps exemplified most pointedly by Peter of Cluny's 1147 *On the Inveterate Stubbornness of the Jews*. The argument was limited in its effectiveness, however, because as Chazan notes, only a small percentage of the population could understand the esoteric explanations on either side.[43] Nevertheless, Llull must have been aware of the great philosophical work of Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, making his omission of reference to it puzzling.

In the third book the Christian presents arguments for his faith. The majority of this lengthy section is devoted to explaining the Trinity and the Incarnation using rationalist methods. Before delving into his complex proofs, the Christian explains to the Gentile that the articles of his faith are so subtle that many cannot understand them, saying "it often happens that one gives a sufficient proof of something, but since the person to whom the proof is directed cannot understand it, he thinks that no proof has been given."[44] The mysterious yet rational nature of Christian doctrine is a source of pride for Llull, who believes in the Faith's accordance with rationality as a sure sign of its infallibility. The following arguments are indeed quite complicated, taking the reader through logical gymnastics to prove the the existence of the Trinity and the Incarnation of Christ as the Son of God. These two beliefs were often the primary sources of attack for both Jews and Muslims, who rejected the notions regardless of the philosophical or scriptural proofs given. Especially for the Muslims, who place supreme importance on the belief in one God, these articles appeared heretical: how could there be one God, yet He is somehow three? Similarly, God could not be one if He had a son. Muslim anti-Christian polemics unceasingly sought to disprove both of these articles since the inception of the faith. It is even contained in the Qur'an:

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[43] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 17.
[44] Llull, *Gentile*, 120.

> The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was no more than God's apostle and His Word which He conveyed to Mary: a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His apostles and do not say: "Three." Forbear, and it shall be better for you. God is but one God. God forbid that He should have a Son![45]

For the Jews, there were several common arguments against the Incarnation, among them that the Messiah could not have been human, nor could the Son of God, if he existed, have demonstrated such earthly and human attributes as Jesus did.[46]

The Christian in *Gentile* attempts to refute these arguments, explaining by means of several flowers from the trees that the Trinity is in fact three aspects of the same God, and that the Incarnation was actually an effort of re-creation by Him, an intercession which saved humanity from its course of irreconcilable punishment. This act was a supreme example of God's attributes established in Book I: His mercy, greatness and love. During the Christian's explanations the Gentile asks many questions which implore the Christian to go deeper into his proofs, setting up the dialogue as a dialectic. This role contrasts starkly with the critical voice the Gentile adopts in Book II, and takes up again with increased vigor in Book IV.

Muslims, Unsophisticated and Carnal

Many aspects of the Christian's arguments contrast with those of the Saracen in Book IV. The Saracen enumerates his articles of faith as twelve, among them that there is only one God, that Muhammad is prophet, and several concerning the final judgement. Bonner remarks that although there is no official list of articles in Islam, these twelve are those most commonly accepted, and more or less reflect the articles outlined by the eleventh century Muslim philosopher al-Ghazali, who, according to Bonner, was Llull's primary source on Islam.[47] Two

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[45] Qur'an, in *Saracens*, 34.
[46] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 60, 114.
[47] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus*, 141 n5.

primary arguments stand out for Llull's polemics against Islam in Book IV: that they are unintelligent and disinclined toward philosophy, and that they are led to believe that they should revel in the sensual delights of this world.

The first argument, that of Muslims' lack of sophistication, is apparent throughout the section both implicitly, through the simplicity of his arguments, and by means of the criticisms of the Gentile. In contrast to the long and complicated proofs offered by the Christian in Book III, the explanations offered by the Muslim are often short and inarticulate. In his proof of the truth of the Qur'an, for example, he merely states that because the Christians and Jews cannot refute it, it must be true.[48] He also offers no refutation of the Christian's proof of the Trinity. The Gentile plays the role of critic more aggressively than with the Jew, demonstrating the arguments' incompatibility with the laws of the trees. At one point the Saracen outlines a proof for the article that Muhammad is prophet, explaining that God can make different laws at different times, and therefore sends new prophets who contradict the first. The Gentile points out that it is impossible according to to the flowers that God could intend for a prophet to be disproven by a future one, and furthermore, the Muslim's argument implies that God will eventually send another prophet who will contradict Muhammad. The Saracen offers no response.[49]

In a more explicit argument, similar to the claim made by the Jew of the philosophical inadequacy of his tradition, the Muslim says at the end of his arguments that philosophy is not welcome in his faith. Refuting men who argue against the sensual delights of heaven, he says:

[48] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 146.
[49] Llull, Book of the *Gentile*, 143.

> these men are natural philosophers and great scholars, yet they are men who in some ways do not follow too well the dictates of our religion, and this is why we consider them as heretics, who have arrived at their heresy by studying logic and natural science.[50]

Llull arrived at this perception in part because it was a common argument against Islam, as with Judaism. Ramon Marti, a prominent Iberian Dominican missionary whom Llull met at least once, pegged the Saracens as irrational on account of their refusing to listen to careful arguments about the Qur'an's errors. Thomas Aquinas reaches similar conclusions in his *summa contra gentiles* and *Reasons for the Faith against the Muslims*.[51] But Llull also reaches this conclusion because he used al-Ghazali as one of his main sources for knowledge about Islam.[52] Ghazali, in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, did not condemn the use of logic, rather he opposed the creation of a natural theology that could be made by applying logic to the revealed Truth contained in the Qur'an, a task undertaken with enthusiasm by the earlier philosopher Avicenna. Instead, Ghazali in *Incoherence of the Philosophers* used reason to prove articles of Islam, which is the only correct use for logic in Ghazali's mind.[53] Even so, Llull's assessment that "no men dare teach logic or natural science publically" among the Muslims is perhaps a bit of an exaggeration. Given the considerable amount of misinformation circulating in the Latin West about Islam, even a knowledgeable authority such as Llull could easily subscribe to this view.

The other prominent criticism in *Gentile* commonly used against Islam by Christian polemicists is that it is a faith "of this world," focused on carnal delights. A few references to this assertion against the Jews were present in Book II, but it is an argument which contains much

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[50] Llull, Book of the *Gentile*, 160.
[51] Tolan, *Saracens* 240-45.
[52] Bonner, *Doctor Illuminatus,* 16.
[53] Etienne Gilson. *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 38-39.

more ammunition when directed at Islam. The Saracen in *Gentile* spends a great deal of time in Book VI describing heaven:

> There will be all kinds of food that will be most pleasing to eat: there will be beautiful clothes, beautiful places, and beautiful rooms; and there will be many beds with many beautiful women with whom one will experience agreeable bodily pleasures.[54]

He goes on to explain that God sent Muhammad to destroy gluttony, lust and avarice in this world, so that man could enjoy the pleasures of heaven. The Gentile points out the obvious contradiction, to which the Muslim, again, has no response.

The modern reader must understand that Llull intends his Christian readers to be repulsed by this sensual description of heaven. From the time of St. Augustine's articulation of the duality of the *civitas dei* and the *civitas terrena*, Christian doctrine held that enjoyment of sensual pleasures is discordant with the pursuit of a life of spiritual attainment, and so the argument against Islam as a purely carnal faith was popular from the early days of Christian-Muslim interaction. Prominent polemical texts such as the eighth-century *Risalat al-Kindi* from Syria, the twelfth-century *Dialogi Contra Iudaeos* from Spain, and Ramon Marti's *De seta Machometi* and *Explanatio Symboli Apostolorum* from the thirteenth century all lambast Islam's promise of sexual delights in heaven, as well as Muhammad's supposedly avaricious sexual appetite.[55] This perception, formed in the seventh century, still finds prevalence today.

