The Influence of Islam on the Course of the Protestant Reformation

by

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Dedicated to the millions of victims of religious intolerance,

to those who chose to die for the sake of the truth,

and to the millions of fervent adherents to all creeds

who follow their convictions to the best of their knowledge

with a remarkable concern for their everlasting destiny.

ABSTRACT

From their beginnings, Christian–Muslim relationships have been characterised by conquests and crusades, two words that cast a long shadow. However, several positive aspects deserve our attention. I intend to unfold those elements that possibly channelled the Protestant Reformation and offer a fresh look at them.

The basis for my construction is the politico-religious ground the Roman emperor Constantine already prepared. He is the one who launched the era of politically-controlled Christianity. Two and a half centuries later, Justinian went the reverse way by setting up the religiously-controlled governance of his empire. At least from the point of view of a Scripture-oriented Protestant, the fusion ended in centuries of theological and social deviations.

Incidentally, right after the reign of Justinian, Islam emerged and overshadowed European chronicles for the next one thousand years. No wonder the new religion was assimilated with an apocalyptic calamity. Its presence brought massive financial and human disasters to medieval Europe. Territorial and geopolitical losses were also substantial: the whole of Asia Minor, North Africa, and a large section of the Balkan Peninsula. Its looming presence at the gates of Vienna became almost overwhelming, marking the apex of its expansion.

But could the bitter aftertaste of the Islamic presence have been over-accentuated and some constructive elements ignored? Two considerations could provide an answer. First, the existence of two distinct Christian views on the Scripture from Constantine's time. Presenting them will possibly help us trace the origins and the *raison d'être* of the Protestant Reformation as an intra-Christian crisis amid the intra-European race for hegemony. At the same time, the Ottomans emerged and made a distinction between Christians identified in the Qur'ān as "concealers" and those named "different believers".

A significant part of my work consists of a review of such mentions and a study of how Muslims generally behaved toward those two groups. The question is whether their interference was motivated by religious conviction and political calculus, or if it was simply the result of random factors.

Another aspect to be addressed is the critical examination of written sources designed to demonise Islam or, on the contrary, to idealise it. It addresses challenging

areas such as the outcome of the Muslim conquests for Christianity through forced conversions and the expression of religious intolerance on one hand and the protection of certain Christian minorities on the other. I need to add Islam's vital role in the preservation of Bible manuscripts and the participation of its commonly called "Golden Age" to the enlightenment, which flowered into the development of the Reformation.

This beneficial repercussion has been widely underestimated, leaving people with a distorted image. It is why History deserves to be reassessed in a way that places the current rise of Islam in the West in a new light. In turn, that would be beneficial to the ongoing efforts in the area of interfaith dialogue.

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

Student number: 6671-313-7

I, Sylvain Romain, hereby declare that my dissertation *The Influence of Islam on the Course of the Protestant Reformation* is my own work and the result of my personal research.

All the sources that I have searched or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I also declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality-checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

Further on, I declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.'

I have committed myself to avoid plagiarism on every level of my research and have fully cited every source used, including books, articles, and internet sources.

Date: 28 February 2022

Place: Sankt Peter am Hart, Austria

Sylvain Romain

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Orientation and framework

1.1 Introduction

Inasmuch as Christianity became the dominating religion (under Constantine the Great), the established church began to stop upholding biblical truths. Medieval Christendom split into those who followed human requirements and others who kept the original faith alive, the latter being a thorn in the flesh of the former. That is at least the Protestant perspective.

The turning point within Europe's major religion coincided with the very moment a new religion originated on the Arabic Peninsula as an organised phenomenon: Islam. Could it be that its quick expansion on the southern flank of the Christian empires came like a response to the confusion within Christianity? Part of the answer is that when the Roman emperor Justinian added his dynamic to the new orthodoxy, Muslims granted refuge to those who refused to comply with what they despised as a betrayal of the apostolic message. Later, when the West turned its back on scientific progress, Islamic scholars promoted it by preserving and publishing written documents. By including manuscripts relevant to Christian theology, they played a decisive role in the transition leading the late Middle Ages into the early Modern Period. As a side effect, the disconnect that grew between what prevailed during the commonly called European "Dark Ages" and Islamic "Golden Age" nourished a growing discontent so that the outbreak of a crisis in the heart of Europe became just a matter of time.

Then, a theological earthquake shook the provincial town of Wittenberg. It was the German Reformation with all its social and theological ramifications. Martin Luther was in line with the pre-reformatory presence that had already erupted on the continent's fringes, such as in Bulgaria, England, Moravia, and the rocky places of refuge of northern Italy and southern France. Worth notice is that, at its beginning, Islam tended to look favourably at those Christians who had resisted the encroachments of the imperial church. It welcomed the victims of religious hatred and protected those under its governance. The Ottoman victories in eastern Europe gave the promoters of the biblical message a respite. While Martin Luther was lighting the fire of the Reformation, Sultan Süleyman crossed the Danube. Charles V, was caught in a dilemma; Should he fight against the progress of Lutheranism or try to stop the approaching

Turks? The emperor of the Holy Roman Empire ended up letting Martin Luther and his supporters expand their position mainly unhindered.

But did the Muslim intend to interfere in the Reformation process, or can we see their contribution as merely a by-product? Reaction or action? Was it the fruit of geo-political considerations, or did it happen by coincidence? Was it the result of an interpretation of the Qur'ān and the self-image of Muslims as reformers? Indeed, the holy book of Islam calls some Christians "unbelievers" and others "the Muslims' best friends".

1.2   Background to the study

Any research project is a journey of discovery, and this one is no exception. Mine is a quest for historical evidence but also a study of quranic statements influencing the role of Islam in what came out as the German Reformation: The question in mind is whether that participation was incidental or not. Moreover, was it marginal or vital enough to secure the Reformation's eventual outcome?

My research takes on the dimension of a pilgrimage to peel off some of the many layers of misunderstanding between two religions moving side-by-side like two fraternal enemies. The journey's geographical loci are two cities chosen to capture the essence of this study: Istanbul and Wittenberg. Both exercised outsized prerogatives on their world and remain as a symbol for two of the most influential figures of the sixteenth century. Let us begin with Istanbul, the former Constantinople. Few places in the world display so many layers of civilisations. That justifies – among other things – why visitors patiently wait in line to finally enter the Topkapı Palace,[1] the centre of the Ottoman administration called the 'Sublime Porte' and situated on a hill overlooking the Marmara Sea. Surrounded by a sea of tulips, this opulent mansion was once the heart of an empire stretched over three continents. From their imposing height, the ceilings of the Dîvân-ı hûmâyûn, the hall of the imperial council, overhang the lattice-work made of sculpted timber enriched with velvet and silk drapes which fall on the plush rugs covering the floor. Light enters through windows crafted with oriel-stained glass and illuminates the masterfully designed chairs with their high carved backs adorned for a king.

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[1] The Ottoman form is *Ṭopḳapu.*

Istanbul typifies Süleyman I.[2] Born on 6 November 1494, the one who carries the nickname *muhteşem*, Ottoman Turkish for "magnificent"[3] became the sultan of the Islamic superpower of that time [1520–1566]. At the age of twenty-six and throughout the forty-six years of his reign, he expanded the sultanate to 2,2 million square kilometres and, with protectorates, from 4 million to 19,9 million – a staggering number equivalent to sixteen times the size of the Republic of South Africa, or two thirds the African continent. The Magnificent is known for having introduced tulips in Europe (1554). But he has done much more than that, in greater and lesser ways. For instance, an anecdote tells us that the French king François I [1515–1547] suffered from severe diarrhoea, and no European doctor could help. His Turkish friend sent a physician to him with a medicine named *yoğurt*.[4] News about the superfood spread around, and *yoğurt* became the most borrowed Turkish word worldwide.[5]

Let us turn now to our second station, Wittenberg. There, we meet Dr Martin Luther (10 November 1483–18 February 1546), the monk who became the champion of the Reformation *par excellence*. He caused a spiritual and political seism within Christendom, gave the German nations a *lingua franca*, and ultimately enhanced their economic prosperity.

Is there a connection uniting these two leading figures, and if so, what was its nature? The answer to my questions could provide some tools to understand why Lutheranism achieved its breakthrough. It is about bridging the Ottoman Sultanate at the zenith of its splendour[6] and the Reformation[7] within the Holy Roman Empire,[8] in a time when the state church fostered wars and moral decadence. While the leading

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[2] Soleiman or Suleiman, Ottoman Turkish: *Sultan Süleyman-ı Evvel*. Turks remember him as Kanunî, the "Legislator" (from Arabic *qanūnᵘ*, law) because of his strict enforcement of the codification of the Ottoman legal code launched by his grandfather Mehmed II.

[3] The Arabic origin of the Turkish word *muhteşem* has a slightly different meaning where it signifies "unreachable."

[4] From the verb *yoğurmak*, "to be coagulated; to thicken".

[5] Employed – and often mispronounced – in most Indo-European languages and others such as Finnish *joghurtti*, Hungarian *joghurt*, Japanese *yōguruto* (ヨーグルト), Malagasy *yogurt*, Thai *yokeirt* and Malay, Samoan, Somali and Tagalog *jogurt*. The global adoption of this word makes it one of the most international ones. [Online] https://translate.google.com/?sl=en&tl=fr&text=yoghurt&op=translate [retrieved 7 July 2021].

[6] The "Golden Age" of the Ottoman Empire started on 29 May 1453 with the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. It happened more or less the end of the Byzantine Empire but only came to its apogee (with the reign of Sultan Süleyman from 1520 until his death on 6 September 1566).

[7] The official start of the German Reformation was on 31 October 1517. Martin Luther died on 18 February 1546.

[8] The Holy Roman Empire developed from the early "Middle Ages" until the Napoleonic wars in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

players of the Middle Ages were struggling for dominion in world affairs, the Turks appeared on stage. They had already settled down over three continents and were about to overwhelm Rumelia – as Europe was named in Ottoman Turkish (*rumili*) – with their armies, religion, and values.

The Ottomans' most alarming offensives ever undertook against Christendom occurred precisely in the early days of the Reformation. Would it be surprising to discover some correlation bridging Lutheranism in its most difficult years of consolidation, and the Ottoman emergence? Historians with a Christian background highlight the Lutheran struggle against the popes and the emperor. But they gave, at best, a secondary role to events outside this dynamic.

The link joining Istanbul and Wittenberg is apparent in the clash between the Islamic East and its advanced scholastic brilliance and religious temperance on one side and the religiously closed European Middle Ages on the other. Could it be that without the oriental enrichment of western culture, the enlightenment – and consequently Luther's Reformation – would never have occurred?

Which factors facilitated the turn Europe's destiny took? If we want to understand the nature of the relationship between the two men and their respective legacies, we need to review various ways to address the past. Within that context, my research seeks to unfold a more historically balanced exposure of how the Protestant Reformation came about. It expounds on the dramatic expansion of Islam under Süleyman the Magnificent and its imprint on the Judeo-Christian world.

1.3   Literature review

My main research question and its sub-questions touch on several historical areas. Almost all of them are covered by an abundant number of publications. Here are the essential topics:

The first area concerns European medieval history. For a general overview, Michel Clévenot (1999) offers a balanced exposition of what made up the Middle Ages so "dark".[9] His five volumes under the title *Les hommes de la fraternité* (French) are filled with well-researched anecdotes that have helped me connecting the dots. In

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[9] Many authors merge the concepts of "Middle Ages" and "Dark Ages". Some expand the latter to more or less the entire medieval period.

regard to early Christianity, Daniel Rops (1971) is a favourite authority for a specific reason: As a Roman Catholic author, he does not attempt to deemphasize the theological drift of the denomination he belongs to but cultivates a spirit of self-criticism instead. That needs to be commended.

The second area deals with apostolic Christianity. The most significant work is John Van Schalk's (2004) dissertation *Unde Malum. Dualisme bij manicheeërs en katharen. Een vergelijkend onderzoek,* in which the Dutch author brings out sufficient evidence to rehabilitate the Bogomiles as diligent students of the Bible. i.e., authentic Christians. His ground-breaking argumentation removes the stigma of Bogomiles as "heretics". As such, it is a must for every discussion on pre-reformatory groups.

Turning to Islam, the classical way of viewing its emergence is the *Sīrat-il-Nabawiyya* (the "Path of the Prophet"), abbreviated *as-sīrah* (the "Path"), a comprehensive biography of Muḥammad accepted by most scholars as the truth. Ṭabarī (838-923) compiled it in 40 tomes known to be a reconstruction of Ibn Isḥaq's (704-767)[10] text (earliest written of the *sīrah* c.767) transmitted by Ibn Hishām (died May 833)[11] (Ṭaha ᶜAbdul Ra'ūf Saᶜd, ed., 1991) and, to a lesser extent, in *The History of the Messengers and the Kings* (*Tariḫ ar-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, ed., 2019).[12] The *sīrah* has been recently qualified of "Standard Islamic Narrative" (S.I.N.) by the proponents of a historical-critical approach. Indeed, one cannot ignore the arguments formulated by the revisionist school of Islamic studies since the 1970s[13] against the S.I.N.'s historicity.[14] Even though it is up to the reader which approach to endorse, I recommend that we seriously look at the evidence presented by the revisionist hypothesis.

When touching on the painful issue of the Muslim conquests, very few have searched for their quranic foundation, except by demonising the concept of *jihād*. Ayman Ibrahim (*Fighting and Killing in the Quran*) and David Cook (*Jihad in the Quran*) have been published together in Gordon Nickel ed., (2020). One contribution is authored by an orientalist, and the other by a westerner, which mainly resolves the partly

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[10] Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq ibn Yasār ibn Khiyār.

[11] Abu Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hisham ibn Ayyub al-Himyari al-Mu'afiri al-Baṣri.

[12] Abū Jaᶜfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd aṭ-Ṭabarī.

[13] Kurt Bangert (2008), Tilman Nagel (2008), Karl-Heinz Ohlig & Gerd R. Puin (2013), Gabriel Said Reynolds (2008), John Wansbrough (2014), and Ibn Warraq (2002), just to mention a few.

[14] For an overview, see Bangert (2008:185-264).

differing perspectives. I have searched the quranic corpus independently and tried to draw my own conclusions.

The sub-question about a possible quranic foundation of Islamic policies toward pre-reformers and reformers in both the support of their cause and in their protection turned out to be uncharted territory in terms of existing literature. Many scholars have worked on comparative studies between the Bible and the Qur'ān[15] and identified the common ground. Yet, no exegesis has been done on the *āyāt* professing the presence of two contrasting kinds of Christians. Not even the *Aḥādīth* (Islamic traditions) and the *mufassirūn* (classical exegetes) have expounded on them.[16] That is why my research in that area is not based on any specific existing works and, therefore, intends to break new ground.

The scope of these texts in their implementation leads us to the next area of study: the official attitude of Muslims toward non-Muslims. In his dissertation *Rechte und Pflichten der Nichtmuslime im Islam. Eine islamisch-rechtswissenschaftliche, gesellschaftliche Studie* (2006), Muhammad Abdel Fadeel Abdel Rahem has listed, translated, and examined the existing documents that define the status of minorities in Muslim societies. Notice that Abdel Fadeel's research covers Islam jurisprudence, starting from the Hegira until the end of the Ottoman Empire. Such a bilingual publication (the original language, Arabic, has been kept) is not only a true gold mine but, under the pen of a scholar of Al-Azhar University, it enjoys a quasi-official authority.

Many essays on Ottoman history have covered a period that had remained obscure for a long time.[17] Yet, still present in older monographs like Paul Cole's (1968) *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* is the focus on their terrifying level of cruelty. Cole seems to ignore the responsibility of the Christians for their failure to defend their territories. This does not imply that his and others' works lack substance. After all, most authors limit their research almost exclusively to the military aspect and barely mention the socio-intellectual elements that shaped the Reformation. Overall, and despite the reproduction of hundreds of *miniatures*, no matter how informative they may be, Cole's contribution leaves the reader somewhat disappointed – especially in the light of my main research question.

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[15] Samuel Said Reynolds (2018), Jeffrey C. Hayes (2020 and 2021).

[16] Part of my conclusion in chapter twelve will be to demonstrate why.

[17] For general background see Stanley L. Poole, ed. (1878), Peter F. Sugar (1955), and Carl L. Brown, ed. (1996).

On the other extreme are authors who overemphasize Muslim benevolence toward Christians, and do not spare praise on the Ottomans. Halil İbrahim İnalcık, probably the most prominent expert in Turkish annals, is the one who rebukes western historians for their "Europeo-centric view of history" (Halil İnalcık, in Kemal Karpat, ed., 1974:51). Yet, this highly respected scholar cultivates in his turn what I call an "Ottomano-centric view of history" with a touch of the spirit of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk evidenced in his famous sentence: *Ne mutlu türküm diyene!* ("how happy who can say, 'I am Turk'!"). Nevertheless, İnalcık's *The Ottoman Empire, the classical age 1300-1600* (2001[2]) could be appraised as the gold standard of Ottoman accounts.

Without unduly eulogizing his own people, Karpat (2002) gathered unpublished evidence of how the Ottomans exercised a duty of diligent care of their Christian subjects. Mehmet Fuat Köprülü's *The Origins of the Ottoman Empire* (2008) is another well-balanced academic presentation. Coping with Atatürk's secularism, Köprülü provides very few aspects of the role of religion in the chronicles of his ancestors, which in return, allows him a more objective approach. If Mehrdad Kia's contribution *The Ottoman Empire* (1992) condenses facts of general knowledge, the scholar of Iranian origin adds the Persian touch as an element of the Anatolian past.

In promoting what I would call "ethno-heroism", I believe that both the pro-Europeans and the pro-Turks writer have their legitimate agendas, or at the very least, their own criteria of filtering. Both define the positives according to their perspective, which could form a unique approach similar to two faces of the same coin. It is up to the researchers to classify them as complementary parts of the same story or not.

In this quest for a middle ground, Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall's (1827-1835) study is still exemplary, even though his *Geschichte des osmanischen Reiches* was published nearly two centuries ago. The Austrian orientalist began a career as a diplomat in 1799 and was soon appointed to his government embassy in Istanbul. For fifty years, von Hammer-Purgstall analysed Arabic, Persian and Turkish authors. The result makes no less than ten volumes – a treasure chest for research workers. Von Hammer-Purgstall spent thirty years listing thousands of letters, treaties, and reports with the meticulousness of a Benedictine. His goal is not to obtain a specific result but to file as many documents as possible without critical analysis. As such, Hammer-Purgstall is not a historian but an archivist. Unfortunately for my research, the central part of his work deals with the time after the second half of the sixteenth century. Therefore, despite the impressive amount of information, there is not much

on the period relevant to my research. Still, Hammer-Purgstall includes some crucial linkages between the reformers and the Ottomans that I will not fail to scrutinise.

For the overview of early Christianity, Philip Schaff's encyclopaedic account (1997[5]) is a must-read. For an extensive bibliography of the Reformation – which I will make no effort to give –, I chose James Wylie's *The History of Protestantism* (2002[3]) for his dynamic language that sometimes outweighs accuracy and, typical for nineteenth-century authors, neglects to perform a systematic check on the integrity of his sources. At least, his exposure of the interaction of the three conflicting forces of the sixteenth century (Emperor Charles V, Martin Luther, and Sultan Süleyman) provides a frame for further scientific investigation.

Beresford Kidd's *Documents illustrative of the Continental Reformation* (1911) offers no less than 740 pages of primary sources related to the German Reformation, covering almost every aspect of that period. Unfortunately for my research, Kidd does not include the communications the Lutherans and the Ottomans had. This glaring omission is not insignificant. Either Kidd did not want to address why the Reformation took place – which would contradict the rest of his presentation. Or the topic was possibly too sensitive in his eyes to be addressed.