Llull's portrayal of Jews and Muslims accurately represents the predominant understandings of their beliefs among European intellectuals. Throughout, his text underscores the optimistic belief that the Muslims and Jews can be convinced of their errors through reason. The surrounding society, however—the culture in which *Book of the Gentile* was composed—

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[54] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 145.
[55] Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 115-16; Tolan, *Saracens*, 61-62, 152, 237-40.

held more complex notions of theological deviancy within it, considering non-Christians simultaneously as objects of conversion, dangerous dissidents, and permanent communities in a divine order. Llull was well aware of these complexities, and they require explanation here as background to discussion of his own response.

Chapter III:

Historical Placements of the Religious Other

Llull's treatment of the major arguments of religious polemic are indebted to Christian conceptions of history and place that had been dominant since the time of Augustine. Jews in this view were given a role as witness to the truth of Christianity, but this ambivalent position created a tension between tolerance and oppression in the societies they inhabited. The tension was inflamed by the arrival of the Muslims, powerful enemies whom Christian society struggled to define biblically and cast in an appropriate role. As well, the cultural changes of the twelfth century created a reinvigorated effort to convert the Jews and Muslims, straining already tense relations, especially as a result of the inevitable frustration that resulted among missionaries when they found little success in their enthusiastic endeavors. Ultimately, Llull's time was a period of anxiety concerning the nebulous definitions of the religious "others."

Augustine and History

Medieval Christian perspectives on other religious communities and their place in history were grounded in the authoritative stance on the structure of human history and civilization articulated by St. Augustine of Hippo, a prolific and formative figure for Christian doctrine. A north African bishop who wrote in the twilight of antiquity, Augustine experienced several momentous events in the closing days of the Roman Empire, including the conversion of the Empire by Theodosius in 380, and Alaric's sack of the Eternal City just three decades later.[56] His vast array of writings formed the basis of Christian theology until the time of the Reformation, marrying scriptural doctrine with a Platonic worldview to establish a Christian philosophical framework that would

[56] Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 22-25.

remain fundamentally unchanged for over a millennium. His importance in establishing Christianity as a dominant historiographical and philosophical force ensures his place as one of the most important figures in Christian intellectual life.

One of Augustine's most important contributions was a new historiographical vision. Departing from ancient notions of time as cyclical, Augustine divided history into two categories: sacred history, comprised of the historical events indicative of divine purpose, and secular history, that is everything else. This distinction does not to him mean that all historical events are not part of the divine plan, but only that certain instances are especially worth noting, and that they may be put together to create a map of the trajectory of human civilization. But the lighthouses of sacred history are not easily distinguished from the vast waters of secular history. In fact, they are discernible only to those who have received the clarity of theological vision. Thus, the only sacred history ever written is the Bible. The Christian worldview had been biblically established: all that one needs to know to interpret the world has already been written down.

One consequence of this historiographical framework is that, since the fundamental world order has been set in place, all events and all types of people can be understood biblically.[57] Thus, when unprecedented events occur, Christians in the Augustinian tradition look to scripture to interpret them. This method of historiography would have a significant impact on Christianity's perceptions of both the Jews and the Muslims in the Middle Ages.

Jews as Witness

[57] R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St Augustine* (London: Cambridge University Press 1970), 1-19; Tolan, *Saracens*, 3-5.

Augustine classified the civilized world into four groups of people: Christians, pagans, heretics and Jews. Pagans and heretics have no place in the history of the world, and their existence must be terminated through either voluntary or forced conversion. Jews, however, are different. Augustine assigned the Jews a specific place in redemptive history, based on their importance to the Christian cause. Because of they shared a spiritual heritage with Christians, Jews are able to give to the gentiles independent testimony of the validity of the Scriptures. They are also living proof, "witnesses" of the truth of Christianity, on account of the punishment they received for supposedly killing Jesus, in which way Christians interpreted the destruction of the temple. Therefore, their continual existence as outsiders within Christian society is, in theory, to be tolerated. [58]

Kevin Madigan, a historian of the Christian tradition, has noted that the Augustinian doctrine created a difficult tension to hold for both state and church authorities. While the Jews are exempt from forced coercion and punishment (unlike pagans and heretics), they are allowed to maintain their community and practice their faith, albeit solely for the purpose of providing witness to Christian truth. They are therefore theological deviants whose existence is to be tolerated, but on no account is it expected that they will be fully integrated members of Christian society, as that poses a danger that the Jews might corrupt Christian belief. And of course, the Augustinian view assumed the Jews would convert to Christianity at the end of history, a major corollary the to understanding of their continued presence.[59]

The exact boundaries of Jewish communities' interactions with the host Catholic society, however, were determined not by clerical authorities for much of the Middle Ages, but rather by secular leaders. Jews were thus subjected to variable levels of acceptance in European societies.

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[58] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 10-14; Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 27-28.
[59] Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 27-28.

The Visigothic kingdom was notoriously repressive of its "protected" minority. The third canon of the Sixth Council of Toledo, convened in 638, dealt explicitly with the royal position on the Jews. An excerpt from the text reads:

> We decree sanctions therefore: to wit, that whoever in time to come shall attain the highest authority in the kingdom shall not ascend the royal throne until he shall have sworn, among the other provisions his oath, not to permit [the Jews] to violate the Catholic Faith; he shall not favor their infidelity in any way whatever[60]

This declaration can be interpreted as a view that Jews could not be permitted to full membership in Visigothic Catholic society, as they could not be risked to influence their evils upon Christianity. A section of *Lex Visigothorum*, a law code written fifteen years later, stated among other things that Jews were not allowed to testify in court against Christians. If, however, "any form of their stock be found acceptable for upright behavior and integrity of faith, permission to testify truthfully along with Christians is granted them."[61] Converted Jews, then, were allowed to testify, but only if they passed scrutiny by a priest as to the eradication of their nefarious beliefs. Thus we see in the legislation of the Visigoths a grudging acceptance of the Augustinian doctrine of Jews-as-witness.

The Visigoths were one of the more direct examples of rulers dealing with the Jewish situation—most kingdoms seem to have had little in interest in them in the early centuries of the Middle Ages, and in fact, up until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, relations between religious groups within Europe were for the most part amiable, and there is little evidence for vigorous and sustained efforts by Christians to convert Jews. Robert Chazan in *Daggers of Faith* ascribes this lack of attention to conversion efforts to the political upheavals of the Germanic invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, followed by the equally destabilizing effect of the Muslim invasions

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[60] "Visigothic Legislation Concerning the Jews," in *Medieval Iberia*, trans. Jeremy duQ. Adams, p. 22
[61] "Visigothic Legislation" 23

in the seventh and eighth, resulting in the loss of the southern Mediterranean lands, as well as the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. Jews were meanwhile in no position numerically to pose a threat of usurpation to Christian society. Only after the political situation calmed down, Chazan says, could Christian leaders turn their attention to the Jews, leading to a reinvigorated effort at conversion. Chazan notes, however, that even when this trend seemed to pick up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there is little evidence of sustained interest in missionizing until the thirteenth.[62]

Scattered efforts at missionizing at that point, however, produced the main polemical arguments against the Jews seen in Llull's *Book of the Gentile*—that Jews are irrational, and marginalized by grand historical forces into a state of poverty. The former assertion is based largely on the refusal of the Jews to accept Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Messiah. But given the weak resources allocated to missionizing, and the fact that the Jews had developed a full set of responses to the Christian polemical attacks, most Jewish historians agree that these arguments largely served the purpose of buttressing the Christian faith rather than actually attempting to proselytize.[63] This conclusion reinforces the widely accepted view that the Jews were seen in these centuries as having an accepted place in society. Even if their deviancy was sometimes seen as dangerous, they were grudgingly understood to be communities permanently included in the scheme of history, and not as groups that must be converted or eliminated, as was the case with pagans and heretics. Nevertheless, tensions between Christians and Jews remained, and woud become exacerbated by the arrival of a new group of theological dissidents on the western European scene.

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[62] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 10-21.
[63] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 13.

Muslims as Enigma

Augustine's doctrine establishing scripture as the only lens through which the divine significance of world-historical events could be interpreted worked well for several centuries, in which there were no major upheavals challenging the apparently permanently etched map of civilizations. Then an unprecedented force shattered the established world order in the form of Islam. After the death of Muhammad in 632, Muslim armies raced out of the Arabian peninsula and with extraordinary rapidity they conquered more than half of the lands of the Byzantine empire, capitalizing on the weakness of the Byzantines and the Persians from their recent war to conquer Syria in just four years. The juggernaut then pushed out in both directions, overrunning the Persian Empire to the east, and racing westward across the expanses of northern Africa to the Atlantic. Constantinople was besieged several times in the seventh and eighth centuries, and Rome was raided in the ninth. Muslim armies crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and into Visigothic Spain in 711, and the Moors, as they came to be called there, claimed the peninsula within five years, leaving only small pockets of Christian lands in the north. Muslim incursion into Europe was finally checked in 732 by Charles Martel at the battle of Poitiers in central France. When the dust settled, Christendom found that the entire southern half of the lands of the Romans, as well as Iberia and the islands of the western Mediterranean, were controlled by a new and dangerous enemy who wielded considerable military might, subscribed to blasphemous yet puzzling beliefs about the God of the Hebrews and denied the divinity of Christ. Everywhere in the conquered lands Christians were now subject to a humiliating and equally unprecedented subjugation, in which they could not preside over a Christian society, yet were allowed to keep their faith, churches and ecclesiastical leadership.

What were Christians to make of these new foes? The followers of Muhammad claimed him as a prophet who received visions from the archangel Gabriel. While they accepted the older, analogous revelation handed down to Moses, as well as the virgin birth and prophetic status of Jesus, they deny the doctrine of the Trinity, and believed that the followers of Christ had falsified his words so as to presume him to be a divine being. Canonical scripture, the final authority on all historical events, in the Christian view had nothing to say about future prophets accorded revelation after that of Christ. Unlike Jesus, Muhammad had been a military and political leader as well as a spiritual messenger, and a shrewd one at that. His earthly success was unfathomable from a Christian perspective, as the only two types of civilization heretofore known were pagan and Christian, yet the Muslims appeared to be neither. What's more, the Saracens' policy of the *dhimma*, a special status for Christians and Jews—the other peoples "of the book," the *dhimmi*—was also unprecedented. Christian history allowed for Christian rulership or brutal repression. This was something in between.[64]

In the East, where the first Christians came under the rule of the Muslims, many believed that the new conquerors were a scourge sent by God to punish them for their sinful acts, such as rampant libidinousness or the continued existence of the heretical monophysites (or duophysites, for those who belonged to the former heterodoxy). Others saw the situation as far more dire, and concluded that Muslim conquest must signify the coming of the apocalypse. In neither of these biblical interpretations were the actual religious beliefs of the Muslims taken into account. By the ninth century, however, eastern Christians living under Muslim rule had accepted that Islam was a force that was here to stay, and undertook the task of educating themselves about the religion.[65]

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[64] Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 103-104; Tolan, *Saracens*, 30-39.
[65] Tolan, *Saracens*, 40-67.

In the west, the trajectory was slightly different, and it took longer to accept Islam as an actual new religion. Christians in Latin Europe attempted to understand Islam biblically, and encountered frustrating challenges. They made many attempts to fit Muslims into biblical categories, especially in Muslim-controlled Spain where the need to halt conversions to Islam was urgent. Eulogius and Paul Alvarus were two prominent figures in this movement. Both of these Christians of ninth-century Cordoba saw it as a sign of dark times that so many of their coreligionists were learning the language and culture of the Saracens, and passively accepting their *dhimmi* status. Their explanation was to alter the image of Muhammad to fit that of the Antichrist, and apologetical texts such as *The Unmistakable Sign* and *Life of Eulogius* describe the Saracens in these terms, while making little mention of the actual faith of the Arabs. Anti-Muslim works glorified the martyr crisis that broke out in Cordoba in 850, which shook relations between Christian subjects and Muslim rulers, and was denounced by many bishops who wanted to maintain workable relations with their non-Christian overlords. Eulogius himself was executed for publicly disparaging Muhammad, and the hostile he promoted among a fanatic minority of his coreligionists was brought northward to the Christian kingdom of Asturias. The rulers there considered themselves heirs to the fallen Visigoths, and the image of a holy war against the Chaldeans became a crucial part of the ideology of *reconquista*, though as we will see, this ideology existed mostly in national myth only.[66]

Other Europeans, farther removed from the reality of living with Muslims or under Muslim rule, perceived them as solely a military threat. The English historian Bede portrays them in his eighth century *Ecclesiastical History* as just another army of evildoers driven out Gaul by the good Christian kings. Bede sees biblical significance in the Arab incursions as the

[66] Tolan, *Saracens*, 85-97.

work of the descendants of Ishmael, but their religion itself goes unmentioned. Other Latin chronicles at this time present a similar attitude.[67]

Both directly anti-Muslim and Muslim-derogating interpretations of the role of Islam in history deployed in the early Middle Ages make little mention of the Saracens' practice of religion or theological stances. Islam itself seemed unimportant when seen through the biblical interpretation of the Antichrist or when Muslims were cast as simple evildoers, so Christian writers saw little reason to actually learn about it. Saracens when seen in this light do not constitute a legitimate religious community. These Christian interpretations imply that Muslim civilization is ephemeral, and will vanish in time by the reinvigoration of Christendom—if not portend the end of time.

By the tenth and eleventh centuries, Christians living in al-Andalus had lived with Islam for centuries and accepted it as another faith grounded in revelation—albeit a false revelation. But other images in pre-twelfth century Europe try to place the Muslims in a familiar scriptural garb: that of pagan idolaters or of heretics. In the tenth century the nun Hroswitha described the Muslim rulers of al-Andalus as idolaters worshipping golden idols. The chroniclers of the First Crusade in the eleventh century often portray the knights as pious monks-in-arms marching to fight the pagan kings desecrating the Holy Land.[68] As for the image of heretics, several "biographies" of Muhammad were circulated in Europe in the twelfth century. These were picked up and expanded upon by Peter, twelfth-century abbot of Cluny, who wrote two polemical and apologetical texts, *Summa totius haeresis saracenorum* and *Contra sectam sive haeresim saracenorum*, the authoritative texts on Islam until Thomas Aquinas's *Summa contra gentiles* a century later. Although Peter used reliable Iberian sources such as Petrus Alfonsi's

[67] Tolan, *Saracens*, 72-78.
[68] Tolan, *Saracens*, 106-111.

Dialogi contra iudaeos, and Robert Ketton's translation of the Qur'an, he portrays Muhammad as an avaricious, intriguing pseudoprophet who invented a false doctrine through the help of several Jews and a heretical Nestorian monk.[69] Outside of Spain, Europeans whose historical perspective inclined them to cast their eyes backward struggled to classify Islam based on biblical interpretations, none of which acknowledged the possibility of a permanent religious and cultural rival to Christianity.

Lateran IV: Definitions

For Robert Chazan, the works of Peter of Cluny, despite their deliberate misrepresentations, are the first sign in a shift in mainstream Europe toward a desire to understand Islam through its own texts.[70] A better moment to pinpoint a conceptual shift towards Muslims might, however, be the Fourth Lateran Council. Summoned in 1215 by Pope Innocent III, the council framed far-reaching changes in European society, significantly affecting Europeans' conceptions of both Muslims and Jews. As regards Muslims, Lateran IV began to represent them as a separate community. Concerning the Jews its decrees demonstrate a heightened sensitivity to the perceived danger they pose to Christian religious practices.