But let us turn our attention to the works covering our actual question, the interplay relating the Christian and the Muslim players. Two titles have caught my attention, first because of their scientific rigor and because both authors are originating in nations historically hostile to the Turks. The first is a doctoral dissertation *The Turkish Impact on the German Reformation, 1520–1555*[18] completed by Stephen Fischer-Galați in 1949. His complex approach was revised five years later and published under *Ottoman Imperialism and German Protestantism, 1521-1555* (1959, 1972[2]). Fischer-Galați's information is the closest I could find to my main research question. Fischer-Galați concentrates on the dynamic linking Charles V, Ferdinand I, François I, the pope, and the Lutherans, as they all faced the Turkish menace while pursuing their own interests against each other. The work does not include Luther's view and Islam and vice versa. Yet, it describes what looks like a game on the European chessboard and how the Lutherans came out as winners.

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[18] A *résumé* of his dissertation was published in 1954, *Ottoman Imperialism and Lutheran Struggle for Recognition in Germany, 1520-1529* (JSTOR 1954:23/1/46-67).

Nearly at the same time when the Romanian scholar Fischer-Galați's published his research, Leften Stavros Stavrianos penned *The Ottoman Empire – was it the sick man of Europe?* (1957) complemented by *The Balkan since 1453* one year later (1958, 2008[4]). Both authors, especially the Greek Stavrianos, are among the best examples of how ethnocentrism can be left aside: Stavrianos does not miss any opportunity to demonstrate Ottoman support for Christian minorities and vice versa. As such, his work dramatically challenges the *cliché* of the Turk as evil. Rather, Stavrianos favour them like welcome allies. Many of Stavrianos' positive reflections will be included in my research. Given such favourable treatment, one can be tempted to think that it is "too good to be true" so they need to be reconsidered.

Fischer-Galați and Stavrianos' focus on the positive role of the Ottoman Empire in the Reformation process gained acceptance, and several authors followed them. Kenneth Oster (1978, 1992[2]) is the one who aroused my interest in this linkage when I was a young student. Since then, I have been gathering evidence in support of, as well as in opposition to Oster's surprising assumption. As the title indicates (*The Role of Christianity and Islam in the Cosmic Perspective of God and Man*)*,* Oster adds the biblical dimension to the search for the positives. He enumerates several elements as signs of what he interprets being a "divine purpose" (1992:12), quoting The Acts of the Apostles 17:26 (NIV) as evidence for God's leading role in human affairs (1992:38):

> "From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inherit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."

Oster sees the Arab conquests as fulfilment of the fifth Trumpet of St. John's Revelation 9:11-12, the Ottomans being the sixth. By doing so, he endorses a historicist view of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation in particular, as the depiction of actual historical events that span the time beginning at the first and spanning history until the second advent of the Messiah. It is not a new approach. Historicism had been sanctioned in Christian eschatology from the early church period by the apologist Justin Martyr (c.100–c.165) (Le Roy Froom 1954:1/231), the Greek bishop Irenaeus (c.130-c.202) (Froom 1954:1/ 244), and Tertullian (c.155–c.220), "the father of Latin Christianity" (Froom 1954:1/-255). In chapter ten, I shall develop that the medieval period nourished a long-standing apocalyptic tradition by attributing a divine dimension to contemporary phenomena like the emergence of Germanic tribes and of Islam later on.

Granted, in the wake of the Catholic Counter-Reformation (starting in 1545), Historicism has been supplanted by Futurism, an approach of prophecy initiated by the Spanish Jesuit Franciso Ribera (1535–1591), that projects every unfulfilled biblical prediction into the future. At the same time, the Jesuit Luis de Alcazar (1554–1613) promoted Preterism, a school of thought despised by early Christianity as being a heresy. De Alcazar followed Porphyrius of Tyre (c.234–c.305) who, in his *Adversus Christianos* (*Against the Christians*),[19] reduced biblical symbolism to the level of some forgery written in an apocalyptic genre as a reference to events that have occurred in the past. Over time, though, his counter-interpretation began to supplant traditional exegesis. The one who resumed the historical method was John Cotton, a clergyman in England and the New World (1584–1652) (Froom 1954:3/33): Cotton is supported by a long list of Puritan authors that ended in the nineteenth-century evangelical confessions derivating from the spiritual awakening within the American colonies. It means that, in his view, Oster is by far not an exception but rather a part of what is probably the longest line of leading expositors of prophecy, in particular of St. John's Revelation.[20]

The *novum* is, Oster suggests a new examination of Islam in connection with the Seven Trumpets of St. John's Revelation. He depicts the Islamic conquests as having been a positive event, which makes his approach remarkable. In particular, Oster (1992:34) interprets "the bottomless pit" mentioned in Revelation 9:1 as "a desolate area", i.e., a neutral reference to the desertic landscape of Arabia. Until then, the origin of the fifth trumpet had always been presented as a symbol for Hell. While his view gave the legitimacy to confer Islam a demonic connotation, Oster negates the satanic origin of Islam and does it on the biblical ground – a quite revolutionary approach. As such, by validating the frame for a theological bridge toward a religion that has been mainly demonised throughout the centuries, the author sets a milestone in interfaith dialogue. Even if divine Providence is not a scientific postulate, its awareness allows a Muslim-friendly comprehension of the historical facts. In doing so, the author may neglect or ignore pieces of evidence that do not fit into his puzzle. Even though that can be condemned as a shortcoming, it can be also justified as a

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[19] No original or copy of this book has ever been found. Porphyrius' central message could be reconstructed by Christian apologists who refer to it.

[20] Froom lists 134 views of the trumpets as the Saracens (the fifth trumpet) and the Turks (the sixth trumpet) and / or with the woes of Revelation 8:11 and 9:12 (1954:4/1124-1125). See also chapter ten.

purposeful reaction to those who have pointed out the negatives. Given Oster's western perspective, this is a surprising premise.

Oster's approach was the starting point of my research. I began to fathom Luther's view on Islam and searched the *Luthers Werke*, a topic that has been amply addressed in several scholarly works. In this regard, a remarkable monograph before Oster was Erich Bethmann's Master's thesis, *The Muhammadian Menace at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century and Its Influence Upon the Protestant Reformation* (1950). Oster begins with the pre-Reformation period, and Bethmann focuses on the imprint of Islam on Lutheranism in the sixteenth century. As such, both works admirably complement each other, with Bethmann going more profound in his research than Oster, who mostly cites secondary sources. The thesis of the native German speaker, who mastered several European and Semitic languages, contains an unequalled number of primary sources. Bethmann writes with clarity and scientific rigor hardly matched in subsequent works. Too bad his dissertation has never been published.[21] It gives the impression that, twelve years after Bethmann's publication, Kenneth Setton's *Lutheranism and the Turkish Peril* (1962:136-165) includes many of Bethmann's ideas as if both had shared a common source. Even though Setton's presentation of Martin Luther's position on the Turks is a well-researched topic, it leaves the reader hungry to discover the other side of the story, namely the way Ottoman viewed Martin Luther. This makes Bethmann's work particularly valuable.

More recently, an impressive number of partially unpublished references to the early responses to Islam has been displayed by Adam Francisco in his monography *Martin Luther and Islam: a Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics* (2008). Francisco's originality is to value in that perspective. Furthermore, and – a particular interest for my research – , Francisco expounds on the tension between Luther's attentiveness toward Islam as a theological challenge and his view on the Turkish threat as a God-given opportunity for an appeal for spiritual revival and personal reformation. By doing so, Francisco creates a well-balanced demonstration that Luther was not only a fine pastor but also a brilliant apologist.

Gregory Miller (2018) published *The Turks and Islam in Reformation Germany*, another comprehensive research on the topic. The monograph updates his Dissertation *Holy War and View on Islam in German Pamphlet Literature, 1520-1545* (1994).

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[21] A scanned copy of the thesis is available at the Library of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI..

In it, Miller correctly notices the division among historians on how late Europeans perceived the fall of Constantinople. His solution comes through a demonstration of the weakness of the western actors as the key to the Ottoman achievements rather than the latter's strength. Hence, his significant contribution is to show Europe's lack of coherence as the cause of failures. At the same time, he tarnishes the image of the heroic Ottomans who profited from their rivals' weaknesses.

Finally, if every essay adds its part to the big picture, it remains that none undertakes a rigorous analysis of all sources combined. This observation also applies to Süleyman's biographies, the most interesting being John Merriman's *Suleiman the Magnificent 1520-1566* (1944), and Metin Kunt & Christine Woodhead's *Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Suleyman the Magnificent and His Age: the Ottoman Empire in the early modern world* (2014). One explanation for this lack of critical spirit may be that the Christian-Muslim debate has much potential for polarization. It may cause one to ask: Is there ethnocentrism at stake? Perhaps national pride or emotional reminiscences?

Whatever the answer may be, our globalised and – hopefully – enlightened mindset hardly admits that it is time to come to terms with 1400 years of inter-religious animosity. The question is, should it happen at the expense of objectivity? Or perhaps, were the blood-stained records of the past unacceptably biased? No matter the logic behind the emphasis on the positive aspects, every author allows the impression of attempting the best effort. It may be that reasonable facts have been largely overlooked or underestimated in the past. In this case, their rediscovery produces a relief that is such as to preclude any willingness to question them.

That being said, only a few authors have included the theological dimension in the discussion. I am not referring to those who, like Oster, share Luther's belief in the providential emergence of the Turks. My concern is to rehabilitate the Ottomans facing the negative view of Islam still prevailing in western thinking. Here is the main missing link I hope to find.

Last, one may argue that I do not corroborate historical Muslim sources in my study of quranic concepts. If that is true, it is because, apart from the classical exegesis written by the *mufassirūn*, very few analyses of the text were published; and what has been done is of relatively poor quality.

1.4. Statement of the problem

Most highlights of the time spanning the medieval period and the German Reformation is comprehensively documented. At the same time, more need to be done on *why* the significant steps happened to be what they were. Some crucial factors are still underestimated:

- Firstly, the consequences of the symbiosis of religion and politics typical of the Middle Ages.

- Secondly, the stigmatization of groups that can be considered forerunners of the Reformation, but mainly relegated by historians to the status of "heretics".

- Thirdly, the overwhelming presence of Islam parallel to one thousand years of European memories. It includes several controversial approaches to the major milestones: the Islamic conquests, the crusades, and the scientific and intellectual legacy of the Muslim "Golden Age" to the European "Dark Ages".

- Lastly, an examination of the theological foundation of the Muslim position toward Christianity within our time frame, including a definition of elements relevant to this attitude: theological differences, perception of Christianity – sometimes as an apostate development, and occasionally a kindred religion; the concept of "holy war", the conversion of "infidels", the policies around *jizyah* and *dhimmī* that may be seen either discriminating or as a protective measure against non-Muslims.

1.5 The main research question and its intention

My main research question aims to detect the motives behind the possible contribution of Islam to the German Reformation. It implies the need for a historical analysis of *how* the Ottoman elite supported Martin Luther's cause. Given Islam's role as a reforming agent, another centre of interest is to assess the import of the quranic definition of apostasy within Christianity vs. the mention of "Christians who are not alike" (Qur'ān, 'Āli 'Imrān 3:113). The answer may view the protection of reformatory efforts by Muslims as something that happened on purpose or, on the contrary, like a by-product of Muslim policy, for instance, in their search for allies against non-reformatory dominations.

To summarize, my leading research question can be divided into three areas and nine sub-questions:

- Early Islam's assessment of Christianity. I intend to discover to which extent Muslims defined their exposure to Christianity on a quranic definition valid from the beginning of Islam until the Reformation, and how, in return, it would affect Muslims forasmuch as the Qur'ān is supposed to be their authority.

  o Can the quranic allegation of Christian apostasy be related to some theological controversies of its time? The intention behind this question is that both the shift within Christendom from a Bible-based creed to a tradition-based religion (chapters two and three) and the emergence of the Qur'ān-based religion took place nearly simultaneously. Answering this question necessitates the search for a correlation between the two. That could resolve several questions around the emergence of Islam, like its success and its development up to the German Reformation.

  o Which groups contemporary to the apparition of the Qur'ān can be associated with the "Apostolic" Christians? (chapter four). The answer is to present those who may have been forerunners of the Reformation, and to find out whether Muslims basically perceived them as "the Christians near to the Muslims" praised in the Qur'ān (al-Mā'idah 5:82).

  o How much theological common ground can we detect in Christianity and Islam?

  o Do the differences arise from varying readings of the sacred texts, or are they the product of various human inventions within the type of Christianity we are dealing with? (chapter five). The answer to this question could explain some common ground and sources of divergences.

  o How, when, and where did early Islam differentiate two groups of Christians; and on which criteria was this categorisation implemented? (chapter six). The answer to that question could clarify whether the impact of the Ottoman Empire on the German Reformation was an entirely new phenomenon or if it started earlier, for instance, during the Arab conquests in case they were based on the Qur'ān.

- The possible Muslim impact on the course of the German Reformation. I have taken for granted that such a repercussion is a fact, but raising this question expresses my desire to critically revise the records affirming such an interaction.

  o Which intellectual contribution did Islam provide to promote the Reformation outbreak? (chapter seven). My goal is to gather as much evidence as possible and to examine their relevance.

  o Is German Lutheranism an extension of those described by the Qur'ān as "peculiar Christians"? (chapter eight). The answer to this question should accord the Reformation a new dimension in the light of interfaith efforts.

  o How did the Ottoman Empire's growth to the status of a global player apply the Islamic recognition of these two strands of Christianity up to the Reformation and its antagonists? (chapter nine). Here, Muslims should establish an awareness of their historic role in the present peace and revisitation processes.

- The search for evidences of direct Ottoman interference into the German Reformation. The purpose is to connect the quranic view of Christianity with the reality of the Ottoman intrusions into Christian territories.

  o What was the scope of the immediate Islamic imprint on the Reformation, and how did the reformers perceive it? (chapter ten). The practical aim is to draw possible lessons from them on how to relate to Islam in its theology and in our interaction with Muslims.

  o In return, did the Ottomans recognise the Reformation as a God-given invitation to Christendom to back to its biblical roots? If so, did they approach Lutheranism with that quranic distinction in mind? (chapter eleven). In case I succeed in discovering an Ottoman line of conduct, such a precedent could define a viable pattern helping those Muslims who deplore the secularisation and irreligious practices within the Christian world, to search for those different Christians and support them like their heroes did in the past.

It is not my intention to examine why a reformation within Christianity had to take place; but I need to recall background information that can hardly be ignored whether one sees Protestantism as a compelling phenomenon or not. My focus, however, is to present the historical development in relation to possible Islamic help.

A collateral benefit to this study will be to determine to what extent occidental and oriental sources differ, in particular in presenting themselves as benefactors or victims and how they frame those deemed "not alike" as perpetrators.

1.6   Hypotheses

My first hypothesis is that the existence of positive interaction between the Ottomans and Luther deserves greater attention, including whether it can be verified or not.

My second is that Christian and Muslim authors would gaze upon the same narrative from opposite perspectives. I expect significant differences among them, which must be analysed using sociological premises. They may be the product of a religious complex of superiority, embarrassment created by disturbing facts, or the intention to denigrate the "enemies of faith", as Muslims were commonly labelled; perhaps to silence one's own mistakes or, on the contrary, erase antagonistic images in search for reconciliation.

 Another hint is found in the quranic statements describing two separate groups of Christians, a subject that has captured my mind for years. So far, I have not been able to define how substantial the quranic application of these texts was in the way Muslims looked at the German Reformation. This openness provides me hope for an impartial approach to a substantial page of religious history.

Last, I assume that any research related to religion must include a certain margin of freedom in conceptualising dogmas, no matter how binding their nature. The same limit applies to various levels of orthodoxy, spirituality, and commitment to the sacred corpus, whichsoever it be. The more pragmatic the religious observance is, the more it may vary according to time and circumstances. Since I attempt to analyse elements scattered over almost one thousand years across a geographic area ranging from Andalusia to Siberia, the challenge will be to identify recurring patterns.

Given the intermingling of politics and religion, another assumption is that religious persuasion may be predominantly comprehended as *a fortiori* justification of per-

sonal interests rather than *a priori* rules of ethics. That is why, in addition to my main research question, attention should be devoted to listing other factors that can be regarded as the Ottoman helping factor toward the German Reformation.

Finally, if we want to analyse a single religion in over its thousand years of existence – in that case, from its establishment to a theocracy in the sixth century to Martin Luther's time in the sixteenth – it would not be surprising to trace some evolution in its nature. Despite these hypotheses, the search for an Islamic role on the German Reformation can only be found in explicit Islamic statements. It explains why my work must include the review of the *expressis verbis* declarations of the quranic corpus on themes relevant to my main research question: policies on interaction with non-Muslim believers, apostate vs. faithful Christians, "holy war", significance and authenticity of the Bible, to name the central ones.

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 Theoretical framework

My sub-questions point to the necessity to work on two levels: theological and historical. The first level search for elements within Islamic theology and possibly some common ground bridging Islam and Protestantism. The second examines attested facts, tries to find new ones, and it intends to establish new ways of linking them toward an answer to my main research question.

Concerning the method of quranic exegesis, I will use the expository mode: unfold the āyāt, elaborate, interpret, and bring out their relevance. Further, I will seek to determine the Muslim understanding of both the text and its application.

The historical part of my research intends to be of qualitative nature. It is a journey through ancient, partly unexplored sources that need to be placed into the general frame of ideological and practical interaction between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, my method is analytical rather than descriptive. It presupposes a correct view of past events. Primary sources might need to be reconstructed and contextualised in time, space, and religious ideology. That requires a historical-critical evaluation of the material. Some case-study needs to be conducted where sources happen to be too controversial. As such, my research is of conceptual nature, whereas its outcome should be a reconsidering of the fundamental view of Islam and Christianity in their factual encounters. It differentiates two strands of Christianity, mainly those of Catholi-

cism and Protestantism.[22] In order to grasp the possible Ottoman help on the flourishing of the German Reformation, both entities must be linked to their historical and theological background:

Firstly, the Constantinian interplay of church and state should help understand *why* a reformation took place within Christianity and *how* it happened.

Secondly, the definition of Protestantism as a reformatory endeavour within Christianity offers a striking parallel to the *raison d'être* of Islam as a reforming agent within monotheism. Indeed, the widespread view among Muslims is that Muḥammad came as the last prophet to communicate the Qur'ān to humanity as the *auctoritas normanda*. His mission was to correct the falsification of the former revelations (the Bible). Here, we sense that both Islam and Protestantism have a similar *raison d'être*, which in return could be ground enough to unite their forces or, on the contrary, to compete with each other. Revising such theories requires the verification of a significant number of recorded documents to be taken into account.

Moreover, the title of my research indicates that the correlations to be drawn presuppose a possible Ottoman intention in the policy toward Christianity standing on quranic grounds. The search for valid evidence for such a theological dimension requires an exegesis of those *āyāt*[23] that point to distinct groups of Christians. The question is whether these texts may be an apology against the theological drift within Christianity at the time the Qur'ān appeared. Or could they also have been binding statements that guided Muslim leaders when they faced non-Muslims? In this regard, the concept of holy war and it signification demands reconsideration, as it appears to be directly related to the topic.

1.7.2 Research design

The framework implies that my research is of historical nature. At the same time, the choice of the topic indicates the need to include a large number of facets. This is why the correlational elements must be included in the design. The danger of drawing a broad picture is that one can go in-depth into some elements. On the positive side, it

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[22] We should not forget that, at least in the first and second century of Christianity, the doctrinal variety was such that it would probably be more appropriate to talk rather of "Christianities" with various and competing theological agendas (Pauline, Johannite, Gnostic, Judeo-Christian Christianities), than of one homogenous entity, which was most of the time far to be identical with the biblical message.