By far the most famous section of Lateran IV's decrees is Canon 68. It stipulates that Jews and Saracens must wear distinctive clothing, instrumental in avoidance of interreligious sexual relations: "Thus it happens at times that through error Christians have relations with the women of Jews and Saracens, and Jews and Saracens with Christian women."[71] Such sexual activity was a perpetual source of consternation for both religious and secular authorities in the

[69] Tolan, *Saracens*, 147-165.
[70] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 29.
[71] "Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: Lateran IV 1215," accessed April 11, 2017, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/lateran4.asp.

Middle Ages. Distinctive clothing is salient here, but Canon 68 also conspicuously groups the Saracens together with the Jews. They are not counted among the heretics, nor are they referred to as idolaters in the Holy Land decrees which follow the seventy canons. Lateran IV's departure from prior interpretations fitting Muslims into biblical categories marks a pivotal shift in western Christendom in its perceptions of the Muslims within its borders. European society appears now to accept them as misguided adherents to a similar tradition of revelation, yet possessing a culture and civilization sufficiently separate that they are not best described as heretics from Christian doctrine. In other words, they appear to be now equivalent in status to the Jews, although their "purpose" in history as a dissenting community is not defined, as it is for the Jews. Without an explicit declaration, the biblical classification of Jews has been implicitly amended to make room for Muslims.

With regards to the Jews, Canon 68 is also significant, as it prescribes a much more aggressive attempt at social demarcation than had been seen in the Middle Ages previously. Although less famous, Canon 69 is equally important, prohibiting Jews from holding public office. Taken together, the two decrees signify several important developments for the religious minorities living in western Europe. Clearly the Jews are now a concern for the papal authority, whereas before the thirteenth century there is scant evidence of them being a matter of concern on the papal level. The underlying fear expressed in these decrees is a more vigorous assertion of an old concept: that they will corrupt Christian religious practices. Although such fear had long driven the delineation of social limitations of the Jews, in the thirteenth century this threat was evidently perceived to be greater than had been in previous centuries.

Scholars debate the reasons for this shift, as well as its implications. Both Robert Chazan and Jeremy Cohen maintain that the arrival of the Muslims precipitated changes in the

perceptions of the Jews. Chazan argues that the perception of a threat without made Christendom far more sensitive to the possibility of threats within.[72] Cohen takes a more radical view, which is that the appearance of an additional religious "other" resulted in a broad reclassification of Jews, which grouped them together with Muslims and heretics as theological enemies, thus representing an abandonment of the Augustinian classifications.[73]

While I agree that the doctrine of tolerance of Jewish presence was modified slightly to make room for the Saracens, I disagree with Cohen that they were grouped together indiscriminately with heretics, for reasons exposed by the statutes of Lateran IV. Heretics were perceived as being much more dangerous to Christendom than the Jews or Saracens who lived within its borders, as Canons 68 and 69 make clear along with Canon 3, which requires all secular authorities to swear an oath that they will, to the best of their ability, purge from their lands all individuals deemed heretical by the church. Innocent III promised to send them considerable resources to accomplish this task—enough that "they shall enjoy the indulgences and privileges granted to those who go in defense of the Holy Land."[74] Thus the theological dissent of Christian heresy warrants a more severe response than the threat of Jews and Muslims. While the two dissenting religions must be distinguished by garb, the heterodox Christians must be extinguished entirely.

What accounts for this difference? The answer lies in the significance of communities in the medieval worldview. The Jews and Muslims were not seen to be as dangerous as heretics because they constituted distinct communities, each with their own cultural heritage representing

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[72] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 30-32.
[73] Irven M. Resnick, "Reviewed Works(s): Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christendom by Jeremy Cohen," *AJS Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (April 2002): 133-135, accessed February 9, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4131568.
[74] "Medieval Sourcebook."

civilizations that are separate from Christendom. Thus, even if the church authorities believed that they were following the path to damnation, they must concede that the Jews and Saracens are allotted a role in history. Acknowledgment of this role for the Saracens is a crucial turning point for Latin Christians in their perceptions of Islam, even if they never articulated what exactly that role might be. Heretics, conversely, did not constitute their own civilization and represent only the attempt at subversion of the purity of Christian society. Without the recognition as a community they were bound by no parameters of deviancy, and therefore could not be tolerated.

The importance of communities in shaping attitudes towards theological dissenters is further demonstrated by Canon 70, concerning Jews who have been baptised but are believed to furtively practice their old rites. A rising fear of the subversiveness of recently converted Jews permeates the text:

> Some (Jews), we understand, who voluntarily approached the waters of holy baptism, do not entirely cast off the old man that they more perfectly put on the new one, because, retaining remnants of the former rite, they obscure by such a mixture the beauty of the Christian religion....we decree that such persons be in every way restrained by the prelates from the observance of the former rite....since not to know the way of the Lord is a lesser evil than the retrace one's steps after it is known.[75]

The authorization of coercive force against Jews who are nominally Christian indicates the seriousness of the matter, here described as closer to the danger level of heretics rather than that of the Jewish or Muslim communities. Jews here are seen as apostates, but as well they are understood to be more dangerous on account of their subversion within the larger Catholic society. This danger is far more akin to that posed by the heretics than by the Jewish and Muslim communities.

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[75] "Medieval Sourcebook."

From Lateran IV forward, Christian writers follow its pattern grouping Muslims and Jews. Thomas Aquinas wrote *Summa contra gentiles* as a refutation of the errors of Jews and Muslims—heretics are not mentioned. And indeed the fact that Ramon Llull in *Book of the Gentile* wrote a dialogue between a Christian, a Muslim and Jew, instead of a dialogue between a Christian and all other theological enemies points to this categorization. In one of his later books, *Book of Ending*, Llull tells a story of a Saracen who wished to convert to Christianity. He came to a Christian land, only to find that he could not decide on the many schisms of the Faith: Greek, Catholic, Jacobite, Nestorian.[76] The message here is that divisions within Christianity are inimical to its survival, but they are distinct from the "infidels."

To pinpoint changing conceptions of these groups by Christian society is difficult because, since the official stance towards Jews would not be amended until the twentieth century, we must speculate from texts such as Lateran IV, the evidence of which does not indicate that there was an abandonment of the Augustinian doctrine of Jews as a separate categorization from heretics. Rather than Cohen's assertion, I find Chazan's more moderate argument that the threat produced by the existence of the Muslim world on the doorstep of Christendom resulted in the increased restrictions on the Jews' social participation to be more plausible than Cohen's. In any case, it is clear that the tension which had long been at the base of the policy towards Jews, between toleration and supression, was at this point augmented by the inclusion in their lot of the Saracens, who likewise were now seen as a permanent community of theological deviants.

In the recognition of the importance of communities we find a further implication, which is that the demarcations of social boundaries of the Jews and Muslims served a dual purpose: not

[76] Tolan, *Saracens*, 270.

only did they act as limitations, but also as protections. As full-fledged communities of dissenters, their role was defined for them. But it appears that the only other alternative to this control would be to have no role at all—in society, as well as in history—and consequently face complete erasure, a fate that befell the Cathars, Waldensians, spiritual Franciscans, and numerous other theological dissidents that were stamped out in the Middle Ages.

Larger Changes

Of the rest of the seventy canons, the vast majority are concerned with the duties and personal habits of the clerical body; some define parameters around the lives of the laity.[77] These decrees represent a shifting atmosphere in the European church in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Not only were new energies being prodigiously applied to suppress the heresies proliferating across Europe, but power was becoming increasingly centralized in Rome, which was attempting to regulate its clerical administration more closely on the diocesan and on the parochial levels. At the same time, it sought to shape the doings of the secular powers. The trend toward centralization developed parallel to greater restrictions on the Jews and a reinvigorated attack on the Islamic world. Europe, feeling the vivacity of the twelfth-century renaissance manifest in increased urbanization and intellectual output, also experienced a realization of the full extent of the strength of the Islamic world. Chazan notes that this circumstance created a duality of confidence and insecurity, and the Jews, who comprised Christian Europe's only significant minority, became increasingly seen with suspicion.[78]

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[77] "Medieval Sourcebook."
[78] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 21-22.

As the papal decrees pushed their agenda with more assertiveness, Europe's secular leaders, on whom the enforcement of the decrees rested, responded variously. This was especially true particularly concerning forced sermon attendance. The practice of mandating Jews and Muslims to listen to preachers in public sermons was not new, but, like other practices examined here, was first institutionalized in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In 1245, a papal edict sent to James I of Aragon contained a decree that ordered Jews and Muslims to sit and listen to sermons by clerical authorities whenever they came to their districts, and authorized the use of force if they refused. Pope Nicholas III in 1278 issued a bull calling for preaching to the Jews across Europe.[79] The crown of Aragon was the site of some of the most vigorous missionizing efforts in Europe on account of its substantial populations of Jews and Muslims. Its leaders expressed ambivalence about forcing its minority populations to listen to sermons by Dominican preachers. Perhaps the most famous of these public sermons was the Barcelona Disputation in 1263. This debate was held in the royal palace of James I between Dominican friar Paulus Christiani and Rabbi Moses ben Nahman, better known as Nahmanides. Paulus deployed new methods of argumentation solidified by Ramon Martí in *Pugio Fidei*, attempting to prove that the Talmud and Torah alike prophesy the coming of Jesus as the Messiah. Both sides declared victory.[80]

Forced sermon attendance went hand in hand with the foundation of the Dominican order and the spread of missionizing as a method of spreading Christian truth. These trends in turn rested on the belief, heralded by the intellectual revival, that the Jews could be shown their errors by use of reason. Aside from being a somewhat puzzling development, since Christian polemicists had long established as a main line of argument that the Jews were irrational, this

[79] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 38, 39, 44, 45.
[80] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 70-75; Madigan, *Medieval Christianity*, 361-362.

renewed attempt further strained the Christian-Jewish relations, as Jews saw compulsion as a breach of their protected status within Christendom.[81]

Many historians view these developments as a sign of deteriorating relationships between Jews and Christians from the thirteenth century through the remainder of the Middle Ages, enough for Kevin Madigan to term this period "a lachrymose age." This general view is the basis for many of the arguments put forward in this paper. Some historians, however, offer a dissenting opinion. David Nirenberg, historian of medieval religious groups, asserts in his book *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* that this narrative is greatly exaggerated, and that the apparent increase in persecution in the thirteenth century was actually consistent with previous patterns of interaction. Nirenberg presents many sources of evidence for his carefully argued thesis, but they are largely concerned with the real-life interactions between Christians and the Jewish and Muslim minorities.[82] This is an important topic, and Nirenberg's contribution to it will be addresed in the following chapter. But he does not present evidence for continuity in theoretical conceptions, and evidence examined in this chapter seems to show conclusively that attitudes of Church authorities became more hostile to Jewish—and by extension Muslim—participation in Catholic Society. Ramon Llull himself is evidence to these twelfth and thirteenth century trends. That he tried repeatedly to win papal favor for his projects, as well as the fact that he genuinely believed in conversion as the duty for a true servant of God bespeak his place in the thirteenth century. In addition, he saw with clarity the difficulties of carrying out his missionizing plan in the religious societies he was a part of, not so much from the contradictions in the established view and trends towards Jews and Muslims, but because of complications involving the intersection of religion and society.

[81] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 39-44.

[82] Gavin I. Langmuir, "Reviewed Work(s): Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages by David Nirenberg," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 88, No. 1/2 (July-October 1997): 70-75, accessed February 9, 2017, http://jstor.org/stable/1455065.

Chapter IV:

Social Complications of Religious Societies

In the epilogue of *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, the Gentile thanks the wise men profusely for opening his mind to the truth of God and salvation. In the distance he sees two more Gentiles from his country approaching, and he is eager to select among the three religions presented to him the one which is most in accordance with truth in order to proclaim it for his countrymen. But before they arrive, the wise men take leave of the Gentile, telling him they do not wish to be present when he made his choice of religion. Llull explains that "in order for each to be free to choose his own religion, they preferred not knowing which religion he would choose."[83] As they walk back to their city, the wise men converse with one another, lamenting that disagreements on the manner of honoring God persist, and war and suffering endure. One wise man says that the three should meet again and debate until they had decided once and for all which faith among them was correct, so they can attempt to end the suffering that is occurring as the result of a multitude of faiths. Another replies that this is not possible, because "people [are] so rooted in the faith in which they found themselves and in which they [are] raised by their parents and ancestors, that it [is] impossible to make them break away by preaching, by disputation, or by any other means man could devise."[84] The other wise men agree, further commenting that most men are too bound by their worldly pursuits anyway to spare much thought to rescuing the souls of others, yet before parting they agree to nevertheless meet every day until they have resolved among them which of their beliefs is true. They then take leave of each other most amiably.

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[83] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 167.
[84] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 168.

Llull's scenario may seem to offer an oddly self-defeating ending to a learned exposition, but through the words of the wise men, Llull is in fact offering valuable commentary on the social backdrop on real-life religious discourse. Although the Gentile is left to choose the religion he sees as best, the wise men lament that the type of free, objective assessment that the Gentile is able to make cannot be expected from the people of established religious societies. There are far too many influences on the religious choices in their land, not the least of which is, as the wise man points out, the wish to remain in the faith of one's parents and ancestors. But other factors contribute to the muddling of religious disputation as well. In addition to having no ancestral ties to a particular religion, the Gentile does not have in his consideration any political, social or economic roles that might be influenced by his choice. Unlike the society of the wise men, the Gentile's land maintains a clear demarcation of religion from other social functions. The land of the wise men, like the Mediterranean world of Ramon Llull, is rather a complex place, where religious classifications were inextricably woven in with social and political factors. As Llull knew, any serious attempt at conversion must acknowledge these intersections.

The Musings of the Learned

In Llull's time, the Iberian peninsula was dominated by the Christian kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Through decades of consolidation and expansion, they had wrested control of the peninsula from the various principalities that existed in a hodgepodge manner after the fall of the Córdoban caliphate in the eleventh century. After the fall of Seville to Ferdinand III in 1248, only the kingdom of Portugal in the west and the Muslim emirate of Granada in the south remained outside of the governance of Castile and Aragon. The crowns inherited not only large populations of Muslims as a result of their conquests, but also established social dynamics and economic models. Muslims, Jews and Christians already occupied certain niches in social,

political, and economic functionings, and as the Iberian kingdoms entered the larger European sphere, both proved more reluctant than their trans-Pyrenean neighbors to bow to pressures of increased marginalization of their minority populations.