[23] Quranic verses (singular: *āyah*).

supports a causal-comparative dimension of a significant period of the human past.

Addressing the role of Islam in Europe could be a delicate task. After all, History is far from being an exact science. Whenever it deals with ideological issues like religious matters, it touches on sensibilities. In that regard, the question is, who defines concepts like truth, apostasy, and heresy? Likewise, victories are as hard to minimise as defeats are to highlight. After all, how can records about violent conquests be treated without evoking emotions? Still, or maybe because of the feelings generated by the topic, I will use a historical-critical approach to events, i.e., in the context presented by their observers. While reporting as they did, I need to discern their motives. At the same time, going through the records of such sensitive issues – without judging to what extent they have been biased – may reveal a variety that, in return, draws a general picture with a unique message to emerge. Like pointillist painters[24] focused on dots ("points") that together form an *impression* rather than an exact *reproduction* of reality, my methodology aims at connecting as many dots as possible to create an impressionist view of one specific topic, which is the benefits brought about by one thousand years of interaction between the two world religions.

1.7.3 Research method

My work should bring an appreciation of the role of Islam in the theological and practical journey of Christendom at the beginning of the medieval period to the German Reformation. To my knowledge, this has not been undertaken before. I hope that the result of my research will contribute to filling a gap in the gigantic jigsaw puzzle called human collective memory. To achieve this, I intend to gather new evidence on Muslim interactions with reformers and pre-reformers. I will search for clues disclosing how much inspiration could have emerged from quranic precepts.

To uncover elements that support my search on Christian-Muslim relationships during the period under consideration, it will also be necessary to gather evidence from both western and eastern sources. Especially in the context of conquests, commonplace is to say that the winners write the annals. Therefore, I proceed with the premise that essential discrepancies among writers are to be expected. On the other hand, given that my topic has to do with the reciprocal effect of two religions on each

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[24] Georges Seurat, Paul Signac, and more recently, Andy Warhol, whereas I am by no means attending to rank myself to the level of such great artists.

other, I must gauge the reliability of the chronicles in light of their writers' intentions. It will be necessary to raise questions: Is there some intent to denigrate the antagonists and present oneself well-disposed? Or, to the contrary, do writers extol real or imaginary virtues as an act of goodwill or conciliation? Similar concerns apply to the divergent views expressed by Catholic and Protestant authors on church matters and, in particular, on the Reformation.

Yet, conditions exhibiting such stark contrasts create the ideal ground for a document analysis as defined by Glenn Bowen (2009:27-40). Moreover, the great quantity of materials available facilitates the process of triangulation.

That being said, I do not take the percentage of corroboration as proof of their reliability as long as I have not explored how serious the explanations are. Indeed, they may be multiple: lack of scientific rigour, political agendas, religious barriers, emotional reminiscences, or simply a restricted view of the "big picture."

Another limitation is the extensive work already done in some areas. It would be illusory to think about analysing them from scratch. Pretending, for instance, to do better analytical work than the Introduction to the Weimarer Edition of Luther's works did would be futile compared to its thousands of pages of explanations of "the world behind the text."

My starting point will be to search for facts closely related to the topic instead of focusing on the exactness of narratives. Controversies on details over, for example, the number of soldiers involved in such or such a battle, are only relevant if they have repercussions on the Reformation, or at least if their outcome was beneficial to Christians. The most critical question is somewhere else, namely whether the Muslim attitude has been motivated by a desire to vindicate "Apostolic" Christians. The scrutinisation of the facts may also involve more fundamental debates, in particular an analysis of the recent challenge of the S.I.N.. Granted, what is at stake has the potential to shake the very bedrock of Islam. On the other hand, the core of scholars follow the S.I.N. so far and have been applying it as a pattern of conduct in Christian-Muslim relationships from their beginning until the time of Luther and Süleyman (and beyond). In that case, I will restrict my critical approach to evidence, such as the common ground in Islamic and Judeo-Christian theology, strong enough to support the blocks of sound interfaith dialogue without questioning the validity of Islamic sources.

My attention will also be caught by any sign of the revisiting of common places. If bias is a distortion of facts and their underemphasis or overemphasis, the first question is, why does some information have been probably downplayed, or even silenced, while, at the same time, another one was played up to figure prominently in the collective memory?

The answer requires focusing on statements that challenge the traditional view. When this happens, I will expose how alternative hypotheses have been perceived. In addition to the excitement of unfolding new authentic facts (which I hope to do), a challenging task will be to analyse the way unconventional ideas are commented on reviews, papers, studies, and research; and at the reaction recorded. Like overreactions to "fake news" in social media, sensationalism can help bring some dynamic to the beaten tracks of human annals.

My document analysis will have three levels: 1. Presenting the mainstream position. 2. Searching for new insights. 3. Inquire how unconventional views were accepted or abandoned, and why.

Finally, my work includes an exegetical part, for which the only documents to be examined are the primary sources (the Qur'ān and, to a certain extent, the Bible). In the first stage, I will only screen relevant passages quoted verbatim. Only in an ulterior phase will I look at how these texts have been applied within the reality of Christian-Muslim relationships.

It goes without saying that when uncovering evidence of positive synergy, one should not forget that the Islamic conquests did leave a bitter aftertaste on many of the populations that came under their administration. I have yet to find any attempt to reconcile them with the (mainly) opposite points of view of Muslim writers. Is there a truth somewhere in the middle? Does History need to be re-written here and there? Or was the positive repercussion of Islam on the Reformation an exception to the rule, i.e., the fruit of chance – or maybe Providence as something our human vision can hardly penetrate – amid savage actions directed against Christians? Seeking to answer these questions may be more complex than endorsing one or the other point of view. That is where I hope to make my most significant enhancement. As we start our journey, let us bear in mind the quranic mentioning of two strands of Christianity: one apostate and one genuine. Let us constantly ask ourselves whether this differentiation could provide an answer to the dynamic that unfolded between Luther and Süleyman.

Being aware of a possible ideological rivalry splitting pro-Muslim and pro-Christian authors, I wish my critical eye turned to both versions can result in a presentation that strikes a valuable balance.

1.8   Limitation of the study

To recognise why the Reformation had to take place and how it took place, I need to look at every factor that activated the reformatory process within Christianity. My exposition will focus on the Reformation in Germany only and not on the broader scope of the Reformation including, for example, England, France, and specific groups (the Anabaptists in particular). It is intended to be a quest for new connecting lines between them like dots of a historical nature. It will incorporate an overview of pre-reformatory groups existing well before the events around Wittenberg. It must also deal with the Islamic position on Christianity. Moreover, my overview requires a study of those countries in which the Reformation took place in areas under Ottoman control (Bosnia, Hungary, and Transylvania) and a presentation of aspects of Islamic History relevant to my research. The timeline will stop on 25 September 1555, when the Peace of Augsburg was ratified as the culmination of several attempts to restore religious unity between Catholics and Protestants.

The definition of my topic implies the necessity to draw an overview of the factors that brought about the Reformation. Yet, it will have to be limited to answering my main research questions: What needed to be reformed, and how the process evolved from its very origin? As I shall try to demonstrate that it started much earlier than during Martin Luther's time.

Another limitation is the obligation to let aside the diversity of the Islamic world – possibly as broad as Christendom. Too often, its theological plurality is underestimated. Yet, it would be a mammoth task to review, for instance, all variations of the quranic manuscripts, the divergent schools of Islamic *aqidah* (creed), the *Aḥādīth* (traditions), the *mufassirūn* (classical exegetes), and the *Ijmā'* (consensus of Islamic scholars) – not to mention the differences between Sunni, Shia, and other denominations. The size of this field of exegesis constrains me to limit myself to quranic statements.

Furthermore, the events climaxing around the German Reformation have been amply reviewed in numerous monographs. I will mention only a few of them and try to avoid losing myself in published details.

To conclude: It may well be that the final analysis will not yield the conclusion that the quranic contribution to the German Reformation was indeed significant. But should some evidence be found; I am aware it may bring answers of different natures. Does the Qur'ān address, for instance, an explicit mandate to reform Christianity, giving Muslim believers an incentive to act on purpose? Or was it instead indirect? Does Islam contain any theological premises that marked Martin Luther in his world-view, perhaps helping him formulate his reformatory principles?

1.9 Significance of the study

The significance of the study is its accent on the four areas listed in the "statement of the problem." To achieve an unbiased result, it is crucial to put every element into the light and the context it deserves. If Islam's say in the German Reformation was part of a strategy that found its inspiration in Islam's holy book, one thousand years of Muslim-Christian relationships might need to be re-written.

I intend to slightly reshape the self-definition of Christianity by showing why it is the way it is: a split religion. Even if we welcome the ongoing steps on the path of revisiting the Catholic and Protestant past, recalling some of the dark side of religious history may help avoid repetition of possible errors from the past. Regarding the interfaces binding the Muslim and the Christian perspectives, their recognition may help reduce the clash of civilisations that, in a globalised world closer together, may quickly be kindled. The more specific outcome has to do with practical considerations:

- Had there been a more apparent appreciation of Süleyman's attested role in the events leading to the Reformation, the Lutherans might have celebrated their recent 500th jubilee in a different manner.

- The rise of Islam represents a growing concern for the West. Turkey's bid to join the European Union is one of the most pressing geopolitical issues at the beginning of the new century.[25] It is followed by debates around the westward

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[25] See for example, Nathalie Tocci 2014:5, Annabelle Littoz-Monnet & Beatriz Villanueva Penas, n.d. [Online] http://aei.pitt.edu/9307/1/050404Turquie-ALM-BVP.pdf [retrieved 17 August 2021].

waves of migrants, mostly of Islamic faith, who have constantly been reaching Europe since 2015,.

Finally, I know that some facets of my work may challenge current views. In a world of growing islamophobia, this may be a difficult mission. But the answer could enrich the terms of the current interfaith debates with an invitation to Christendom to re-think her position on Islam. The result, if any, should be an evaluation of what Germany owes to Turkey. At the same time, my research could encourage the Islamic community to exercise more excellent care in its perception of Christianity by learning to perceive "two groups" of Christians.

In summary, may the facts gathered in this research make a valuable footnote in the role Turkey (and Islam in general) can play in shaping the future.[26] May my conclusions add to the dynamic of the Christian-Muslim dialogue and the peaceful integration of these two groups. May my work be a valuable tool for all who attempt to build a better world!

1.10   Chapter outline

After this introduction (chapter one), the second chapter begins with an overview of the quranic texts referring to those non-Muslims declared "Infidels". Then, I intend to present an overview of what may constitute a drift of Christian theology (Greek: *apostasía*) away from the apostolic faith. For this, I will focus on the role notable figures such as Constantine and Justinian played in it.

Chapter three will address the relationships between church and state in early European society as a key element for their theological drift and their consequences for "Apostolic" Christians.

In chapter four, I will search for the presence of "Apostolic" Christians in medieval centuries and ask to which extent they can be labelled as pre-reformatory movements. I will start with an analysis of the quranic references to the People of the Book.

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[26] The topic has gained actuality in the last decade through Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the controversial president of the Republic of Turkey, who has often been called a "neo-Ottoman". His admiration in behalf of Turkey's imperial past and his ongoing policy of expansion, at least in terms of geopolitical ambitions, could bring him to act in similar ways as the sultans of old, whom he indirectly claims to be the heir. In this case, unveiling some aspects of the circumstances surrounding the rise of the sultanate and its radius of action far beyond its borders should provide some essential keys to help us gain a better and more balanced understanding of the present challenges and their potentialities for Europe.

To find out to which extent Islam affected the Reformation process, I will list the common ground linking quranic Islam and biblical Christianity and how Muslims related to it. That will be the subject of chapter five.

In chapter six, I will examine the sources documenting the early Islamic import on Europe, with an attempt to detect the areas of pressure or support and, in particular, how it defined the way Muslims interacted with Christians in times of relatively peaceful coexistence.

In chapter seven, I will present various elements inherent to the Muslim world that may have played a role in preparing medieval Europe to transition into the early modern period, thus indirectly paving the way for the German Reformation.

Chapter eight will introduce Martin Luther's direct precursors, their theological participation in ushering in the German Reformation, and the message Luther and his supporters promoted.

In chapter nine, I will draw an overview of the Ottoman emergence and the factors expounding its swift unfolding. It will include an exposition of the Ottoman policy of *milet* applied to non-Muslims and some precedents of direct or indirect protection of discriminated Christians in their realm.

Chapter ten will be dedicated to the progress of the German Reformation, which happened parallel to the Ottoman penetration of the Hapsburg territories. At the same time, I will highlight Martin Luther's attitude regarding Islam, his knowledge, theological reaction, and eschatological views.

In chapter eleven, I will present the Ottoman perception of the Reformation and the "other Christians", and to what extent Süleyman took interest in actively supporting Martin Luther and his theological heirs. The study will include how the sultan applied the quranic definition of two Christian entities. I will close the research with an overview of Ottoman-European relationships at the socio-religious level and a search for the Ottoman incentive in the process.

Lastly, I will summarize the focal points of my findings and add some reflections on its outcome regarding the growing presence of Islam in the West.

1.11   Terminology and dates

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches will be referred to as such, sometimes as "the established church", "state church", or "Church" (capitalized), in some cases as "West Rome" and "East Rome", respectively. Christians who cherished the pre-reformatory principles will be referred to as "Apostolic Christians" (after the name "*apóstolos*" given to Jesus' early disciples), or "forerunners of the Reformation" (i.e., Bible-oriented) and, in the context of Islam, as "peculiar Christians".

The appellation "Protestantism" and "Protestants" came after the Second Imperial Diet of Speyer (1529). Before it, we shall use "Reformation", "Lutheranism", or "Calvinism", and their derivatives.

My research will include some quranic and biblical exegesis. All translations of non-English sources quoted in my work, including the Bible, the Qur'ān, and the Weimarer Edition of Luther's works, are my own work and may not match the current publications. Substantial deviations are justified in the footnotes.

The language employed is British English.

Words in languages using non-Latin alphabets will be transliterated. I will keep the initial spelling of nouns, provided that doing so does not unnecessarily complicate the text. Except for Greek, I transliterated the mention of words, authors, and titles of works written in non-Latin scripts following conventional systems.

Bosnian and Serbian kings were usually named "son of" (Tomašević = son of Tomaš) and almost exclusively Stjepan as their first name. That is due to the honorific use of this name (from the Greek *stephános*, the coronated one). The frequent mention of Stjepan is sometimes confusing.

The dates indicated [in square brackets] after proper names refer to the dates of office and all others (in brackets) to the life span of the persons mentioned.

I use the Gregorian calendar.

1.12   Summary

My main research question is a broad topic that presupposes a wide range of documented information. In particular, where approaches have been amply covered in other publications, an examination of each in detail is impossible and superfluous. At

the same time, giving a historical overview will help to present Islam's indirect role in the reformatory process. Each *momentum* should be scrutinised like one piece of a gigantic puzzle. My assignment is to put the picture together and, if necessary, to look for misplaced or upside-down pieces. It could establish new correlations and revise views that are too simplistic to let them stand as they are.

The consensus applies to almost all areas related to my research: Constantine's motives, the moral decay of the state church in the West[27] – on which not even the Catholic sources remain silent, the history of the Reformation, and the Ottoman Empire as an agent of change.

Three domains remain particularly controversial:

- The nature of Christian movements outside of mainstream Christianity, like the Bogomils and the Albigenses,

- The reliability of the classic biography of Muḥammad recently challenged by the historical-critical method,

- Islam's dazzling expansion in the way generally presented in western records as having been a calamity – and in Muslim sources as a blessing.

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[27] Whereas it should be said that moral decay can happen within any religious group.

Christian apostasy and its beginnings

2.1   Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an informative overview of the significant changes that took place during the reign of Constantine I. Relevant to my research question, the word "reformation" implies radical transformations. Suppose Martin Luther's legacy is to have reshaped ("re – formed") the Christian world; in that case, we must start with the theological adjustments generated by the new status of Christianity under Constantine. It allows us to define Lutheranism as a spiritual turn back to the original values of apostolic Christianity. Reformation presupposes a deformation – let us name it a "drift" away from the norm. This matches the etymological sense of the word "apo – stasy", *apostasía*, the composite verb *aphístēmi*: away (*apó*) from a standing point *(histémi)*. The prefix *apo* is used in the context of a Christian derivation from its original biblical teachings, something that has been predicted by the apostle Paul when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 2:1,3):

> [1] "Now, brothers, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,
>
> [3] Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away [*apostasía*] comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.

Paul foresaw a drift within the apostolic faith and wrote that opposing forces would "draw away the disciples" and many to "depart from the faith."

> Acts of the Apostles 20:29-30
>
> [29] "I know that, after I leave, wild wolves will appear among you and not spare the flock.
>
> [30] Men will rise from among yourselves, speaking perverse things to draw away [*apospan*] [28] the disciples after themselves."

> 1 Timothy 4:1
>
> [1] "The Spirit expressly says that in the last times, some will depart [*apostēsontaí*][29] from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons."

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[28] *Apospan tous mathētàs opíso haautōn*. Notice the use of the same prefix *apo*.

[29] *Apostēsontaí tines tēs písteōs*. Again, the word has the prefix *apo*.

2.2   The quranic view on Christian apostasy

Muslims are aware of the theological drift within Christian beliefs and consider it a fact. In that regard, the Qur'ān abounds in reproach against the People of the Book. Some examples:

> al-Baqarah 2:75
>
> "Can you entertain the hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a specific group had heard the Word of Allah and perverted it knowingly after having understood it."
>
> Then, in the same sūrah, we read (āyah 170):
>
> "And when it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has revealed', they said, 'No! We follow what we found our fathers doing'."
>
> The observation is reiterated in 'Āli 'Imrān 3:78,
>
> "There is among them a specific group[30] who roll their tongues when they recite the Book. They want you to believe that it belongs to the Book while it does not; and they say, 'That is from Allah!' even though it is *not* from Allah. Doing so, they tell a lie against Allah, and they are aware of it."

The quranic context essentially associates the "People of the Book" with the Jews, although some rebukes are directed against those who called themselves *naṣārā,* "Christians" (al-Mā'idah 5:14):

> "We [Allah] made a covenant with those who call themselves Christians, but they forgot a part of what they should remember from it. So we aroused between them enmity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. And soon will Allah show them what they used to do."

Let us note that this accusation is not directed against *all* Jews and Christians but only against *some* of them. The expression "a specific group"[31] in al-Baqarah 2:75 and 'Āli 'Imrān 3:78 implies that only *some* of the People of the Book corrupted the reading of their Scriptures. They have blindly taken over inherited beliefs ("the way of our fathers"). The converse is that there must be a majority of Jews and Christians (more than "some") who have put into practice the biblical instructions without mixing them with human hermeneutics. What is more, the negative answer to the admonition

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[30] *Min'hum lafarīqan*.

[31] *Farīqun min'hum*. The root *fā rā qāf* means "to separate."

to "follow what Allah has revealed"[32] implies that the distortion merely consists of the refusal to listen to what God had sent down. It does not necessarily mean that the text *per se* was corrupted. Notice that these āyāt name the Bible "the Word of Allah" and "what Allah has revealed"; but does the Qur'ān denote the falsification of the Bible?

In six sūrāt, Jews and, to a lesser extent, Christians get a rebuke for not living according to their own scriptures:

- al-Baqarah 2:41-42, 58-59, 78-79, 140-143, 146, 159, 174;
- 'Āli 'Imrān 3:71, 78, 187;
- an-Nisā' 4:46-47;
- al-Mā'idah 5:13-15, 41;
- al-An'ām 6:91;
- al-A'rāf 7:162, 165.

In these texts, the Arabic language uses eight different verbs:

- *akhfā*, to conceal to hide: al-Mā'idah 5:15; al-An'ām 6:91;
- *ishtarā*, "to buy", "to exchange", i.e., to make a cheap imitation: al-Baqarah 2:79;
- *labas*, "to cloth", i.e., to disguise the truth (with lies): al-Baqarah 2:42; 'Āli 'Imrān 3:71;
- *baddala*, to replace, to change for other words: al-Baqarah 2:59; al-Ar'āf 7:162;
- *katama*, to hide, is a verb used most frequently than the others: al-Baqarah 2:42, 140, 146, 159, 174; 'Āli 'Imrān 3:71, 187;
- *lawā lisān*, to roll the tongue: 'Āli 'Imrān 3:78; an-Nisā' 4:46;
- *nasiya*, to forget: al-Mā'idah 5:13; al-Ar'āf 7:165;
- *ḥarrafa*: to falsify: al-Baqarah 2:75; an-Nisā' 4:46; al-Mā'idah 5:13, 41.

The āyāt listed above testify of what happened. Several believers placed other writings on the same level as the Bible. Others practiced a biased recitation. Even the sad fact that some use to forget parts of it after reading them does not imply that they took them away. Instead, the texts suggest the presence of *oral* twisting and exegesis out of context. None of these verbs indicates a corruption of the text *verbatim*.[33]

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[32] Literally, "sent down."

[33] Not only the quranic text but also the Islamic exegesis (*mufassirūn*) and the Islamic Sunnah (*aḥādīth*) understand the *taḥrīf* (from *ḥarrafa*, "to falsify") as being a corruption of the *meaning* of the text and *not* of the text itself. See one of my books (Sylvain Romain 1991, 2019⁵:55-60).

To better understand what it implies, it is helpful to get a clear idea of how the Qur'ān qualifies those who do not live in accordance with their own holy writ. Mainly two words should grab our attention: *al-kuffār* and *al-mushrikūn*.

2.3 *Al-kuffār*

Generally rendered with "disbelievers", "unbelievers", or "blasphemers", the word *kuffār* qualifies, in a general way in colloquial Arabic, those who reject Islam as the truth. Yet, the word history of the verb *kafara* has to do with "to cover". Therefore, the more accurate translation of *kuffār* should be "the concealers", those who "cover" (the truth). The occurrence of *kafara* in the Qur'ān is remarkable. It appears 289 times in the verbal form I (*kafara*), 27 times as a noun (*kuffār*, "concealers"; singular *kāfir*), 19 times as an active participle (*kāfirūna*, "those doing *kafar*"), and ten times as an adjective (*kāfirīna*, "those guilty of *kafar*"). That is sufficient material to clarify what the word implicates. The Qur'ān employs *kafar* as an antonym of "belief", i.e., unbelief. It is related to "Allah, His angels, His (revealed) Scriptures, His Messengers, and the Judgement Day". The most quoted text in this regard is Sūrat-un-Nisā' 4:136,

> "O, you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book He has previously revealed. Whoever hides something about Allah, His angels, His books, His Messengers, and the Last Day has truly lost (his way) and drifted far away."

The frequent mentions of *kufr* in the context of the refusal to believe in "Allah and His Messenger" cause Muslims to label those who do not accept Muḥammad's prophethood as *kuffār*. However, the context of 4:136 indicates that the reproach concerns the Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah.[34]

> an-Nisā' 4:171
>
> "O, People of the Book![35] Do not deviate[36] in your religion and only tell the truth concerning Allah! Al-Masīḥ 'Īsā Ibn Maryam is truly[37] Allah's messenger,[38] and His

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[34] I have developed this idea in one of my books (Romain 2010:122,134-135).

[35] Mostly the Jews.

[36] *Lā taghlū*, "Do not commit excess!" Notice that the oldest mention of 4:171 (an inscription in the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem, c.681) writes *ta'lū*, "Do not deviate!" The difference is the absence of a diacritic dot on the *ghayn* (*taghlū*) that makes a *'ayn* out of it. Therefore, I have chosen the word *ta'lū* rather than *taghlū*.

[37] *Innamā* is an emphasis that can mean "only", or "truly". But the context does not intend to lower the Messiah's position but to elevate him. Therefore, I prefer the second option.

[38] *Rasūlu-l-lah[i]*: Not "*one* messenger" – as many translate –, but "*the* Messenger."

word conveyed unto Mary, and spirit from Him. Therefore, believe in Allah and His messengers, and do not say 'Three' – Desist! [It is] better for you! Allah is the only One God. Glory to Him! Should He have a child? To Him belong whatever is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Allah is sufficient as Disposer."

A look at the text does not allow us to label adepts of other monotheistic religions as *kuffār*. Some Christians, though, belong to the categorisation stated in Sūrat-il-Mā'i-dah 5:72-73, primarily those who believed that God is entirely Jesus and nobody else.

[72] "They surely hide something [*kafara*], those who say that Allah *is* the Messiah, the son of Mary, while the Messiah [himself] said: 'O sons of Israel, worship Allah my Lord and your Lord'. Whoever ascribes [*yush'rik*] partners to Allah, for him Allah has surely forbidden Paradise: His abode will be the Fire. No helper for evildoers."

[73] "They surely disbelieve [*kafara*] who say: 'Allah is the third out of three'. There is no god out of Him, except the One – Allah. If they do not desist from what they are saying, punishment will afflict those who disbelieve [*kafarū*]."

2.4 *Al-mushrikūn*

Mainly translate *mushrik* (44 times) as "polytheists" or "idolaters." The Arabic word is the active participle of *sharaka* (form IV). It is applied 73 times in the Qur'ān to those who ascribe partners to Allah. *Mushrik* could be a reference to Adoptionism or the theology of Mary mother of God. On the other hand, "partners" is in the plural, which applies the practice of *shirk*, "association", to polytheism. Muslims refute the sonship of Jesus as being *shirk*, this time translated as "blasphemy", and quote an-Nisā' 4:116 in this regard:

"Allah will not forgive whenever partners are ascribed unto Him. He pardons all except that to whom He will. Whoever ascribes partners unto Allah has wandered far astray."

Indeed, the noun *sharīk* "partner" occurs 38 times in the plural (*shurakāu*) and twice in the singular. Both verses have to do with Jesus' sonship:

al-Isrā 17:111
"And say, 'The praise only belongs to Allah, the One who has not taken a child and has had no partner to reign with Him. He does not need a protector out of weakness; and magnify Him with all magnificence'."

al-Fur'qān 25:2

"He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He has not taken a child and has no partner to reign with Him. He has created every single thing and determined it with precision."

A closer approach of those āyāt reveals that they both deny the sonship of Jesus in conjunction with Adoptionistic elements: Allah "has not taken a child and has had no partner to reign with Him". This is why *mushrik* cannot be a reference to mainstream Christianity, neither in the time of Muḥammad nor today.

But did the People of the Book deviate from the requirements of their scriptures? Is the Qur'ān right in criticising Christians for not living according to the Bible?

Before we go deeper into the Qur'ān (the focus of chapter five) and the identity of those who remained true to the biblical message (chapter four), we need to expose the process that may be "apostasy" within Christianity. For this, it would be beneficial to briefly review the socio-religious context of the Middle Ages with its negative culmination, often labelled "Dark Ages". In doing so, I need to list the elements that led the pre-Reformers to search for light. I shall turn our attention from quranic theology to History and rewind to several features. The starting point is the Roman emperor Constantine I, the one after whom Constantinople was named.

2.5 Constantine and his move to Constantine's city

During Constantine's[39] reign [302–337], one specific conflict crystallised: the rivalry between the western and eastern sub-kingdoms. His outspoken claim to decide was also on spiritual, liturgical, and dogmatic questions. Still, his friendly approach helped him to be accepted by the Byzantine patriarchs and the Roman bishops alike.

In 330, Constantine transferred his throne from Rome to Byzántion, a tiny Greek colony named after King Býzas. [40] Once the move was completed, Byzántion was to "become his (Constantine's) customary residence and capital, and he decided to found it as a Christian city" (Timothy Barnes 1981:111). Constantine baptized it *Néa Rōmē* (New Rome), which was soon adjusted – against his will – into *Kōnstantinoú-*

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[39] Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus (272-337).

[40] In case Býzas was more than a legendary figure – which has never been demonstrated – he did not reign earlier than 1200 BC. At least, it gives an idea of the period the city named after him was founded.

polis ("Constantine's town"). This designation remained[41] besides "Istanbul", the old name that had been in use by the local Greeks for a long time, possibly a Middle Greek expression *eís tēn pólin* (pronounced "*east ten poleen*"), "into the city." Either it was the central "city" they knew – *the* metropolis *par excellence* – or the Greek phrase was merely an abbreviation for "into (Constantino) polis." Since the appellation "Istanbul" is not older than Constantinople is, Constantine's name could be implied in the shortened form "Istanbul." Scholars are divided, and the most thorough scrutiny opts for the abbreviated s*tēn póli* with the same meaning, "into the city" (Marek Stachowski & Robert Woodhouse 2015:221-245). Interestingly, the Ottomans kept on using Qusṭanṭīnīya[42] and İstānbūl alternatively throughout their sovereignty over the place (Gülru Necipoğlu / Nazan Ölçer 2010:262).[43]

One factor that prompted Constantine to move to Byzantium was its strategic position on the European shore of the Strait of Bósporos. New Rome[44] would be far safer than the old one was since it was farther away from the barbarians constantly approaching. Last, the division of the Empire was the application of Diocletian's concept of two augusts assisted by two caesars (Clévenot 1999:5/217).

2.6   Constantine's interventionism in religious affairs

After the repressive policy applied by the Roman authorities against those who would refuse to worship the emperor, Constantine's legal recognition of Christianity as *religio licita*[45] legitimated imperial interference in religious affairs. Instead of diminishing his divine authority, Constantine's switch to a new religion allowed him to wield increased control over it. He still claimed the same privileges every caesar before him had asserted. Perhaps the best example is that Constantine gave himself the title "Pontifex Maximus." This appellation is of pagan origin, as it refers to the high priest of the mystery religion of old Rome. From then on, this attribute was assumed by the *Imperator* himself, the supreme praetor of the Roman legal religion. It became one of the titles claimed by the popes later as "pontiffs" (derived from *pontifex*).

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[41] The Greeks still call it Κωνσταντινούπολη (*Kōnstantinoúpolē).*

[42] Or (Ottoman Turkish), *Be Makam-e Qonstantiniyyah al-Mahmiyyahin* ("the Protected Location of Constantinople").

[43] "From Byzantine Constantinople to Ottoman Kostantiniyye."

[44] Called today Bosporus or Bosphorus.

[45] The switch from Christian persecution to religious liberty was initiated by Galerius, Constantine's predecessor.

During the third and fourth centuries AD, barbaric tribes[46] invaded the Roman Empire and brought it to the edge of anarchy. For this reason, the *Imperator Maximus* tried to secure ongoing peace for his realm by proclaiming Christianity's triumph over the barbarians'religions as soon as Constantine conquered Rome. His move eastward gave him this empowerment, but it took place far away from the city of Romulus and Remus. Eventually, he gave the ecclesiastical authorities on the Tiber a golden opportunity to expand their prerogatives without opposition. We can add that while he did all he could to dominate Christianity, Constantine *de facto* gave the church the status of "empire within the empire".

2.7 Constantine's implantation of an ecclesiastical hierarchy

According to the meaning of the Greek word *hierarchía* ("dominion of a priest"), a "hierarchical" system can only be of religious nature. But the strict sense of the word changed when Constantine felt that the time had come to provide a hierarchical structure to Christianity: either vertical or pyramidal. By doing so, the emperor transformed one fundamental principle of the "Apostolic" church: her horizontal structure. In the New Testament (1 Peter 2:9), every believer *is* a priest, i.e., enjoys direct access to the divine. The Constantinian definition organized a clerical pyramid of priests standing amid God and the ordinary believers (the "laymen"). This move is noteworthy for why my main research question because it is one of the most credible explanations why many Christians became sceptical regarding the authority of the established church. As we will emphasise in chapter eight, one of the German Reformation's cornerstones is the principle of the universal priesthood. It explains the popularity of Islam among those Christians who held to the equality of all believers as a brotherhood, which is also a fundamental value of Islam. Lastly, the concentration of ecclesiastical prestige facilitated abuse, and this open secret discouraged sincere believers from supporting such faith.

Constantine was prepared to yield more authority to the bishop of Rome who in return, would act on behalf of the *imperium*. But at the same time, "he worked to transfer the power of traditional civic magistrates to the officers of the church" (Noel Lenski 2016:197-206).[47] On the one hand, his move would hopefully secure support

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[46] Whereas the Greek word *bárbaros* did not have the pejorative connotation perceived today ("barbaric" as a synonym for uncivilised), but it applied to non-Greek speakers in general.

[47]"Constantine's grant to bishops of the right to adjudicate civil cases with full reliance on imperial authorities for the enforcement of their decisions [*episcopale iudicium*]; his institution of a new manu-

from the religious authorities. On the other, Constantine underestimated the potential of the clerics to take advantage of these clauses. In fact, he opened a door that would be difficult to shut[48] – if only because of the physical distance separating the old and the new Rome.

Moreover, the transfer from the shores of the Tiber to the Golden Horn on the Bosporus implied a geopolitical switch within Christianity. At that time, "the head of the church replaced the emperor" (Pierre Lanarès 1975:2/7) in the Occident. Still, she was insignificant compared to her sister in Asia Minor, at least in Constantine's priorities. Michael the Syrian reported that, out of the three hundred eighteen bishops who signed the Nicene Creed, only seven represented the western part of the empire (Jean-Baptiste Chabot, ed., 1901:1/247). Sylvester, the then Bishop of Rome [314–335], remains as a shadow figure in the annals of humanity.

2.8 The rise of the bishop of Rome

The race for hegemony began middle in the power vacuum left after Sylvester's death (31 December 335) followed by Constantine's fifteen months later (22 May 337). For the first time, a Roman pope (Leo I [440-461][49]) claimed the *Plenitudo Potestatis,* or "fullness of Peter's and the Apostles' authority." Also taking on the title of *Vicarius Christi*, or representative (vicar) of Christ, Pope Leo the Great presumed to be com-missioned by Jesus Himself to be in charge of Christianity as a whole (Peter Uhlmann 1984:54). Next, Leo stated that his spiritual supremacy had been entrusted to him at the very beginning of Christianity. Rome would not honour the pope as merely *Primus inter pares,* "first among equals", but as having supreme ascendancy over *all* other bishops. The authority of Rome was sealed by Aurelius Ambrosius' declaration, "The church is where Peter is"[50] and by Augustine's[51] addition, "Rome has spoken, the

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mission process whereby Christian clergy could offer full and formal freedom to slaves in their places of worship; his opening of the use of the public posting system [*cursus publicus*] to Christian clergy; and his grant of curial immunity to Christian clerics." The quote continues: "Once again his steps in this direction were neither comprehensive nor decisive, but they pointed the way toward a shift in civic power that would, over the course of the next two centuries, become complete" (Noel Lenski 2016:197).

[48] The bishops of Rome had always pretended to be above the others. Clévenot (1999:5/191) gives a list of examples.

[49] Also called Leo the Great.

[50] Aurelius Ambrosius, bishop of Milan (c.340–397).

[51] Augustine of Hippo (354–430).

matter is settled" (Rops 1971:2/123). Last, the third canon of The First Council of Constantinople (360) reads (Rops 1971:2/123):

> "The Bishop of Constantinople shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome because Constantinople is New Rome."[52]

The Catholic hegemony was now settled for centuries, if not for over a millennium. But it would not be without its adverse side effects.

2.9   Pagan elements as indicators for growing apostasy

There is no doubt that over his thirty years of reign, Constantine had favoured Christianity even though it was one *religio licita* among many. This positive attitude toward Jesus' followers resulted in the proselytization of millions of heathens to the *de facto* state official religion throughout the Roman Empire. At the same time, the rapidity of the switch implies that most of the neophytes did not know what the message of Jesus was all about. In other words, Christianity's success appeared to be more pragmatic than theological. The Edict of Milan provided equality between Christianity and other religions, whereas "the general opinion saw in Christianity the religion that the Roman emperors could not destroy. Besides Constantine's triumph on the Milvian Bridge, the quick expansion of Christianity was interpreted as a sign that the God of the Christians was stronger than the old pagan gods" (Rops 1971:2/153). It fostered the supremacy of the new faith over all previous ones. Barnes (1981:131) comments:

> "Large new churches were constructed in the centers of cities, which immediately and inevitably gave their bishops a prominent place in civic life. The emergence of Christian bishops to prominence in the life of Greek cities throughout the East was not a slow and gradual process, as has often been imagined, but a rapid one."

Just think of the construction of imposing shrines like the Hagia Eirene in the heart of Constantinople, the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem,[53] and the Lateran Basilica in Rome. Christianity, which was "a humble and downtrodden minority" (Hans Pohlsander 2004[2]:30), developed to a highly estimated way of life. Many neophytes considered themselves "Christians" but kept their pagan practices, integrating them into

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[52] NPNF2-14. Canon III, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Ccel. org., 1 June 2005. [Online] https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf214.ix.viii.iv.html [retrieved 28 May 2020].

[53] Constantine is also the one who turned Jerusalem from a provincial city into one of the most important in the new Christian Empire, just after Caesar Aelius Hadrian had refounded it as a Roman city under the new name "Colonia Aelia Capitolina."

their newly-embraced religion. The teachings of ancient philosophers had always exercised a sizeable impression on Christianity and played now an essential part in theological discussions. Not only did professed adherents to the new religion continue to cling to the doctrines of pagan philosophers, but they imposed those very same tenets on others to maximize their effect on the ordinary people. In this way, serious errors were introduced over time into the Christian creed, and the church diluted the message of her biblical precepts with extra-Christian elements. Yet, if "Mixing Christianity with antique culture and religions had happened from the beginning of Christianity, it experienced another enhancement" (Karl Heussi 1960[12]:89).

By publicly supporting Christianity, Rome indirectly encouraged the amalgamation of religions. The easiest way to persuade pagans to accept Christian principles was to blend them with folk heritage. Inasmuch as these elements were integrated into Christianity, paganism lost its appeal. In addition, as soon as the fight for domination began to rise beyond spiritual interests, the desire to uplift the love for the truth was overtaken by personal agendas. Uplifting biblical principles turned out to be less important than winning approval.

We need to bear in mind that most citizens of the Roman Empire were themselves pagans. On the other hand, even the fervent adherents of the new religion lacked sufficient education to be able to resist the influx of syncretic elements. The faith of Jesus' disciples had not reached the remote areas. Most people underwent baptism without natural choice, allowing atavism to come back into their daily lives. In addition, the continual arrival of barbarians constantly reinforced the cycle of compromises. At that time, the clergy represented the only safeguard for the peasants against political despotism. Yet, it often had poor intellectual and theological instruction.[54] Thus, the ecclesiastical governance was likely to misuse its trust, and non-Christian features could be introduced with little resistance. On top of that, the naïveté and ignorance of the commoners made them easy prey for religious deceivers. Such a person could be an adventurer who pretended to be Jesus Christ *in persona.* As an example of another impostor, a priest by the name of Adalbert (eighth century) produced a letter "written by Christ himself" allowing him to forge a rebellion against the hierarchy (Riché 1953: 115). It looked as if no one could retain a biblically grounded theology.

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[54] Classical Latin was less and less spoken. Boniface's quote of a Bavarian priest baptizing *in nomine patria et filia et spiritus sancti* is undoubtedly not the only sample of poor linguistic abilities (Riché 1953:114).