The two kings who presided over the thirteenth-century expansion of their respective kingdoms were well known for their incorporation of Muslims and Jews in social and economic functions. In Castile the self-fancied philosopher-king Alfonso X, dubbed *El Sabio*, is remembered for his patronage of Islamic learning. His Aragonese father-in-law, James the Conqueror, boasts a well-deserved reputation as a tenacious battlefield commander and shrewd political administrator. Both kings had seemingly mixed attitudes about the Muslims and Jews they inherited in their kingdoms. The image of the Saracens from the royal viewpoint in particular seemed to be contradictory, as the Moors were simultaneously an external enemy of Christendom and protected subjects alongside Jews. Several of Alfonso's commissioned works, the *Estoria de España* and the *Siete Partidas* best illustrate this stark duality. In the *Estoria,* a chronicle of Roman and Visigothic history, to which Alfonso sees the Castilian monarchy as heir, the familiar protonationalist themes of military adversity inherited from the chronicles of Asturias several centuries earlier reappear: through sin the Visigoths lose their kingdom to the dark-skinned, nefarious infidels, led by the Antichrist Muhammad, but otherwise religiously insignificant. Here the Moors are only another illegitimate ruler of Iberia, like the Carthaginians and Vandals in earlier times, to sweep through and interrupt the rightful Roman-Visigothic hegemony. Their illegitimacy is underscored by the fact that Muhammad's rule, and the subsequent success of his followers, was established through deceit and trickery.

Estoria almost certainly served as political propaganda. John Tolan notes in *Saracens* that it was probably written to bolster Alfonso's claim to the title of Holy Roman Emperor, an

appellation he sought obsessively for much of his life. This assessment seems plausible, especially given that he stopped work on *Estoria* at around the same time that he finally abandoned his pursuit of the imperial title.[85] *Estoria de España*, and the patristic view of rulership as being closely affiliated with religious righteousness, was closely tied with political considerations. But this context does not mean that Alfonso did not believe the polemical image of the Moors was true, at least in theory. Other documents indicate he was capable of holding this view alongside other, seemingly contradictory ones.

A more practical vision of the role of Islam in the Christian world is portrayed in Alfonso's monumental work of law, *Siete Partidas*. The most complete law code ever assembled in the Middle Ages, *Siete Partidas* demonstrates the full range of Alfonso's philosophical preoccupations, containing important subjects of public, criminal and canon law, as well as discussions on smaller topics such as the proper behaviors of kings and knights, burial procedures, customs of inheritance, maintenance of castles, treatises on warfare, and countless other aspects of thirteenth-century society. It runs for over seven lengthy volumes in the English translation.[86] Included in the seventh *partida* is a brief section on the legal status of Jews and Muslims in Castilian society. Stipulations here concerning practices of their religion, places of worship, conversions, sexual relations between members of the faiths, and other areas indicate that Muslims within Castille, along with the Jews, were seen as protected minorities, simultaneously limited in their social fluidity and protected from offense. Concerning the Jews, the *partida* reiterates longstanding beliefs about the proper place for Jews in Christian society: "Jews should pass their lives among Christians quietly and without disturbance, practicing their

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[85] Tolan, *Saracens*, 186-189

[86] Robert I. Burns, "Stupor Mundi: Alfonso X of Castile, the Learned," in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and his Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Robert I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), accessed February 8, 2017, http://libro.uca.edu/alfonso10/emperor1.pdf.

own religious rites, and not speaking ill of the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which Christians acknowledge."[87] Alfonso's vision is in fact one of the more liberal interpretations of the Augustinian doctrine. On synagogues, for example, *Siete Partidas* notes that the Jews are not allowed to construct new ones, but are assured they can keep the ones which already exist. Moreover, "for the reason that a synagogue is a place where the name of God is praised, we forbid any Christians to deface it, or remove anything from it, or take anything out of it by force."[88]

Concerning conversion, Alfonso's position is antithetical to the papal position of forced sermon attendance: "[N]o force or compulsion shall be employed in any way against a Jew to induce him to become a Christian, but Christians should convert him by means of the texts of the Holy Scriptures, and by kind words, for no one can love or appreciate a service which is done him by compulsion."[89] The *partida* also echos canon law in that it seeks to keep the community separate to avoid pollution of Christian religious practices, forbidding "any Jew to keep Christian men or women in his house," and sentencing to death Jew who has sexual relations with a Christian woman.[90] It reiterates Lateran IV's decree of prescribed dress for Jews, to prevent "crimes and outrageous things [that] occur between Christians and Jews."[91]

The Muslims receive similar stipulations in *Siete Partidas*, which conveys a very different image than their portrayal as nefarious political usurpers in the *Estoria de Espãna*. The provisions concerning the Moors are slightly more restrictive than those about the Jews, probably on account of their greater population and their implicit association with an external military

[87] "Siete Partidas," trans. S.P. Scott, ed. Maria Remie Constable, in *Medieval Iberia*, 269.
[88] "Siete Partidas," 270.
[89] "Siete Partidas," 271.
[90] "Siete Partidas," 272.
[91] "Siete Partidas," 272.

threat. However, Alfonso emphasizes that compulsion cannot be used to convert Muslims any more than the Jews, and further that any Christian who insults a recent convert to Christianity should be punished as seems best fit by the judge of his district. A Christian who converts to Islam, however, is to be stripped of all his possessions.[92]

The *Siete Partidas* was never implemented in Alfonso's lifetime, and, like the *Estoria*, Alfonso probably did not believe that this model was how the relationship between Christians, Jews and Muslims could actually be expected to unfold. The *Partidas* rather reflects his wish to uphold the ideal of protected communities, and of conversion of religious deviants by kindness. In this view, it makes sense that Alfonso did not see a contradiction between the attitudes towards Islam in *Estoria de España* and *Siete Partidas*. Both are idealizations, and both serve a specific purpose.

Other interpretations, however, account differently for the relationship between these two documents. John Tolan sees *Estoria* and *Partidas* as mutually complementary, expressing Alfonso's view that his society was founded on the inferiority of Jews and Muslims, and his right to rule over them. In Tolan's view, the *Partidas* is a way to restrict and denigrate them as much as possible.[93] Alfonso no doubt saw the Jews and Muslims as royal subjects, and as belonging to civilizations rooted in theological error. Tolan's opinion of his views, however, does not acknowledge the paradoxical nature of the Augustinian doctrine of acceptance. Alfonso evidently wished for the Jews and Muslims living in his kingdom to be protected in their social roles. Were Alfonso interested only in denigration, complete silence on the subject would have been the most demeaning to the Jews and Muslims. By stipulating parameters he was indeed

[92] "Siete Partidas," 269-272
[93] Tolan, *Saracens*, 189-193.

expressing his right to rulership while at the same time recognizing their importance in his society.

In addition, the patronization of learning in Castile and Aragon in the thirteenth century, most famously pursued by Alfonso X, but also an interest of James I and his heirs, has been the subject of much recent speculation. Alfonso undertook a vast project in his new capital of Seville of copying and translating thousands of Arabic works of science, medicine, philosophy, and other subjects. In the role of cultural go-betweens, Jews were often integral parts of these translation teams. Robert Burns, late scholar of medieval Christian Spain, notes that the scholarly undertaking resulted from Alfonso recognizing the need to create a Castilian high culture to elevate Castile to a status respected by other burgeoning Christian European societies.[94] The existence of Islam as an important cultural legacy adds yet another conception to the list of functions, alongside military enemy, protected subjects, theological deviants and economic contributors.

Uses of the Conquered

A different view of religious minorities is presented by Alfonso's contemporary, James I of Aragon, the Conqueror. A relentless commander and an effective administrative innovator, James I conquered the Muslim kingdom of Valencia in campaigns lasting from the 1230s through the 1250s. Like Alfonso's *Estoria*, James' autobiography, *Libre del Feyts*, portrays its subject as a pious warrior conquering the lands of the Saracens in the name of the Virgin. In his writing, the Muslims are solely a military adversary, and while conquest for Christendom was certainly an important aspect of his justification for war, he neither mentions the faith of the

[94] Burns, "Stupor Mundi."