That is how the work of corruption quickly progressed. Superstitions multiplied, and magic formulas, blind confidence in the supernatural puissance of relics, pagan liturgy[55] were introduced and local heroes venerated as saints. Symbols of sun worship began to replace Christian signs. For instance, one can still admire a mosaic designed in Constantine's time in the basement of St. Peter's Basilica. On it, Christ is portrayed like the sun god Apollo, whom the emperor had worshiped so far. Devotion to the Zoroastrian Mithras, the equivalent of Apollo, was surprisingly popular. It had dominated the Persian religious world for centuries, and the Romans could hardly resist its attraction. "A long line of *mithrarea*, or temples dedicated to this god, stretched along the Rhine River from southern (sic) France all the way to the territory of the German tribes" (Benjamin Wilkinson 2015[3]:29). Up to the present day, the historical centre of Rome abounds with monuments reminding the worship of Mithras.[56]

On 25 December 274, the emperor Aurelian made *Sol Invictus,* the "Unconquered Sun, the official sun god of the Empire. Nevertheless, Constantine erased the sun god Apollo from the imperial coins. It might indicate that *Sol Invictus* did not refer to him but to another deity, possibly Christ as the sun of righteousness. Indeed, he began to issue new ones with the sun. Constantine let the words *Soli Invicto comiti* be engraved on them, "essentially claiming the Unconquered Sun was a comrade or companion to the Emperor" (David Read 2021:1).[57] On 7 March 321, he decreed (Read 2021:1) that "the Venerable Day of the Sun" i.e., a day off for sun-worshipers in honour of *Sol Invictus,* should be observed as the Roman day of rest:

> "On the venerable Day of the Sun, let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest and let all workshops be closed. In the countryside, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits. Because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or vine-planting; by neglecting the proper moment for such operations, the bounty of heaven should be lost."

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[55] "During pilgrimages, the access to the basilicas is transformed into courtyards of miracles. There, the paralyzed, the ulcerous, the deaf, the dumb, and the persons suffering from epilepsy crowd together to ask the pilgrims for some charity while they invoke their favorite saint. The cloth that touched the coffin, the dust scratched from the gravestone, the oil from the lamps on the altar, all these are medicine for the sick bodies" (*Indiculus superstitionum, eighth century* (in Riché 1953:115).

[56] "Constantine's policy was clear and unambiguous: he forbade traditional forms of worship of the heathen gods throughout the Greek East, but he left most pagan holy places untouched except for the confiscation of the riches that they had accumulated over the centuries, and he allowed worship in these 'shrines of falsehood' in the Christian manner" (Barnes 1981:130).

[57] Noel Lenski (2016:134) remarks that "Sol Invictus had in fact disappeared from the bronze coinage already by 318, but continued to be minted in gold down to the year 325. This has interesting implications for the sort of audiences Constantine and his moneyers were speaking to with the religious messages on his coinage. Note that some other pagan deities persist on Constantinian coinage after 325."

Sabbath observance was the early custom of both Christians and Jews until Constantine devised a political-religious manoeuvre to unite Pagans and monotheists to consolidate his authority. Himself a fervent sun worshiper, Constantine transformed "Sun – day" from a time of manual labour into a day set apart for spiritual activities.[58] Eusebius (c.260.–c.340), bishop of Caesarea Maritima and author of a thorough bibliography of the *Imperator Maximus*, adds that (in Charles Odahl 2010[2]:173), "Accordingly, he [Constantine] enjoined all subjects of the Roman Empire to observe the day of the Lord as a day of rest," though not as *dies Domini* but using the old pagan term *dies Solis,* "day of the sun" in his Legislation. It is how Sunday, a word expressing what it is, was chosen as a legal holiday.[59] The Catholic historian Daniel Rops (1971:2/161) confirms that Sunday became "the compulsory day of rest."

Independently from Rome's efforts to provide a theological foundation for her supremacy, Alexandria's school of metaphysics had already chosen to accommodate. As early as in the second century, Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215) had advocated that sun-worship and the adoration of Jesus as the "Sun of Righteousness" were compatible.[60] He probably did it in an attempt to please the masses.

Then, Julian,[61] one of Constantine's nephews and the last Constantian emperor [361–364], called the Council of Laodicea (363–364) in which the observance of the Sabbath was forbidden for Christians and rest on Sunday imposed (Canon 29)[62]:

> "A Christian shall not stop work on the Sabbath, but on the Lord's Day."

2.10   Persecution despite tolerance

Some of the theological arrangements made might be the cause of why the Catholic Encyclopaedia writes, "Constantine can rightfully claim the title of great, for he turned

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[58] Philip Schaff (1997[2]:3/par.2) adds that "Two fragments in which Constantine lays down that the *dies Solis* shall henceforth be a day of rest on which no legal business shall be transacted are preserved in the Theodosian Code and the Codex Justinianus. The two are addressed to Helpidius, *vicarius* of the city of Rome, and have the consular date of 321".

[59] His motive was not only to introduce sun worship into Christianity, but to break with Jewish laws. In the Profession of Faith of the Church in Constantinople known as "Constantine's oath" (325), the believer is requested to say: "I renounce all customs and rites (...) of the Hebrews". The list that follows includes the seventh-day Sabbath.

[60] This is clearly demonstrated in the statement: "He himself [Clement] expressly tells us in his *Stromata,* that he would not hand down Christian truth pure and unmixed, but associated with, or rather veiled by, and shrouded under the precepts of philosophy … [i.e.,] the philosophy of the Greek" (John Laurence von Mosheim 1856:1/341).

[61] Flavius Claudius Julianus.

[62] Inscription read in the recently reconstructed church on the archaeological site of Laodicea.

the history of the world into a new course" (Robert Broderick, ed., 1913-1914:4/297). What is disturbing is that oppression began to rise due to the "tolerant" symbiosis of paganism and Christianity. In an attempt to force people to accept the new "mixed" version of Christianity, which had become mainstream, those who did not comply were labelled "heretics" and treated with intolerance. It is evident that "As soon as Christianity was official, she had to define what truth [was] and consequently reject those who did not share the official doctrine" (Jean Imbert 1975:2/27). It could clarify why even Orthodox writers (Aristotle & George Demacopoulos 2017:5) admit:

> "It would be difficult to dispute that after Constantine, Christianity suffered from the temptation of using state power to advance what determined to be Christian objectives".[63]

In the fourth century – the one marked by the edicts of Tolerance – the religious policies evolved toward coercion against dissidents. Oppression was soon accepted as a legitimate method of treating defiance. Constantine thought he was a manifestation of God on earth like every emperor before him did. Thus, "It became more and more difficult not to be a Christian" (Clévenot 1981:2/223), and those who did not accept Constantine's interference in ecclesiastical matters had to be reminded that they were dealing with the secular arm of the church.[64]

The quest for political unification was growing as the Germanic threat approached. It is probably why imperial Christianity gave such a high priority to eradicating every allegedly erroneous theology. Nearly one hundred years after Nicaea, "the victories of the northern Goths had reduced the empire to only one-third of its original territory. In order to survive, it was necessary to closely unify that which remained" (Wilkinson 2015[3]:41). No need to say that it happened best under the guise of religion.

Several groups were known to have spoken out decidedly against the arangements made by religious institutions, whereas Constantine showed no tolerance to whoever opposed his syncretistic position. He accused them of unwillingness to recognize a variety of faiths. As the logical consequence of what we could call "compulsory acceptance", non-compliance of every sort was outlawed. Unadjusted places of

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[63] The text goes on: "And this temptation plagued the Christian Church even during the formation of the modern nation-state."

[64] One of the issues resulting from the merging of political and ecclesiastical competencies is highlighted by the statement: "The major church councils in Nicaea in 325, Constantinople in 381, Ephesus in 431, and Chalcedon in 451, which concentrated on political unity through religious edict and theological orthodoxy rather than mission, and which failed to yield much clarity on the nature of Christ, became the tool for legislating faith instead of teaching or proclaiming faith" (Gabriela Profeta Philips 2003:3).

worship were closed down, and they soon lost their civil rights. Eighty years after the Council of Nicaea, for instance, Theodosius II, emperor in East Rome [408–450] "inflicted the death penalty on those who denied the Trinity [the Arians] and on those who repeated baptism [the Donatists]" (Roland Bainton 1995:103). One climax of the killing of Christians by Christians was the execution of Priscillian in 386, the spiritual leader of the Donatists, along with six of his devotees.[65]

On 28 February 380, a few years after the death of Constantine,[66] Theodosius mandated that "All our people must adhere to the faith handed over to the Romans by the Apostle Peter" (Rops 1971:2/355). The most significant pressure took place during the reign of Justinian I [527–565].[67] The emperor ordered Arians, Montanists,[68] Sabbatarians,[69] and other so-called "dissidents" to either abjure or undergo severe sanctions. As the leading Byzantine historian of the sixth century, Procopius of Caesarea (500–565)[70] pointed out, Justinian engineered an incalculable number of murders. His ambition was to force all his subjects into one single form of Christian belief. He wantonly destroyed everyone who would not conform and did it while keeping up a pretence of piety. As long as those who died did not share his beliefs, he did not regard it as a crime to kill them.[71] The historian Karl Popper (1966:2/24) concludes:

> "It can hardly be doubted that with Justinian's persecution of non-Christians, heretics, and philosophers (529), the Middle Ages began."

2.11   The decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire

Another frightening development that promoted Catholic supremacy over political institutions was the arrival of the Germanic tribes. The newcomers gradually weakened the Roman Empire. The emperor exercised little authority outside of Italy, and

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[65] According to the Jesuit author Joseph Lecler (1955:1/76-77), "By applying physical punishments to the dissidents, the political system would blur for centuries what had been the foundation of the church's autonomy: the distinction between spiritual and temporal matters. Fighting against heresy would foster Caesaropapism and justify the spiritual power of the Protestant princes in the sixteenth century (…). Therefore, even if Constantine's politics alone [do] not explain the medieval intolerance, [they] at least opened the door to it".

[66] The Western Church celebrates his memory as being "the Great", while the Orthodox world gave him the extravagant title of *isapóstolos*, the "equal to the apostles."

[67] Flavius Petrus Sabbatius Iustinianus Augustus, habitually known under the name Justinian I.

[68] An early Christian movement that started in the late second century.

[69] Christians who rested on the Sabbath-day.

[70] Procopius of Caesarea (1966:106). He was a writer living in the time of Constantine and accompanied general Belisarius in his war campaigns.

[71] Cit. in Karl Popper (1966:2/22).

the Gothic threat had never completely disappeared. Yet, the climax of Germanic domination happened with the rise of the Visigoths.[72] Their leader Alaric I received full support from the western emperor Theodosius I against his eastern counterpart Valens.[73] Moreover, allowing Alaric to base a Visigoth kingdom in Hispania and Gaul would help prevent further Vandal intrusions, so Thedosius' strategy. On the other hand (Riché 1953:11), "Even though the Romans admired their courage and the values of their domestic life," the Visigoths had increased in numbers to the point that they posed a significant threat. Despite the sacrifice of half his ten thousand fighters against the Frankish usurper Arbogast, Alaric never received the recognition he expected from Theodosius. No wonder that, after being crowned by his tribes, he retaliated by aiming at nothing less than the domination of the whole empire. Marching on to Constantinople, Athens, and the coasts of the Adriatic Sea, he returned to Rome to seal his revenge with the sack of the city (Michael Kulikowski 2007:126).

The Vandals came next.[74] Around the year 400, they migrated westwards into Roman territories under the pressure of the Huns. Very soon, the Roman governor Boniface asked them for cooperation, wishing to benefit from their military strength. Later on, they passed through southern Spain and remained there (415 to 429).[75] Under the command of Genseric [428–477], they crossed the Strait of Gibraltar. Immediately, "Genseric's soldiers sowed terror throughout Roman Africa like apocalyptic riders" (Rops 1971:2/7). The southwestern side of the *marre nostrum*, "once the bread basket of Rome" (Sean McLachlan 2004:47), became "vandalised" in the truest sense of the word: a Vandal kingdom.

The Roman authorities welcomed the Germans and entered a *foedus* with them. The agreement allowed them to settle legally within the empire by providing, in return, military assistance. The mention of the *foederatus* (the origin of the English word "federation") is more than a footnote. I will show in chapter nine that the Byzantines resumed the same western policy much later by inviting the Ottomans into their territories. Back to the Germanic invasions, the migrants were accepted with open arms as workers. That was due to the lack of workforce in the rural areas. Considered

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[72] The name *Visi* does not come from West – as generally assumed – but from "wise" (Riché 1953:6).

[73] Douglas Boin's (2020:53) study on Alaric is the most recent and the most accurate introduction to the Visigoths and my essential source of information.

[74] Beside Michael Kulikowski's, the best book in English on the Germanic invasion is probably Thomas Burns (1994). See also Herwig Wolfram (1997).

[75] Even though we lack attested support, their name is still to be found in the name "Andalusia", stemming from al-Andalus.

an efficient weapon against the hordes of Attila and others, several emperors had even hired them as their exclusive helpers. In fact, the general of the Roman units was at some stage the Vandal Flavius Stilicho, "who became, for a time, the most powerful man in the Western Roman Empire" (Stephen Mitchell 2007:89). Significantly, Flavius married Emperor Theodosius I's niece.

Then, the Ostrogoths reached the eastern part of the Roman Empire under the pressure of the Huns. This other Germanic branch settled down and absorbed the culture. Most of them joined the army and hurried to gain political and military influence. Having first located around and in Constantinople, they left the city and ended up in Italy. There, their king Theodoric [471–526][76] founded the first Ostrogothic empire. When the Huns pushed them into the land of the Visigoths, the latter asked Emperor Valerian for asylum. The request was granted, and hundreds of thousands of barbarians flooded the *imperium*. The Vandals had come before them; the Sueves and the Alans came next.

The peaceful coexistence did not last long. Even though the ultimate reason for the decline of Rome has never been wholly found, at most, I may say that "the Great Migration," as it is remembered, indirectly contributed to disintegrating Europe's unity. While the Western Roman Empire was slowly collapsing under the pressure of the barbarian tribes,[77] it is said that the eastern emperor Leo I[78] [457-474] owed his position mainly to the Germans, who had a say in his court. The communication within the vast *Imperatum* was inadequate. The structure of the oriental part would soon crumble just as the occidental territories already had.

We go back to the Western Roman Empire when in 476, the ultimate step in the escalating conflict happened. Augustulus, the last emperor, was merely a puppet in the hands of the Heruli and the Visigoths. Odoacer [476-493],[79] king of the Heruli and leader of the Germanic mercenaries, came to him, demanding more land and privileges. When Augustulus refused, Odoacer and his fighters sequestered him and forced the freshly proclaimed Caesar to resign. The Visigoth sent the imperial tokens to Constantinople and requested that Zeno [474–475 and 476–491],[80] Leo's succes-

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[76] Theoderic the Great.

[77] The deterioration of the cities and countryside in the Roman Empire during the invasions is well documented in Doug Lee (2013:205-210).

[78] Flavius Valerius Leo Augustus, or Leo the Thracian.

[79] Flavius Odoacer, or Odowakar.

[80] Zeno the Isurian.

sor, was appointed as the new head of the Western Empire[81] while Odoacer kept on "pulling the strings in the background."[82]

Augustulus' rescind marked a definite triumph for the Germans and signified the formal dissolution of the Western Roman Empire. The defeated emperor was sent into exile, and "On that day, on 4 September 476, a thousand years of glory [came] to an end" (Rops 1971:2/130). Ironically, Augustulus' real name was Romulus, an appellation awarded to him in honour of the founders of Rome. The one whose title should have brought glory to Rome became the very person primarily responsible for her fall.[83] Old Rome was now dead, and Augustulus ("the small Augustus") was her last dynast. An important notice for my further research is that most Visigoths were Christians. The historian Walter Adeney writes (1908:36) that,

> "When the Goths captured Rome, they came as a Christian people, reverencing and sparing the churches and abstaining from those barbarities that accompanied the invasion of Britain by heathen Saxons. But (. . .) many of these simple Gothic Christians learned to their surprise that they were heretics and that their efforts toward fraternizing with their fellow Christians in the Orthodox Church were angrily resented."

Anno 476 marks the formal demise of the Western Roman Empire. It was replaced by the Western imperial court of the Ostrogothic Kingdom in Ravenna. At that moment, there was no way to resurrect the western part of the *Imperium Romanum*, except possibly by a religious arbitration. Riché (1953:103) adds, "One [could not] see any other way out than with a Christian solution. This became a reality at the very moment when the Roman Empire collapsed."

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[81] Odoacer's successor Theoderich was also acknowledged by Emperor Anastasios I.

[82] The following statement describes best what took place: "An epistle was addressed, by their unanimous decree, to Emperor Zeno, the son-in-law and successor of Leo, who had lately been restored, after a short rebellion, to the Byzantine throne. They [the Western Roman Empire] solemnly disclaim the necessity or even the wish of continuing any longer the imperial succession in Italy; since, in their opinion the majesty of a sole monarch is sufficient to pervade and to protect, at the same time, both the East and the West. In their own name, and in the name of the people, they [the Western Roman Empire] consent that the seat of the universal empire shall be transferred from Rome [in the West] to Constantinople [in the East]; and they basely renounce the right of choosing their master, the only vestige which yet remained of the authority which had given laws to the world" (Joshuah Litch 1842: 2/156-160). [Online] https://www.bing.com/search?q=josia%20litch%20Prophetic%20Exposition&FORM=ATUR01&PC=ATUR&PTAG=ATUR01RAND [retrieved 15 November 2021].

[83] … whereas the Empire was so weakened that it would have happened sooner rather than later. Augustulus just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

2.12 The power vacuum

After Augustulus' capitulation (476), Byzantium remained the sole Roman secular actor. Since Emperor Zeno was ruling out of Constantinople, he needed a surrogate in Rome. He had no choice but to close an eye when the local clergy took advantage of the lack of administrative structures. Indeed, the state church seized the opportunity to intensify her say in the everyday lives of citizens, slowly gaining notoriety over secular decisions, at least on the provincial level. However, the Roman bishop still did not have much say. He was a mere puppet and remained so – well into the middle of the sixth century. Several Germanic tribes fully supported him as *the* ultimate authority. In return, this recognition allowed the religious structure to fill the geopolitical gap resulting from the political vacuum. That was the perfect *kairós* for the church to increase her sphere of influence. In order to strengthen his hand, the bishop of Rome, Pope Gelasius I [492–496] came up with a revolutionary concept that would shape the way ecclesiastical governance would work for a very long time, perhaps even to the present day. Gelasius pretended that "two powers are ruling primarily over this world: the holy authority of the archbishops and the royal domination" (Friedrich Heiler 1923: 269). The predominant church also claimed that the secular authorities had no right to interfere in spiritual matters. Her pretension paved the way for the political supremacy of the pope over the state, a step called *translatio imperii* – or "transfer of rule" – of the defunct system. One Catholic source (Charles Pichon 1968:73-74) comments:

> "The government of the Roman Pontiff suddenly grew into the only entity capable of standing against the invading tide. (. . .) The papacy had replaced the imperial power for good. It had become the central social and political authority in Italy, the only regulator of the surrounding anarchy, and the only possible middleman between Romans and barbarians. Ineluctably, the pope became the prince of the Romans. That is how his political power started."