Moors nor despises them for it. Once they are conquered though, James appears to see patronage and protection of his new subjects as an expression of his pious chivalry.[95]

Unlike Alfonso, James' actions are consistent with the ideology presented in *Libre del Feyts.* The surrender agreement of the city of Valencia in 1238 required that all Muslims leave the city, but permitted them to travel with royal protection to the nearby towns of Denia and Cullera. The treaty also guaranteed a seven-year truce with James's armies. James apparently upheld these provisions, as he mentions in his autobiography that he had to put to death a few of his men who attempted to steal possessions from the departing Moors. Even so, this particular treaty was less lenient than most, on account of Valencia holding out for so long against James's siege. Many other surrender agreements allowed for Muslim farmers to remain on their lands as tenants to Christian landlords. One typical such charter prevented Christians from settling the Muslim lands without their permission, and allowed Islamic law to operate within Muslim communities.[96] This use of religious autonomy as a bargaining chip demonstrates James's grounded recognition of religious minorities as socially autonomous communities, rather than just theoretical theological enemies.

Other factors point to a complicated relationship between James and his Muslim subjects. One is that, for James I, Muslims and Jews were quite profitable. He was a champion of the model of military-commercial power, expanding his control of sea trade to dominate the western Mediterranean. Jews and Muslims, aside from being profitable settlers, were also centrally important to the quasi-mercantilist economies. Jews especially had long been an essential component in the financial workings of Iberian societies, including the common occupation of

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[95] Burns, "Castles of Intellect, Castles of Force;" Tolan, *Saracens*, 175-180.
[96] James I of Aragon, "Chronicle," trans. John Forester, and "Three Charters from the Kingdom of Valencia," trans. Robert I. Burns, in *Medieval Iberia*, 211-213.

moneylenders. But James and Alfonso kept Jews in their courts as well, as they were seen as effective cultural go-betweens.[97]

James I is also known for establishing a school of medicine in Montpellier (attended by Ramon Llull), and many schools of Arabic language and culture for missionaries. These establishments are often seen in light of a desire to convert his Muslim subjects. Indeed, the extensive operations of Dominican and Franciscan friars within James's realms has been carefully scrutinized by recent historians. The Dominican order was founded, after all, in Aragon, and the director general of the order, Ramon de Peñafort, was a close advisor to James I, and secured royal support for his activities of preaching and establishing schools of Arabic. James himself was present at the Barcelona Disputation, and gave a sermon at the synagogue in Barcelona a few days after.[98] Viewed in light of his patronage of missionizing, the king seems to have actively sought the conversion of his kingdom's Muslims and Jews.

However, other evidence points to his commitment to this task as being erratic, and kept in check by his interest in their economic and political functionalities. After the Barcelona Disputation, James issued an edict ordering the compulsory attendance of Jews and Muslims at Dominican sermons. Three days later he issued another edict reiterating his order, but addressed directly at the Jews. The day after that, however, he issued a third edict reversing his decision, ordering his officials that, "you not compel nor permit to be compelled the Jews of our cities, towns, and locales of our rule….to exit to any place outside the Jewish quarter for the purpose of hearing a sermon of any of the Preaching Friars."[99] He also stated that Jews could not be forced to listen to sermons within their own district. Perhaps James did not want to push too hard

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[97] Burns, "Castles of Intellect, Castles of Force."
[98] Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 62.
[99] As quoted in Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 46

against his profitable and efficacious subjects, or perhaps, in a manner similar to his autobiography, he did not see his devotion to the Faith as necessitating conversion of Jews and Muslims.

Both of these possibilities are supported by the arguments of Robin Vose, a historian of medieval religious conflict. In *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon* he argues that the Dominicans were mostly concerned with protecting the Christian laity from corrupting influence, and did not spend much effort on interfaith proselytization. He cites as evidence that medieval monasteries were more closely tied with wealthy patrons than proximity to non-Christian populations, and a seeming lack of necessary texts in their libraries for effective study for conversion.[100] This argument challenges the prevalent narrative that mission and crusade were seen at the time as the most devout form of piety. Ramon Llull, we have seen, was an ardent advocate for expanding conversion efforts. But it is plausible that intentions among the Dominicans and Franciscans were varied, and Vose's opinion, although debatable in its universal application, seems to corroborate evidence that James' attitude towards conversion of his subjects was capricious.

Ramon Llull was therefore a direct product of James's patronage of missionary education—indeed, the reason he was so easily able to study the necessary texts when he turned himself to preaching attests to James's support of religious learning. And if James saw Jews and Muslims in any different light, as did his son-in-law Alfonso, Llull certainly held no illusions that a religious debate could take place free of of the many complexities of the multireligious societies in which he lived, outside of staged disputations such as in Barcelona. He himself was a staunch advocate for military action against Muslim power, as he realized the practical

[100] Travis Bruce, "Review: Robin Vose, Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon," *Medieval Encounters*, Vol. 19 No. 4 (January 2013), 483-486

impossibility of a purely missionary-based approach to conversion, even if he wished it to be possible. Interestingly, he seems to attribute this confusion of identities with the misplaced love that most men have of their earthly status, as one of the wise men laments:

> But since men are lovers of temporal possessions, and lukewarm and of little devotion in loving God and their neighbor, they therefore care little about destroying falsehood and error; and they live in fear of dying and of suffering illness, hardship and poverty, yet they do not want to give up their wealth, their possessions, their lands, or their relatives to save those who are in error, so that they may get to everlasting glory and not undergo infinite suffering.[101]

Llull thus expresses his frustration with the social circumstances. Tension in social roles is inimical to religious success, yet even Llull, a native of cosmopolitan Majorca, could not have denied that Jews and Muslims were integral to the operation of Aragonese society. The complications of religious demarcation ensured that the borders of faith were always shifting, tied with cultural, linguistic, social and economic identities, and Llull's single-minded determination amidst these factors is indeed emblematic of his time.

[101] Llull, *Book of the Gentile*, 169.

Conclusion:

Living In-Between

With the clarity of hindsight, the successes and pitfalls of Ramon Llull's ambitious projects are easily apparent. On the one hand he was a veritable genius who produced one of the most comprehensive systems of ontology ever created. He also understood the realities of the political and social context in which he operated. On the other hand, Llull appeared throughout his life to encounter perplexity or indifference towards his creative method, and failed to come to grips with the fact that his methods probably had a negligible impact on conversions to Christianity. The later reader can easily discern why: the complications of his system, his striking lack of tact on his visits to North Africa, and his failure to recognize the vastly different paradigms between a Christian worldview and a Muslim or a Jewish one. He did not realize that Christian notions of salvation was not a relevant basis for the theological language of the other two faiths, and failed to appreciate the gulf that existed between himself and those he was trying to reach.

In a sense, Llull understood some of the complexities he was dealing with, and was tragically ignorant of others. He is best remembered today not as much for his esoteric writings on theology—many of which were later condemned as heretical by a church seeking to purge ungrounded rationalism from its canon—as for his great literary works, in particular *Blanquerna*, which some literary historians ambitiously call the first novel. But, writing in Catalan, he was one of the first great authors to use a romance vernacular, and so represents a European identity simultaneously attempting to coalesce Rome, while separating into a multitude of societies with divergent trajectories. Conversion of the "others" into Christians, Europeans, Latins, Spaniards—all the things that their religions indicated they were not—was his pious goal, as well as his

vision for an ascendancy of European civilization. But he could not escape the internal and social discordance of his vision with a European—and especially Spanish—identity that included these minorities as permanent features. Llull presents himself as determined, but wrought with contradictions and uncertainties, a defining figure for his time indeed. He stands appropriately as the beginning and the end point of a discussion of thirteenth-century Iberian religious interaction.