The popularity of the Roman bishop in turning some of the Germanic tribes away from Arianism to Catholicism facilitated this evolution, as it made the invaders more compliant. The Franks entered the *Imperium Romanum*. The reason was the great starvation of the fourth and fifth centuries in northern Europe*.* They ended up in Gaul, which became *Francia* or the "country of the Franks."[84] As Arians, they represented both a political and a religious threat to the Western Roman Empire. But

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[84] France, the Franks' kingdom, is well expressed in Afrikaans *Frankryk*, Dutch *Frankrijk*, and German *Frankreich*.

the decisive change came with the Visigoths's defeat at the Battle of Vouillé (507). It signalled the retreat of Arianism and built up Catholic dominance in Gaul, i.e., the supremacy of Trinitarianism over the Arian Controversy.

Then, the conversion of the Frankish king Clovis I[85] [481-511] to Catholicism cemented the position of the church[86] as the promoters of the christianisation of the Occident.[87] Clovis' baptism[88] in the name of the triune God was a great decision since, by doing so, the king distinguished himself out of the Arianistic tribes. It also laid "the foundation for a future restoration of the West under the 'direction' of the church" (Rops 1971:2/234). Gaining control over the Franks was Rome's triumph over the adepts of Arius' Christology. It explains why, at his baptism, Christians hailed him "the new Constantine" (Riché 1953:67). Rome praised him "the first Catholic Majesty and [Constantine's] successor" as well as "the eldest son of the church." Undoubtedly, the religious shift of the first Merovingian monarch caused the unification of the Frankish tribes under one governance and one "universal" (Greek *kathólikos*) creed. The process ensured that from now on, the secular authorities would support the clergy in reaching its goals. In the long run, such unity promoted the consolidation of Catholic supremacy. It also marked the beginning of the *ekklēsía* as the factual wire-puller behind the royalty. Although no one can pretend that the first king of the Franks turned to Christianity with the sole intention of enhancing his authority,[89] there is no doubt that his profession of faith contributed to the enlargement of his kingdom. "[T]his step [his conversion] enabled him to win the church with her expanded organisation and the Roman landlords of Gaul, who were Christians, as his allies" (Horst Diere, ed., 1982:91). In addition, Clovis' legendary cruelty indicates that his baptism was more a tactical manoeuvre than a sincere surrender of the heart to the biblical principle of meekness. Instead, his actions manifested a complete lack of respect for fundamental human rights.

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[85] Chlodwig from Tournai (Latin Chlodovechus).

[86] In the next chapter of this book, I will show that Apostolic Christianity was already installed in Western Europe but regarded heretic by mainstream Christianity.

[87] Georges Bordonove writes in his book *Clovis* (2017[2]:102): "Giving the church the assurance of her religious domination and her authority over Arianism, Clovis saved the Roman civilisation. No matter what difference we may have, we Europeans are the heirs of both Christianity and the old Roman Empire."

[88] The date of Clovis' baptism is controversial. Historians have promoted many options. The date of 24 December 508 became popular in the late nineteenth century and does not correspond to the latest research. Bruno Dumézil is perhaps the most knowledgeable scholar on that question (2019: 312).

[89] Even though the notoriety of Clotilde, the devout Catholic daughter of the king of Burgundy, should not be underestimated in this regard.

2.13   Justinian and the new rise of Rome

The year 527 marks the beginning of the reign of Justinian I. Ruling from his head-quarters in the East, his primary goal was to regain control over the Western Roman Empire. By doing so, he anticipated to revive the greatness of the historic *Imperium Romanum*. Step by step, the threat against the Romans diminished.

The Germanic tribe of the Heruli[90] had a reputation for being good fighters, and they proved to be the best. They reached southern Italy, where the Ostrogoths were staying,[91] and the *Imparator* felt the imminence of the danger. Surprisingly, their chief Grepes[92] converted to Christianity and came to Constantinople on 6 January 528. In the emperor's presence, he and twelve of his noblemen were baptized into the Catholic faith. Most of his people had subscribed to Arianism, and he had to cope with those who did not convert to the new christology. The theological discord resulted in a civil war that ended when Justinian took the radical step to chase the Arian Heruli out of his realm (Otto Mazal 2001:184). In a ground-breaking presentation, Henry Bradley (1890:59) argues that the Goths have only been branded as "Arians" because they refused to believe as Rome did. Philippus van Limborch (2018:95) questions the conventional view. He pretends that the motive behind Arius' repudiation was his (too) strong popularity and not a theological issue since, according to him, Arius himself never taught that Christ was created.

The following ethnic group to take the stage was due to a Vandal comeback. Justinian had always been eager to get the upper hand on the North African coast and annex it to the Western imperial court. In 533-534, the emperor initially launched the invasion of Vandal territories as a preventive measure. The "Vandal expedition was but the first step in a long-cherished plan to recover the western provinces and restore the pre-eminence of the empire throughout the Mediterranean world" (Doug Lee 2013:259). One thing is sure: The citizens of Constantinople were overjoyed about the unexpected success of the expedition (Heinz Bellen 2003:3/304). Flavius Belisarius, Justinian's senior general in the oriental provinces – a man who had become famous for getting rid of the Persians out of his realm (530) – was celebrated like a national hero. Justinian was renamed "Saint Justinian the Great" by Eastern Orthodoxy. It is

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[90] Or Herules.

[91] In 269, the Goths split into the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths. In 375, the Huns hushed the Visigoths into the Balkans, where they organised their state as a federate part of Byzantium.

[92] Or Gretes.

said that he appraised this year as a "very happy one" (Bellen 2003:3/305). In return, the positive mood probably stimulated his enthusiasm "to expand the conquest of Italy and Spain" as it was "a case of circumstances facilitating the realisation of long-standing and far-reaching ambitions" (Bellen 2003:3/ 259).

The last sword of Damocles to hang over the eastern part of the empire was that of the Ostrogoths, and "Justinian could hardly entrust his next initiative – the invasion of Gothic Italy – to anyone other than Belisarius, the man who had defeated the Vandals with such ease" (Bellen 2003:3/162). In 535, after years of Ostrogoth incursions, Belisarius launched the offensive, captured Sicily, Naples, Rome, and at last, Ravenna, which had become their capital. Theodahad, then king of the Ostrogoths, made full concessions to Justinian by ending the war and handing over his dominion.[93] Justinian formally dissolved the Western imperial court. Dalmatia, Italy – including Rome – and Sicily were restored. The Iberian Peninsula was reclaimed. Half a century of Germanic dominance now belonged to the past. Rome's control over the western Mediterranean was resumed so that the *Imperium Romanum* was now encircling the *Mare Nostrum* – "our sea"[94] – once again.[95] But this time, it happened under (Byzantium); and it lasted until the arrival of the Lombards at the end of the same century.

Another dimension of the Germanic annoyance was the heretical approach some of the tribes had. The Ostrogoths had been mainly accepting Arianism so the victory over them gave another reason for the government and the papacy to rejoice.

To summarize, Justinian's legacy includes much more than mere military achievements. He, the one who commanded the reconstruction of the Hagia Sophia[96] – one of the finest buildings ever built – also remains "the emperor who was never sleeping". As such, he devoted enormous energy to other monumental projects like rewriting the *Corpus Juris Civilis*. This "Roman law" still forms the foundation of the judicial basis of many states today. Ironically, while putting so much effort into revising Roman law,

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[93] See the chapter "Die Niederwerfung des Ostgotenreiches" (Mazal 2001:144-175).

[94] Still reflected in the name "Mediterranean", "between the lands".

[95] One source (John Haldon 2003:7) describes the culmination of Justinian's draconian efforts to reunify Rome with the words:

> "Justinian's rule constitutes a distinct epoch in the history of the Later Roman Empire, and his reign [was] marked by the ambitious but only partly realized *renovatio imperii*, or restoration of the Empire."

[96] Some credit its construction to Constantine. After his death, his son Constantius II [337-361] continued working on it. See Odahl (2018[2]:237-39). Later destroyed in riots over the exile of Bishop John Chrysostom, a second part was added (415); but it burned during another wave of riots (532). What is sure is that Justinian dedicated the current structure in December 537.

Justinian's sense of morality was sadly lacking. Nevertheless, his policy in ecclesiastical matters shaped European hegemony.

2.14   The Pentarchy

The emperor formulated a model called "Pentarchy", a "fivefold governance"[97] into which Christianity would be divided – and at the same time united – under the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome. In addition, Justinian addressed a message[98] to Pope John II [533–535], urging the Orthodox patriarchs to accept that the Roman Catholic bishop should have the last word on principle. Justinian specified that he has always been cautious to inform the bishop of West Rome of everything in East Rome, and he made clear:

> "We have exerted Ourselves to unite all the priests of the East and subject them to the See of Your Holiness."[99]

Then, he added that he would use of his complete authority to submit the patriarchs to the pope. Benjamin Wilkinson (2015[3]:192) quotes him:

> "We cannot suffer that anything which relates to the state of the church, however manifest and unquestionable, should be moved without the knowledge of Your Holiness."

Thus, Justinian did not formally acknowledge the authority of the head of Western Christianity over the others, but he did by default.

The next step would be to transfer his supremacy to the established church, which the emperor never did *expressis verbis*.

The move became evident in the foreword of a letter sent to Pope Agapetus I [535–536], entitled "Confession of Faith" and addressed to Pope John II's successor. The document begins with a clear recognition of the bishop of Rome's sovereignty, even to the point of believing in his quasi-infallibility. Later on, the pope sent following document to the patriarch of the church in Asia Minor for his signature:[100]

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[97] A compound name from the Greek *pénte*, "five", and *árchein*, "to rule."

[98] Dated 8 June 533 and inserted into the second edition of the Justinian Codex (16 November 534) together with the answer of the pope (Code I,8). That is what gives the document its official character.

[99] The Decrees of Justinian Declaring John, Bishop of Rome, to be Chief "Bishop of all the churches". [Online] http://moellerhaus.com/studies/JUS533.HTM [retrieved 15 November 2021].

[100] *Corpus Juris Civilis, Code I/1,7.* See also *Novel IX*: "No one can doubt that the sovereignty of the church is in Rome" and *Novel 131*: "According to the decisions of the Councils, we decree that the

> "All questions of religious nature must be communicated to the bishop of the ancient Rome as chief of all holy priests of God."

The emperor's motives for asking the patriarchs of Constantinople to support the pope have never been entirely clarified. It appears that Justinian sought the help of the Western Roman Church in order to ward off the threat of the Germanic tribes due to her ongoing success against them since Clovis' baptism. No matter how much admiration or gratitude motivated Justinian to place the bishop of Rome in a vital position, his leading preoccupation was to strengthen his authority. But by doing everything he could to stabilise his position, he facilitated an unparalleled rise of ecclesiastical omnipotence.[101] In 554, Justinian introduced the codex named after him, which opposed the Ostrogoth administration in Rome. The Catholic historian Daniel Rops admits that (1971:2/210):

> "In order to prevent the oligarchic ambitions of the main landlords, he [Justinian] gave in this codex a privileged position to the pope and to the bishops in the new organisation. Again, the motherland of Rome was Roman."

From Justinian's point of view, the privileged position of the church was relatively modest. After all, the emperor had made the pope overseer of Rome's walls markets (550) and nothing more. But, as we have determined, the ecclesiastical supremacy was already well cemented. Nevertheless, the letters mentioned above are the first official acts formally introducing the papal powers into temporal affairs.

The decisive moment came when Justinian wrote to Pope Vigilius (in Rops 1971:2/214): "The unity of the Holy Writ depends on the teaching and the authority of the Apostolic church." In addition to the *Codex Justinianus*, another significant legacy of Justinian is the *Novellae Constitutiones*, or "new constitutions", in which the emperor insisted: "No one can doubt that the supremacy of the 'sovereign pontificate' is in Rome."[102] While the Roman Empire gradually regained its lost predominance, every possible religious and military action against the papacy was removed. The rise of the state church would last for centuries.

Most Holy Pope of ancient Rome shall hold the first of all hierarchs." Quoted in Antoine Vacant & Edmont Mangenot (1925:2285).

[101] It is important to note that Justinian made it a point to humiliate the pope of Rome by taking him captive for a couple of years on one of the islands in the Sea of Marmara.

[102] Latin: *Novellæ constitutions*. [Online] https://web.archive.org/web/20120713025157/http://webu2. upmf-grenoble.fr/Haiti/Cours/Ak/Corpus/Novellae.htm [retrieved 9 November 2021].

Modern historians name Justinian "the last Roman",[103] a title that he "earned" when the Ostrogoths broke the siege of Rome and left the place for good (March 538). The departure of the Barbarians made the rout of Germanic tribes complete[104] but prompted Justinian to fill the political vacuum in the West. He chose to avoid a crisis by delegating his authority to the ecclesiastical institutions.

2.15   Summary

Constantine's Edict of Milan formally ended discrimination and granted Christianity the status of *religio licita*. As a paradox, the consequences of that decisive turn in Christian history were:

- The political control over religion,

- The penetration of paganism into the apostolic faith

- The intolerance toward those who did not comply with the normative belief.

While during Constantine's governance, politics had the last word over religious matters, the situation under Justinian had now been reversed. Notably, in the West, spiritual sovereignty took over politics (William Estep 1992²:13). While Constantine exposed Christianity to paganism, Justinian opened the door to abuse under the "blessing" of theological justification. In their position, both "great" emperors supported the religious authorities in their control over the *Imperium* by increasing their lead and restricting the prominence of possible rivals, particularly the Germanic tribes.

Another cause for the move was the will to co-opt the church's well-functioning administrative structure. Even though, to my knowledge, there is no source strong enough to support this reflection, I am tempted to conclude that the emperor soon recognized the value of a homogenous entity capable of disseminating information quickly, starting with the bishops at the top and ending among the lay people at the bottom. Such a pyramidal structure implied that the clergy would receive guidelines from their superiors and transmit them down the road, maybe crafting them into sermons preached to the laity at the end of the same week. The hope was to establish a communication channel facilitating his reforms' implementation. It makes clear why

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[103] For instance, George Baker (1938:232).

[104] One source describes this aftermath in the following way: "During his reign, Justinian got Africa back from the Vandals, Italy from the Ostrogoths, and the Spanish coast from the Visigoths. Arianism was losing ground everywhere. The German princes who reigned over southern Spain were now Catholic, acknowledging Rome as their spiritual authority" (Barrès 1957:49).

he gave more credit to the bishops, allowing them to be a part of the imperial political system. By taking advantage of the ecclesiastical channels, he speculated that his prestige would increase and his authority be enlarged.

In order to describe the Ottoman sultanate's possible significance for the German Reformation, addressing the existence of a revolving door between church and state in medieval Europe should help us recognize *why* a reformation *had* to take place within Christianity and *how* it happened.

Moreover, some of the measures Justinian took affected Christendom at a time when Muḥammad's religion came into being. The parallel journey of both monotheistic faiths may answer one of my research's most important questions: To what extent was the interaction action or reaction?

That is what I will develop in the next chapter.

Why a reformation had to take place

3.1   Introduction

We have noticed in the previous chapter that the rise of Rome's politico-religious au-
thoritarianism reached a new dimension with Emperor Justinian I. The emperors had
felt alone in their fight against the Germanic tribes until the emperor found a valuable
ally in the Roman Pontiff.[105] As a side effect, this alliance prevented the eastern pa-
triarch's authority from growing beyond his control. That is why we may consider
Justinian's support of the established church in the West an indirect way of creating a
balance of power between the West and East, in which each party sought to obtain
help from the other to assert its interests. In such a situation, the *Imperator*'s policy on
religious questions was far from a straightforward process. He played on others for his
advantage and engaged in win-win cooperation. On the one hand, Justinian did make
concessions to the religious authorities. It includes tax issues and some autonomy in
ecclesiastical concerns, particularly by making church property inalienable. On the
other, this move cemented his prerogatives as controller of spiritual matters. At the
same time, the policy pleased the clerics and made them highly wealthy over time
since the parishes could never be divided and sold. We may say, the official church
was well rewarded for the concessions she made to Justinian.

To pretend Justinian surrendered to the spiritual leaders would be exaggerated.
On the contrary, his legal position extended to the point where he was called *nomos
empsychos* or "law incarnate". It was way more than any of his predecessors and
successors had achieved. His genius made him a legislator of divine will, which led to
the doctrine of the God-willed mandate of kings omnipresent throughout the Middle
Ages. Yet even then, Justinian's writings always insisted on Rome's supremacy as far
as spiritual matters were concerned. Such unprecedented recognition elevated the
predominant church in the West to the threefold winner of Justinian's *modus operandi*
in terms of superiority over political entities, authority over the Eastern Church, and
pressure on possible dissidents. Of note is that the Codex did not start to be the legal

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[105] "He [Justinian] hindered the practice of the Jewish religion and fought without mercy such ancient
sects like the Samaritans, the Montanists, and the supporters of ancient heresies. He encouraged
Christian propaganda beyond the borders of his empire" (Augustin Fliche & Victor Martin, eds, 1937:
4/133).

reference in Occident before the ninth century. Meanwhile, the Roman Church had developed her own labyrinth of canonical laws. To sum it up, if both parties had their share of benefits, Justinian always had the final word and certainly did not leave much room to manoeuvre for the pope. At a particular stage, being eager to secure his superiority, Justinian was bold enough to imprison Pope Vigilius and to proclaim himself as having absolute authority over Catholics.[106]

No matter what Justinian's intention must have been, the Holy See pursued her agenda to enforce a style of governance similar to what the caesars had created at the time of their supremacy. In fact, the more the emperors began to abandon the classical Roman structures, the easiest it was. In this regard, a symbolic step was made when Emperor Gratiangave the title "Pontifex Maximus"[107] ("supreme pontiff") to a pope (375). It was the first time such a title crossed the Christian line.[108]

3.2   The finalisation of the supremacy of the state church over the state

Another decisive step to bring Christianity under the Roman structure was built by Boniface, an English noble named Winfrid,[109] nearly one hundred years after Justinian's death (565). Boniface made it his life's goal to put pressure on people who refused to surrender to Roman governance (Johannes Heinrich August Ebrard 1882:213). Despite his legendary energy spent in bringing heretics to capitulate, we should not un-

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[106] The official reason for Vigilus' arrestation was his refusal to sanction Justinian's condemnation of Monophysitism ("the Three-Chapter Controversy") Josep Rist, in Friedrich Wilhelm & Traugott Bautz, eds. (2004²:1383–87).

[107] "Highest bridge builder" is an allusion to the position of both the emperor and the pope in their alleged function as mediators between Heaven and earth (Uhlmann 1984:54. The Head of the Roman Catholic Church, the pope, has nine titles: His Holiness the Pope, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the prince of the apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the State of Vatican City, and Servant of the Servants of God. Incidentally, "Pontifex Maximus was the title of the high priest of the pagan mystery religion of Rome. As the chief priest of the Roman state's cult, the Roman emperor himself held it" (Claude Lombart 2017:11).

The College of Pontiffs (*Collegium Pontificum)* is known as an established entity of the Latin state religion since the fourth century BC. It constituted the body of the priests of the sun-worship, whose high priest was called "Pontifex Maximus".

I was surprised to discover the same inscription twice on the archaeological site of Ephesus in Turkey, just a few meters from each other. One is engraved on the pinnacle of the Celsius' library dedicated to the Roman emperor named by his title "Pontifex Maximus", and the exact wording can be read on a plate commemorating the visit of Pope Paul VI in 1966 in the Church of Mary (Meryem'in Kilisesi).

[108] Pope Leo I, also called Leo the Great [440–461], is the one who officially claimed the tile "Pontifex Maximus" for the first time (in Ansley, ed. 2006⁶:512).

[109] Saint Boniface (675–754).

derestimate his decisive role in forcing the Frankish predominance as the secular arm of the Western Church.