It is, however, important to note that Llull was a member of the educated elite, and therefore offers a slight distortion of reality. Although his social class comprises our best sources for historical information, they lived more sequestered lives than the vast majority of the population. Conceptions of society were necessarily more theoretical for them than for the average person, and our conceptions of Iberian society as divided into neat, albeit sometimes nebulous strata reflects the workings of partially detached observers. In other words, Ramon Llull, Alfonso X, Thomas Aquinas and others may have been attempting to define for themselves the workings of their civilizations, and our interpretations are filtered through their own simplifications. The reality of human interaction is chaotic, irrational, and often defies neat categorization. The common people in medieval Spain could probably not define with clarity the relationships between the Abrahamic faiths, and the relationship of the "others" to the host society. The thesis put forth by this paper, that the driving force of religious interaction in thirteenth century Iberia was tension, would be news to a medieval Iberian, perhaps even to an educated man such as Llull. But medievals no doubt understood it intuitively, and although the artificial demarcations in which historians engage are necessarily simplifications of reality, they may approximate ordinary realities. It is my hope that this essay has approached that goal.

Evaluating Convivencia

One topic that this paper attempted to respond to is the extent to which medieval Spain was truly a model of *convivencia*. The concept is challenging to evaluate objectively, as it originated as a result of a particular historical context, and maintains currency because of its perceived relevance to modern issues. The first usage of the term was by historian and philologist Américo Castro in his 1948 book *España en su historia: cristianos, moros, y judíos*. In this work, Castro attempted to explain why Spain in the mid-twentieth century was seemingly disconnected from the rest of Europe. He theorized that the Spanish national identity was formed by a chronic sense of inferiority as a result of its subjugation by the Muslims, who possessed a rich and creative high culture brought from the East. Even when the Christians drove forward with *Reconquista*, bringing their former Muslim overlords under their control, they remained aware of their own cultural inadequacy compared with the richness of the Andalusian society they were subjugating.

Castro's thesis was popular and controversial among Spanish historians. But in the 1980s and 1990s, Spain appeared to integrate effectively back into the European mainstream, and the debate faded as the need to explain why "*españa es diferente*" no longer seemed relevant. The concept of *convivencia* then spread beyond the context of Spanish identity and evolved as an alluring historiographical model of interfaith relations, a popularity that was only increased by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the apparent re-ignition of European-Islamic antipathy.[102] *Convivencia* appears topical, but just how relevant is it? In the context of modern interfaith discussions, the temptation to moralize Spanish history for the sake of lessons for modern times, or as a model of *modus vivendi*, is real. Treating history as a contemporary issue, however, is a

[102] Wolf, "*Convivencia* in Medieval Spain."

misleading practice. A gulf of more than half a millennium separates us from thirteenth-century Spain, and in the intervening time numerous political, philosophical and social paradigm shifts have occurred that make our own society difficult to compare to that of the Middle Ages.

With these differences in mind, I maintain that *convivencia* was a real occurrence in its historical context. Among increasing pressures in the thirteenth century to lessen social participation of minorities, Christians and Jews and Muslims lived together in way that, despite occasional outbreaks of violence, seemed to work. However, I have argued that this coexistence was tense for all three groups, and necessarily involved demarcations of social boundaries, as well as degradation of the minority groups, because this is the only way in which a multireligious society was possible. Medieval Spanish society was inherently hierarchical, necessitating the subordination of two peoples to a dominant third. In the context of the European Middle Ages this model appears illuminating, but if it were to exist today, it would undoubtedly seem backwards and be deemed "intolerant." Medieval Spain is a fascinating study for its tangled intersections of cultures, religions, languages and worldviews, but its surface-level relevancies to modernity must be seen with reserve.

Of the literature on *Convivencia* that has proliferated in the last several decades, the most popular nonspecialist work is María Rosa Menocal's 2002 *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain*. The book, although enjoying an avid following, has been criticized extensively by specialists in the fields of medieval, Iberian, Jewish and Islamic studies for romanticizing multicultural societies without giving sufficient attention to their complexities. The subtitle indeed suggests that Menocal transposes onto Medieval Spain modern notions of tolerance, an error which the introduction to this paper warned against, and that many historians likewise have sought avoid. But in reality her

thesis is more involved, responding adequately to the many subtleties of her subject. Menocal's argues that contradictions were the prevalent attribute of medieval Spanish society, and the uniqueness of the Iberians within their European and Middle Eastern contexts was their ability to tolerate those contradictions. She says in her introduction:

> In its moments of great achievement, medieval culture positively thrived on holding at least two, and often many more, contrary ideas at the same time. This was the chapter of Europe's culture when Jews, Christians and Muslims lived side by side and, despite their intractable differences and enduring hostilities, nourished a complex culture of tolerance, and it is this difficult concept that my subtitle aims to convey. This only sometimes included guarantees of religious freedoms comparable to those we would expect in a modern "tolerant" state; rather, it found expression in the often unconscious acceptance that contradictions—within oneself, as well as within one's culture—could be positive and productive.[103]

The description here of contradictions emerges as consonant with the argument put forth by this thesis. Throughout, Menocal attempts to show that those contradictions—although sometimes resulting in violence or oppression—were the reason for medieval Spain's vivacity and rich cultural production. The ultimate demise of Iberian tolerance, she argues, was a result of the outside influences of, on the one hand, rigid North Africans and, on the other, trans-Pyrenean Europeans. Although her characterization of medieval society is somewhat romanticized, and the reasons for its apparently abrupt transition oversimplified, I find that Menocal's assessment of *convivencia* represents the complex social determinants in this multireligious society accurately. The tensions that Menocal sees as defining medieval Spain are the same tensions with which Ramon Llull wrestled in his eclectic projects. These stresses made thirteenth-century Castile and Aragon places of dynamic religious interaction and nebulous social boundaries.

In my view, tension, the most significant element of *convivencia*, transcends historical circumstances. In his essay "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing Our Approach to

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[103] María Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 11.

Medieval 'Convivencia,'" Jonathan Ray, historian of the Jewish tradition, examines the Jewish experience in thirteenth-century Christian Spain by looking at examples of Jews who used their in-between status for personal advancement. In a lucid exposition, Ray shows that the culture of the Christians, by its dominance, had also become the secular culture of the peninsula. Jews and Muslims were thus living in the secular dynamics of the age as well as in the religious traditions of their native communities, and in this middle ground was an opportunity for personal advancement and placement:

> Here we see something approaching a true example of convivencia. Not only did Jews show a greater concern for personal advancement than for religious or communal solidarity, but in so doing they demonstrated their identities to be as much a product of the prevailing historical processes and social dynamics of the age as they were of the discrete traditions of the Jewish community.[104]

Here Ray argues that, although the prevailing approach to *convivencia* is to consider religious groups in their entirety, individuals themselves may have seen themselves as products of two identities, existing between their Jewish heritage on the one hand, and the dominant secular culture on the other.

Ray's argument is compelling. When Judah Abravanel composed his teary lament in verse to his son, did his heart ache for the second diaspora of his people, or his loss of the Christian Iberian society that was his home? For that matter, is the tension of competing identities a permanent feature of any multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural society? In thirteenth-century Spain, this tension was indeed seen as a permanent feature, but in the modern day it is seen as a struggle to be overcome. I do not posit whether it is possible to do this or not, but as Ramon Llull, Judah Abravanel, Alfonso X and their contemporaries suggest, this tension

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[104] Jonathan Ray, "Beyond Tolerance and Persecution: Reassessing our Approach to Medieval 'Convivencia,'" *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter 2005), 12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4457701.

leads to both a cultural vibrancy that is seldom matched, as well as conflicts that are equally impressive in their brutality.

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