First, Rome urged the military leader Charles Martel [718–741][110] to continue the work of Boniface, this time in France. That is how the Carolingian dynasty began, which reaching its apogee with Charles's grandson Charlemagne. Even though French popular memory still celebrates Charles Martel as a hero for his fight against the Umayyad dynasty[111] in 732,[112] he should instead be remembered for having established Rome's omnipotence over religion and politics. In the Pope's name, Boniface coronated Charles Martel's son Pépin,[113] reward him for his achievements. In turn, Pépin gave the territory of the Lombards, in central Italy, to the pontiff (756) and sealed the importance of Rome over Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela as central places of pilgrimage, calling Rome *Patrimonium Petri*, or Peter's patrimony. That was the first decisive action taken by the "religious state." Willkinson (2015[3]: 204) adds that "this conspiracy is an example [of] how the papacy built itself up by alliances with the kings of the earth." A German proverb says it rightly, "One hand washes the other."

The culmination of clientelism linking church and state reached a new peak in Rome. On Christmas Day 800, Pope Leo III placed the imperial crown on Pépin's son and declared Charlemagne "Head of the Holy Roman Empire of Germanic Nations." The move created a vast European revolution, since it was nothing else than the beginning of an empire in which the clergy was weaving together temporal and spiritual jurisdictions. At the same time, it marked the end of any interference of the eastern emperor in western European affairs in favour of the Carolingian Dynasty. "Charlemagne was king and priest, chief of a theocracy that cumulated spiritual and temporal authority" (Clévenot 1999:5/143) – and strong enough to deny possible rivals the slightest chance to rebel.

3.3   The supremacy of Rome over all episcopates

Indicating a fatal break in classical culture, the increase in the religious leaders' influence remains as one of the significant features of medieval Europe. During pre-Christian times, it would have sounded unacceptable for pagan priests to have

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[110] i.e., the Hammer.

[111] The Umayyad dynasty (661–750) was founded after the caliphate moved from Medina to Damascus.

[112] I intend to discuss in chapter six that this defeat has been dramatically overemphasized, probably to justify the creation of the Carolingian dynasty under the control of the church.

[113] Pépin le Bref (Pepin The Short).

any political say. The Catholic bishops expressed their concern to help maintain stability and imperial authority. That is something in which they eventually proved to be more reliable than many generals and governors. In their thirst for recognition and to secure obedience, the religious authorities appointed civil servants eager to climb the administrative ladder. Eventually, they did not hesitate to add a blend of credulity mixed inside a good portion of spiritual abuse generously seasoned with apparent godliness. The recipe proved to be effective in increasing dominance. The laities were busy going down the ways of the cross, kissing relics, performing acts of penance, and giving their best to the construction of cathedrals. Enjoining such good deeds would appease the wrath of God or at least secure His favour. Above all, it distracted from asking embarrassing questions.[114]

The pope secured his hegemony over the Holy Roman Empire, and the Byzantine See remained steadfast to its "orthodoxy" under the patronage of its emperor. Each entity went its way, and East and West never enjoyed a genuine friendship – hardly even a decent relationship. From that moment, the position of the Romanic system grew steadily. At about the close of the eighth century, the Vatican rehearsed the claim mentioned by Leo I, that God Himself had appointed the bishop of Rome to be Peter's successors. In order to build credibility for such a pretension, huge means had to be deployed. A fake imperial decree attributed to Constantine was produced (eighth century). In that "Constantinian Donation", the emperor had supposedly transferred the western part of his empire to the care of the bishop of Rome, giving him the explicit command over "all churches of God in the whole world".[115]

Later, the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals"[116] appeared as a collection of one hundred and fifteen writings legitimizing the papal pretentions for spiritual supremacy over all other episcopates. The forgery appeared just in time to allow Pope Nicolas I [858–867] to declare Rome (and himself) the ruler above the entire world. Christendom, the core of believers supposed to represent the one who said "I am the truth", greedily accepted these fraudulent deceptions. Besides that, the publication of Augustine's

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[114] For a comprehensive study on the signification of penance in the Middle Ages, see Giles Constable (1977:258/3-27).

[115] Donatio Constantini 11, 13, 16-19, quoted in Kurt Guggisberg (1981:201).

[116] Attributed to Isidore Mercator, a fictitious person often erroneously identified with Isidore of Seville, Spain.

thesis in 22 volumes entitled *De civitate Dei contra paganos*[117] paved the way for papal Rome to promote God's kingdom on earth.

3.4   The divine claim of the clerical hegemony

The climax of the *de facto* monopoly to act in the name of God reached a new dimension when the pontiff stopped being merely the vicar of the Apostle Peter, as he was at the beginning of the Middle Ages, but claimed the title[118] *Vicarius Filii Dei*, "Representative of the Son of God". The pretensions found their full expression in the days of Pope Innocent III [1198-1216]. Other appellations (like "God on earth", "Earthly God" or "our Lord God the pope") symbolised a claim that dared not to be questioned. Gradually, the head of the *ecclesia catholica* became much more than a mere commissioner of the Apostles. The pope rose to a quasi-incarnation of the omnipotent and omniscient God. The highest level of usurpation is the use of the word "pope", which should be translated with "father", "holy father", "most holy father", and "Your Holiness". All titles make reference to "God the Father".

Until the tenth century, the kings had the privilege of electing and deposing the bishops. This claim was called "investiture", empowerment.[119] Anyway, Catholicism did not lose her authority as long as client monarchs chose her leaders. With the death of Charlemagne, however, the old Frankish custom of dividing the kingdom between the heirs became a severe issue for the church. The pope had crowned Charlemagne, but the possible strife among his numerous sons could become a threat to Rome. That might have been why the ecclesiastical actors attempted to modify the terms of the Investiture.

Then, a campaign of reform originated in France and quickly reached the British islands, Germany, Italy, and Spain. The goal was to take the Investitures out of the hands of the local heads for the church to gain autonomy. The campaign started in 909 at the Abbey of Cluny, after a monk began to preach that "the Normans are instruments of divine justice sent to punish the Franks for their sins" (Clévenot 1999:5/46). Apart from the shout of destitute, widows, and orphans, the monk added to the charges "the church's disregard of the universal order" (Clévenot 1999:5/46). No one had

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[117] The book is commonly titled *The City of God.*

[118] Mentioned in old publications like Theodor Brieger's (Professor in Leipzig (1907:193).

[119] Latin *in*, "in", and *vestire*, "to dress", i.e., to adorn with a formal dress.

indeed been able to stop the invasion of the Normans so far, and the threat they represented had sparked a revival of religiosity.[120] In that time, monasteries multiplied. Great destinations of pilgrimage, like Santiago de Compostela, became sacred grounds to implore God's mercy against the invaders.

It was the right moment for Catholicism to take destiny into her hand. In 1057, the Curia chose the pope without consulting the emperor, who was only notified after Pope Stephen IX was elected [1057–1058]. Originating in Lorraine – the centre of the clerical opposition of political interference in religious affairs – Stephen was precisely the one who had published a treaty against Catholic corruption and the election of the bishops by the lords and princes.[121] The Archdeacon Hildebrand informed the emperor of his support. Hildebrand is the one who later became the mighty Pope Gregory VII. He is the author of the Gregorian Reform and the Dictatus Papae (see the next paragraph). The revolutionary move to reverse the terms of the Investiture was sealed in the form of a decree as soon as Stephen IX passed away – after only eight months of a pontificate. His successor Nicolas II [1059–1061] immediately defined a new procedure for the pope's election:

> "We enact and decide that at the death of a pope, the cardinals and bishops will choose the new one with greatest care and assent of the clergy and the believers."[122]

The decision freed the papacy from the say of the emperor. At the same time, it silenced the voices of the laities who accepted or voted down the bishop's choice by using the peculiar procedure of making noise ("tumult"). The Lateran Council of 769 had abrogated this authority, but the same democratic freedom was given back to the nobility in 862 and performed until Pope Nicola II's decree. That is how the operation that had begun on the grass root level happened to benefit the religious structure instead of, as it was intended, meeting the needs of the ordinary people. Other measures[123] taken by Pope Nicolas II launched the "Gregorian Reform" by enlarging the gap between laity and clergy and giving more authority to the latter. His reinforcement of celibacy was not only a way to increase the control over the priests, but it was also

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[120] My affirmation is based on the perception of the Norman invasions in France, as it is still taught in French schools.

[121] Humbert de Moyenmoutier, in Fliche & Martin (1937:8/16).

[122] *Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum* 1/539, cit. in Fliche & Martin 1937:8/18).

[123] "It is forbidden to remunerate laymen for their religious duties, and the church shall not give assignments by taking money".

felt like an apparent interference in social affairs. Of course, this step was quite hostile to men and met with solid refusal, giving the king one more incentive to publicly manifest his opposition to the quest for a "privatisation" of religion.

3.5 Dictatus Papae and feudalism

Another step in papal overreach occurred when Archdeacon Hildebrand became the mighty pope Gregory VII [1073-1085]. In the 27 theses of his "Dictatus Papae",[124] Peter's alleged successor declared himself "the almighty elected one", stipulating that (in Robert Kaspar 2001:84):

> "Only the Roman bishop has the right to be called 'universal'. (…) Only the pope has the right to formulate new laws. (…) All the princes must kiss the feet of the pope and only them. The pope has the right to depose emperors."

The claim list ended up with the declaration that, "No sentence that he pronounced can be reversed by anyone, but that it is his (the pope's) prerogative to reverse the decisions of all others". Gregory's proclamation of the perfection of the Roman authority reached its climax in what Michel Clévenot calls "a theological earthquake" (Clévenot 1999:5/150):

> "According to the Scriptures, the church has never erred, nor would she ever err."[125]

Moreover, the Dictatus Papae sealed the pyramidal structure of feudalism,[126] often lapidary qualified as "theocracy".[127] In fact, it was nothing else than nepotism under a religious guise, a balance between mutual interests. Granted, the position of hegemony enjoyed by the pope began to crumble in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries under the growth of cities allowing rural exodus. But the Catholic Church maintained her supremacy.

The conflict opposing church and state generated into "the Investiture Controversy",[128] leading to nearly fifty years of civil war. It only ended with the signature of an arrangement (23 September 1122). Known as the "Concordat of Worms", the

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[124] Published in 1073 at the very beginning of Gregory VII's pontificate.

[125] Needless to add, no scriptural text supports this assertion.

[126] Starting with God at the top, immediately followed by the emperor or the king, knights, dukes, and counts, down to the servile peasant.

[127] Like in Marcel Pacaut's book (1957).

[128] or Investiture Contest.

agreement uniting Pope Callixtus II [1117–1124] and the Holy Roman emperor Henry V [1099–1125] ended the clerical race of power for its advantage and against the European sovereigns. It sealed the formal separation of the secular competencies and the sacred ones. The pope would be invested (origin of the name "Investiture") under the control of the monarchs, but the kingdom's governance would remain subject to Rome's oversight. The bishops had to owe allegiance in worldly matters to the political and religious authorities. The result of the Concordat was the limitation of the secular grip and the pope's triumph as having a direct say over the emperor.

The comprehensive effort aiming at enacting Catholicism above earthly authorities culminated in the first Ecumenical Council of Lateran (1123). There, the very same pope Callixtus II brought an end to the ecclesiastical benefices of laypeople, thus freeing the election of bishops from possible manipulation. In addition, it enforced the principle that (Norman Cantor (1958:8-9) "spiritual authority resides solely within the church, and he abolished the claim of the emperors to mingle into papal elections".[129] The fruit of the mutual protective covering of the religious and secular jurisdictions kept flourishing within the European nobility. "There was no more Occident, no more Europe, no more Roman unity, but a mosaic of barbarian states [that] had succeeded to the Imperium" (Rops 1971:2/130). The Augustinian theory of a God's city on earth had grown deep, imbuing the conviction that the empire would never disappear. The church had supremacy over the state.

3.6 The moral decay within the established church

In the Middle Ages, the church did not only control emperors and kings but had a say everywhere, whether in the public square or private life. Throughout centuries of feudalism, landlords (at the beginning an aristocracy of warriors) granted fiefs to the «serfs» under complete submission. Attached to the lords' land, the hardy vassals were «corvéables à merci», which means nothing else than "fully enslaved".[130]

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[129] Cantor comments on the Investiture Controversy:
> "It may rightly be regarded as the turning point in medieval civilization. It was the fulfillment of the early Middle Ages because, in it, the Germanic peoples' acceptance of the Christian religion reached its final and decisive stage. (…) The greater part of the religious and political system of the high Middle Ages emerged out of the events and ideas of the investiture controversy."

[130] "In those disorderly times, every great landlord was a sort of petty prince. His tenants were his subjects. He was their judge and in some respects, their legislator in peace and their leader in war. He made war according to his own discretion, frequently against his neighbours, and sometimes against his sovereign" (R.A. Cambpell & H.S. Skinner, eds. (1976:312).

Meanwhile, the clergy, who was complicit with feudality, was not much better in terms of perversion. According to the historian of the Reformation, Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné, many priests enjoyed the unwritten privilege of abusing housewives, daughters, and sons of their parish for their sexual enjoyment.[131] Just a few years before the Reformation started, the humanist and social critic Erasmus von Rotterdam[132] – himself a former priest – testified how one German bishop publicly boasted that within one year, he had received bribes from 11.000 priests.[133]

Sadly, "there were many women of commanding personality (and, usually, little scruple) in the early Middle Ages" (Joseph McCabe 1916:238); and it is no wonder that the period of almost two hundred years between 882 and 1059 has been described as the time of "Pornocracy." History has recorded one indignity after another.[134] Perhaps the lowest point was reached by Pope John X [914–928]. He remains notorious for his ongoing affair with a married noblewoman named Theodora, "a shameless[135] whore (who) was all-powerful at Rome. She was the mistress of John X, whom she promoted to the See of Ravenna and then to that of Rome" (McCabe 1916:238). Afterwards, she organised his deposition and imprisonment in a dungeon, where he rotted away and died. Yet, the worst was still to come. Theodora's daughters "Marozia and Theodora were more shameless than she" (McCabe 1916:130). They became Sergius III's concubines [904–911],[136] the one who strangled both his predecessor Leo V (903) and the antipope Christosphorus – the same year.

Such precedents[137] of abandoned "women controlling the chair of Peter and investing their lovers or sons with the robes of the Vicar of Christ" (McCabe 1916:130) reflect the degree of governance of the religious institutions at that time and their low level of morality alike.[138] The installation of Sergius III in 904 marks the formal

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[131] Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné (1860:1/49) adds that to stay under the tutelage of his superior, "the priest had to pay the bishop a specific amount of protection money for the women he was living with and for each child he had with her".

[132] Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, known as Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536).

[133] *Ero uno anno ad se delata undecim millia sacerdotum palam concubinariorum* (Erasmus 9|401), quoted in d'Aubigné 1860:49).

[134] Peter de Rosa's book (2000[2]) and Lindsay Brook. [Online] https://web.archive.org/web/200804132 10922/http://fmg.ac/FMG/Popes.pdf [retrieved 25 August 2021].

[135] *Scortum impudens.*

[136] Marozia married Duke Alberic I, the son-in-law of the most prominent Roman citizen at that time.

[137] William Cannon (1960:133) writes, "For approximately sixty years, the papacy was tied to a woman's apron strings. Theodora and her two daughters, Theodora the younger and Marozia, through their charming and enticing harlotry, controlled Rome, and with it even the church itself in the West".

[138] A comprehensive study on the subject of "pornocracy" is found in Abbott (2010).

beginning of what has been labelled as *saeculum obscurum*, the "Dark Ages". The origin of the word *obscurum* refers to intellectual darkness ("obscurantism") rather than to devolution.[139] In the context given, we quickly understand that not much of an interest in biblical truth remained.

3.7 Theological implications

No need to say: Under such circumstances, mainline Christianity swiftly lost her destiny as the locus of biblical faith. The subsequent centuries witnessed a constant increase of errors within doctrinal precepts. Let us mention Sunday observance rather than worship on the biblical Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) and the celibacy of the priests. Considering that it became a bone of contention all along the Reformation, I need to mention the theology of the sacraments, especially the practice of the Eucharist, in which the role of the priest is to create the incarnate God in the wafer. It implies the mandatory requirement to receive the Eucharist regularly – preferably daily – in order to partake of the divine nature of Christ and to enter Paradise eventually. In the same vein, salvation through works and self-sacrifice is one key element that brought Luther to his break with mainstream dogmata.

The origins of such beliefs are only sometimes clear. Some were rooted in local paganism or Greek philosophy until the councils formally ratified them. Others were possibly created on purpose to legitimate the established church's power.

Furthermore, by spreading the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, the clergy established the authority to seal the eternal destiny of their fellow human beings. The view of man's state of consciousness in death led to the invocation of the saints and the veneration of the Virgin Mary as a mediator.[140] Out of it sprang the erroneous teaching of eternal torment for the impenitent.[141] This dogma indirectly granted to the church a quasi-unlimited authority over the ultimate fate of humanity in terms of Heaven and Hell as an efficient way of pressure. Hieronymus Bosch's triptych The Last Judgement (1486), in which demons skin people alive who are trapped inside deep

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[139] The concept of "Dark Ages" has been expanded to the Middle Ages as a whole by those trying to establish a contrast between the light coming out of the Reformation and the Enlightenment ("light").

[140] The two were legitimated by Pope Gregory I (around 600).

[141] Council of Florence (1439): "If those who are truly repentant die in the love of God without having paid with fruits of penitence for what they have done or omitted, their souls will be purified after their death by purgatorial punishments. For the penalties to be sweet, the intercessions of living believers are useful" (in Dumeige, 1975: 512-513).

dark pits or force sulphur down their throats and prod them with hot irons, were part of their daily nightmares. Such graphic portrayal compelled people to accept in good faith anything that would supposedly spare them the ultimate agonies so eloquently described to them from the curia's pulpits.[142] Century after century, rich and poor were terrorised by the prospect of spending the rest of eternity consumed by the flames of hell. This spiritual abuse was made even worse by the extortions of the priests who enriched their order by pretending that generous donations of money and property, and giving children to the church could alleviate the pain.

Then, the stratagem of "purgatory"[143] was introduced, a kind of heavenly torture chamber in which the souls not evil enough to deserve everlasting damnation were to suffer a mere "cleansing punishment" for their sins. They would escape and be admitted into Heaven after being relieved from impurity. Fervent believers were terrified but taught that through monetary payments, they might free themselves from transgressions. They may even release the souls of their deceased friends and relatives out of the tormenting flames. Since forgiveness of sins was to be exclusively granted by the clergy, the forgery of purgatory enabled the Roman institution to benefit from the fears and vices of her adherents. Later, complete remission of guilt, past, present, and future, was assured to whoever would enlist in the crusades. By doing so, the pontiffs facilitated the enlargement of their temporal dominion and the punishment of their enemies. At the same time, they pretend to have the right to exterminate those who questioned their spiritual supremacy.

The religious requirements were pounded into people's heads by the spread of superstition, magic, fear, and bigotry. On top, the mandatory weekly visit to the confessional (Katharina Karl & Harald Weber, eds., 2021:21-29) was invented as a mind control method. The obligation to confess every "sin" to a priest was not only against biblical principles. The clergy could use the self-accusation of secret information to control people. Knowing compromising details about the parishioners' private life, the priest had no restriction to abuse his religious authority. After all, it could reassure

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[142] "If someone dies without penitence in the state of mortal sinfulness, no doubt that he will be tormented forever by the fires of eternal hell." Letter of Pope Innocent IV to the bishop of Tusculum, 1254 (in Dumeige 1975:509). Tusculum was a Roman city situated around twenty kilometres from Rome.

[143] "According to the holy fathers' tradition and authority, we call this purification 'purgatory'. In the future, we want them [the Greek] to call it like this, since, except the deadly or capital sins, the temporal fire purifies the sins that cannot be forgiven by penance. It means that these light and small sins are still pressing hard on them after their deaths, even though they have been forgiven during their lives." Letter of Pope Innocent IV to the bishop of Tusculum, 1254 (in Dumeige 1975:509). The doctrine of purgatory was formulated during the Second Council of Lyon in 1274 (in Dumeige 1975:18-19).

believers by claiming divine inspiration, something that not many people were in a position to interrogate.

In addition, the practice of substituting false writings for the Bible became a reality in the first century. It lasted centuries.[144] One example is the significant number of "Pseudo-Aristotelian", or "Pseudo-Pythagorean", writings. Another case was the so-called "Sylvester Legend" that appeared around 500, according to which "no one has the right to judge the authority of Rome" (Heiler 1923:296). The lack of factual sense supported the extensive use of spurious documents at different times among the populace.[145]

Very few had direct access to the biblical corpus. Books were handwritten so that only the wealthiest could afford them. A publication like the Bible would have cost as much as maybe an entire flock of sheep. Illiteracy was high, and even the few literate people could hardly comprehend the Scripture written in Classical Latin. The success was overwhelming when the University of Paris published the first French edition of the sacred text (1226 to 1250). No wonder the Catholic Church immediately took action. For those able to read, Rome claimed that it was her office to interpret the Bible and formulate the explicit interdiction to read it. In 1229 the Council of Toulouse stipulated (Ioannes Dominicus Mansi 1779:23/14):

> "We forbid laypeople[146] to own the Old and New Testament books, except the Psalms, prayer books, and the veneration of the Holy Virgin Mary. We categorically forbid that these books be owned in a translated edition into any common language."

Only five years later (1234), the Synod of Tarragona amended (Carl Mirbt 1924[4]:194):

> "No one has the right to own the books of the Old and the New Testament in Romanic language. Whoever owns them should hand them over to the nearest bishop for them to be burnt. If not, no matter if he is a clergyman or a layman, he will be suspected of heresy until he is cleared of every doubt."

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[144] A famous one is a falsification of the Sixth Council of Nicaea by Pope Leo I, in which he allegedly proclaimed that "the Church of Rome has always been above all others" (Uhlmann 1984:54).

[145] "During the Middle Ages, it was quite difficult to evaluate all the sources of information, to distinguish genuine writings from apocryphal ones or to check those at hand, due to the popular legendary mindset of the Middle Ages towards ecclesiastical antiquity." Mane Erna Shirinian, The Letter of Love and Concord Between Rome and Armenia, a Case of Forgery from the Crusader Period, in Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids & Herman Teule, eds. (2003:80).

[146] i.e., people outside of the clergy.

At the same time, the Magisterium raised to the level of enjoying quasi-divine inspiration to be endorsed as an authoritative foundation for faith. In 787, the second Council of Nicaea had already declared (Uhlmann 1984:12):

"Whoever rejects the church tradition, written and oral, must be excommunicated."

3.8   Summary

As soon as Justinian the Great handled the western part of his empire over to the dominant church, religion gained the upper hand in her approach to political entities. The battle for dominance opened up a systemic and pervasive misuse of religion. The established church promoted her political agenda at the expense of cherishing the biblical truths she had been entrusted with. Thus, the message of God's mercy disappeared under a mix of ignorance and blind obedience fostered by the formulation of theological errors. Indeed, it seemed that the spiritual abuses inflicted on the commoners and the nobility were without limits under the religious authorities. These deviations did not have much in common with the original faith of Jesus. In fact, they kept on growing over nearly one thousand years of intellectual and religious obscurantism. The promoter of darkness was the very church entrusted with Jesus's command to each believer not to hide his light under a bushel but to "let it shine before men" (Matthew 5:14-16).

All human excesses can never be stronger than the truth. The darker a room is, the brighter the little light in it. No superstition can ever erase the need for light-piercing obscurity – in our case, to finally shine as "the Protestant Reformation". Such reflections bring us to the next step of our research, which is discovering groups of Christians that kept the flame of the authentic biblical record alive and prepared the breakthrough of the Reformation.

That is what will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Qur'ān and "Apostolic" Christianity

4.1   Introduction

After describing the dynamics of mutual favouritism between church and state, the next question is, How did Christians and Muslims react to the theological-political drift? Would Islam identify them as those praised in the Qur'ān as "peculiar"? Further, did some believers refuse to enter into this game and, in particular, opt to stay obliged to their apostolic calling? Even though we are still far from the German Reformation, answering such questions could help us interpret the Ottoman attitude toward Lutheranism as a possible continuation of their assistance to non-compliant Christians during the Middle Ages.

In the quest for answers, I will now focus on presenting Christian denominations outside of the mainstream in early medieval Europe, like the Bogomils, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses. But in the context of one of my sub-questions (how does the Qur'ān define two specific approaches of Christianity, and how is this view to be placed in the context of early Islam?), I need to explore the quranic assumption of two kinds of believers among Christians.

4.2   "Not all of them are alike".

In chapter two, I have listed quranic statements reproaching the People of the Book for not living according to their sacred revelations. Here, a quranic verse draws our attention. Sūrah 'Āli' Imrān expresses the wish there would be "a community that calls for the good, orders the proper, and forbids evil" ("for they are those who will succeed").

> 'Āli 'Imrān 3:104
>
> "Let a community come forth from you that calls for the good, enjoins the proper, and forbids evil. For they are those who will succeed."

This community originated "from you" (Muḥammad), which indicates that it is made up of those who accepted the message of the Messenger. But the next āyah exhorts believers not to be "like those who are divided" (105):

'Āli 'Imrān 3:105

> "And do not be like those who are divided. They turned away from the clear evidence that came to them. They will receive great punishment."

The text does not specify which persons are involved. One of the next āyāt establishes a distinction among the People of the Book, accompanied by the wish that "they may believe."

'Āli 'Imrān 3:110

> "You (Muslims) are the best community that has ever arisen for humanity. You command what is right, forbid evil, and believe in Allah. If the People of the Book (Jews and possibly Christians) had believed, it would have been good for them. There are some among them (Jews and possibly Christians) who believe, but most of them are insolent."

Let us note that even if "most of them" are "insolent", "there are some among them who believe;" and that is where Āyāt 113 and 114 take up the thread of the idea by specifying:

'Āli 'Imrān 3:113-114

> [113] "They are not [all] alike: Among the People of the Book there is a community that stands for the right [or: a righteous community]. They rehearse the verses of Allah during the hours of the night in an attitude of adoration.
> [114] They believe in Allah and the Last Day, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and hasten in good works. They are among the righteous."

Can we apply the expression "those who are among the righteous" to Jews and possibly to Christians? In this case, they would be put on an equal level with Muslims so far as faith is concerned.

4.3   The recognition of "Apostolic" Christians as "believers"

Muslim scholarship mainly chose to limit the application of this āyāh to some Christians and Jews who, at the time of Muḥammad, converted to Islam, such as Abū-Salama, one of the early companions of the Messenger (Sacd, ed., 1991:3/95). Others apply them to Christians who agreed with the *tawḥīd* (the oneness of Allah). There is no real consensus in Islam about the Christian identity of these believers described in 'Āli 'Imrān 3:113-114. The ambiguity disappears if we put 3:110 and 3:113-114 in parallel:

- The statement "some among the People of the Book do not believe" is generally applied to Christians, but Āyāt 113 and 114 make a difference between them and as Christians "who are not alike".

- Like Muslims, "they (those who are not alike) enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (the exact Arabic wording in 3:110 and in 3:114).

- The two groups (Muslims and "Apostolic" Christians) believe in Allah.

- Both constitute one united community (the same word *'umma* applied to both).

- These Christians are called "believers" just like Muḥammad's followers.

- There is no indication that they embraced a new religion (Islam) or recited the confession of faith (Šahāda).

- The expression "they (these Christians) are among the righteous" (*min l-ṣāliḥīna*) implies that Muslims should accept those "peculiar Christians" as being equally worthy candidates for Paradise (*ṣāliḥ*, "apt to enter Paradise").

Many Muslims are aware of the quranic distinction, like the Moroccan Mohamed el-Fasi (in Ivan Hrbek, ed., 1992:3/24):

> "Islam makes a sharp distinction between those non-Muslims who belong to a religious system with revealed books, i.e., the *ahl al-ḵitāb* ('People of the Book'), and non-Muslims regarded as polytheists, idolaters or pagans. As owners of the Holy Books, the Jews and the Christians are not forced to adopt Islam."[147]

If my perception is correct, we may expect to list some more āyāt reflecting the same categorisation. Let us look at several texts that go in that direction:

> al-Mā'idah 5:82
> "You will truly find the enemies of the believers among the Jews and the Adoptionists; and you will find the nearest in love to the believers among those who say, 'We are Christians!'. Indeed, among these are men devoted to learning, who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant."

> Yūnus 10:94
> "If you hesitate on what We have revealed to you, ask those who have read the Book before you. The truth comes from your Lord. Therefore, do not be among those who doubt."

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[147] El Fasi goes on, "And this tolerance was also applied to Zoroastrians and later even to Hindus (notwithstanding their multitude of Gods) and Buddhists".

al-'Ankabūt 29:46

> "And do not argue with the People of the Book but in the best manner – except with those among them who do wrong; and say: 'We believe in what has been revealed to us and you. Our God and your God is one[148], and we submit unto Him'."

The statement implies the presence of two distinct theological orientations in the context of Muḥammad's preaching. According to al-'Ankabūt 29:46, those among the People of the Book who "do wrong" (lit.: "cover the truth") are an exception rather than the rule. Yūnus 10:94 speaks about those who have "read the Book before you" (or: in front of you). "Those" is a selective demonstrative indicating that not all the People of the Book read the Book. Both āyāt invite the quranic (Muslim) reader to nurture a good relationship – "in the best manner" (al-'Ankabūt 29:46) – with Jews and Christians due to their knowledge of "the truth" (Yūnus 10:94).

The Qur'ān (al-Mā'idah 5:82) emphasises a contrast between "the Jews, the polytheists" (those who *ashrakū*, associate; the same word as *mushrikūn,* the associators / adoptionists) on one side, and the *naṣārā*, "Christians", on the other. That the latter is "nearest among them in love to the believers" can be understood as advice not to brand all Christians "unbelievers" or enemies but to recognise "the nearest among them in love to the believers". Such words express deep sympathy and respect for those who are "the nearest in love to the believers."

4.4 The spread of "Apostolic" Christianity from Jerusalem to Asia Minor

According to the New Testament, the Apostles' message was well received among several ethnic groups. The Acts of the Apostles (2:9,11) mention quite an impressive number of nations exposed to the Gospel at Pentecost – the very beginning of Christianity: Arabs, Cretans, Elamites, Jews, Medes, and Parthians. They had come on pilgrimage to Jerusalem from places as various as "Mesopotamia,[149] Judea, Cappadocia,[150] Pontus,[151] Asia,[152] Phrygia,[153] Pamphylia,[154] Egypt, and parts of Libya".[155]

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[148] *Wa-ilāhunā wa-ilāhukum wāḥidun wanaḥnu lahu mus'limūna*.
[149] Area around Şanlıurfa in today's Turkey.
[150] Area around Kayseri.
[151] Area around İstanbul.
[152] Area around İzmir.
[153] Area around Dalaman.
[154] Area around Antalya.
[155] Acts of the Apostles 3:10-11.

Further, we read that the word "Christian" has been mentioned for the first time in Antioch.[156] Originating there, the apostle Paul, himself a Roman citizen from Tarsus,[157] went to Athens, Beroea, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, – all cities still flourishing in today's Greece[158] – to Cyprus and Syria; to Derbe, Cilicia, Ephesus, Galatia, Iconium,[159] Lystra, Pamphylia, Phrygia, and Pisidia. Notice that the cradle of Christianity was today's Turkey, i.e., where the Ottoman realm developed later on.

Paul espoused the message of Jesus the Messiah, carried it around Asia Minor and the Greek Peninsula, and left organized Christian communities behind him.[160] No wonder the name "Paulicians" is commonly applied to the Christians of the first centuries.[161] The continuous presence of "Apostolic" Christians in Asia Minor is still attested by members the Ḥasibī sect. Often assimilated to the Alawites, the Ḥasibī have nothing in common with them.[162] The Ḥasibī who live until today in the Turkish province of Adana pretend that the Sunni Muslims have falsified the Qur'ān. They claim that the original text of the Islamic revelation was similar to the Old and the New Testaments. Even though most of the Ḥasibī are secularized, their religious roots are still alive, at least in their shared memory:

- The Word of God (the Bible) is the authority in religious matters,
- Jesus is the Son of God in a metaphoric sense,
- The seventh-day Sabbath is God's holy day of rest,
- The Lord's supper is coped with the early Christian practice of foot washing,
- Jesus Christ will return on earth very soon.[163]

Most of these principles contain the theological basis of the pre-reformatory movements. Despite the quasi-absence of comprehensive references to their actual

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[156] Acts 11:26; 13:1. Antioch is today's Hatay.

[157] Close to Adana, Turkey.

[158] Athína / Athens, Veria, Kórinthos / Corinth, Alexandroúpoli and Thessaloniki.

[159] Today's Konya.

[160] Acts of the Apostles chapters 13-20.

[161] Or "Paulianists" – not to be confused with the "Paulicianists" probably named after the third century bishop Paul of Samosata, a Gnostic sect flourishing in Armenia in the seventh century.

[162] The ʿAlawī are the adepts of a syncretic sect of Turkey ("Alevism") based on the philosophy of Ali (ʾAlī ibn ʾAbī Ṭālib), the Twelve Imams, and Hacı Bektaş Veli. The Ḥasibī also have nothing in common with the Nusayrī-ʿAlawī, another syncretistic cult.

[163] Belonging to this *tarikat*, as Turkish say ("sect") and adhering to its beliefs has been kept secret from non-initiated through the centuries. That is why it isn't easy to find written documentation. As far as I know, no monography of the Ḥasibī has been published yet. While I lived in Adana, Turkey, I had the privilege to enter this secret *tarikat* (estimated to count over one million members). Talking with their leaders convinced all of us that their precepts have the same biblical foundation as the first Christians'. That is no wonder since the first Christians were organised in that area (close to Antioch).

views, historians have often stigmatized those adherents to Pauline Christianity as "heretics". They are not even mentioned by the Church Fathers or sanctioned in the councils. Misrepresented for centuries and falsely charged with heresy, the Paulicians have been exonerated by some historians like Edward Gibbon (2008:54). The British historian dedicated a whole chapter to them and overall vindicated them of the charge of Manichaeism.

4.5　The spread of "Apostolic" Christianity to Europe via Asia Minor

According to the New Testament, Paul, Silas, and Timothy went to Macedonia with Erastus and other apostles.[164] Titus came to Dalmatia.[165] We know from the Acts of the Apostles[166] that, soon after implanting Christianity in Syria, the Apostle Paul preached to the *Galátai*. The name "Galatians" reminds us of the "Gauls". Indeed, the Galatians originated from Gaul and spoke a language related to Breton Irish, Scottish, and Welsh, which indicates the common cultural roots. They had invaded Macedonia and Greece and successfully advanced thanks to the vacuum left by Alexander the Great's death. Some came to Thrace, today's European part of Turkey. Many were hired as mercenaries by Nicomedes of Bithynia,[167] whose kingdom covered the south-western shores of the Black Sea.[168] Others settled in Galatia, today's central part of Turkey (this area that was named after them). The Gauls moved back north-westwards after staying in Asia Minor for over 600 years. On the way, they bore witness of their faith, first of all to the Goths. One may debate to which extent their missionary work was carried out on purpose or incidentally.[169] The migration may have been the fruit of political and economic reflection. Fact is that Near East Christians entered the Old Continent.[170] Leaving Galatia, they crossed the Marmara Sea and brought the Gospel

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[164] Acts of the Apostles 16:9-17:14; 18:5; 19:21-22; 20:1-4.

[165] 2 Timothy 4:10. See the excellent research made by Gjika (2014) on the travel of the apostle Paul in northern Macedonia and, particularly, in today's Albania.

[166] Acts 16:6. Later, he wrote a letter "To the churches of Galatia" (Galatians 1:2).

[167] Nicomedes I of Bithynia, c.300 BC–c.255 BC.

[168] Its western extremity is today's Asian part of Istanbul, which points out to the origin of the name of Istanbul's French high school "Galatasaray" and its world-class soccer team carrying the same name.

[169] John Bury (1905:4) remarks that "The conversion of the West Goths in Dacia was not inaugurated by any missionary zeal on the part of the church, but came to pass through the means of Christian captives whom the people had carried off in their invasions of Asia Minor in the middle of the third century."

[170] Christianity spread through Asia very quickly. Even prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, the Gospel had been carried to Asia Minor, Ethiopia, Greece, Italy, Samaria, and Syria. Soon, it reached China, India, Mongolia, Persia, and Central Asia.

up to Ireland. Many superseded over the centuries. Some were compelled by a missionary spirit while others escaped mistreatment.

The Roman armies mostly failed in conquering the British islands. It allowed the Bible-believing Celts to settle down back to where their geographical roots were. Being beyond the limits of Roman reach, they could live out their precepts unhindered. Interestingly, when they suffered affliction at the hands of the non-Christians (especially in 177), the descendants of the Galatians sent an account of their hardships to their brethren in Anatolia and *not* to the Roman Church.

4.6   The early defenders of *Sola Scriptura*

Even though they did not use the expression *Sola Scriptura* – by scripture alone – *verbatim*, the early Christians appealed to the biblical text as the sole foundation of their faith. Since my research focuses on Lutheranism, it is essential to note earlier declarations about the Bible as the unique and infallible source of authority.

Erna and Willem H. Oliver (2020:vol.40/no.1/p.1) have traced the presence of the *Sola Scriptura* principle in the writings of the early church fathers (Patristic era, i.e., the first five centuries). In *Against Heresies* (180:b.3, chp.1, par.1), Irenæus of Smyrna, Lugdunum's bishop (c.130–202) declared the Bible to be "the ground and pillar of our faith".[171] A study of Irenæus' work, however, reveals that his primary concern was the acceptance of the episcopal councils as the only way for Christians to retain doctrinal unity, which sounds quite the opposite to the *Sola Scriptura* principle.

Twenty years later, Tertullian affirmed the message of the Cross "according to the Scriptures" (chp.29, cit. in Oliver & Oliver 2020:106):

> "For even the apostle, to his declaration – which he makes not without feeling the weight of it – that 'Christ died,' immediately adds, 'according to the Scriptures'."[172]

The central point of Tertullians' statement is a biblical quote (1 Corinthians 15:2), so it has to be understood in the context of his unorthodox position and not in the sense of the said reformatory principle. Maybe the sentence preceding it (not quoted by Oliver & Oliver) is more significant in that regard:

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[171] "Fundamentum et columnam fidei nostræ futurum". Original text (Latin). [Online] http://textexcavation.com/documents/images/ah3p004.jpg [retrieved 27 December].

[172] "et nam et apostolus, non sine onere pronuntians Christum mortuum, adicit secundum scripturas."

"Silence! Silence on such blasphemy! Let us be content with saying that Christ died, the Son of the Father; and let this suffice, because the Scriptures have told us so much."[173]

The third church father mentioned is Hippolytus of Rome (c.170–c.235), who wrote that "We gain the knowledge of God from the Holy Scriptures, and from no other source" (*Against the heresy of One Noetus*, Paragraph 19). *Biblehub* comments:

"This emphatic testimony of our author to the sufficiency of the Scriptures is entirely in keeping with the entire system of the Ante-Nicene Fathers."[174]

The footnote marks an exciting disparity between Constantinian theology (symbolised by the Council of Nicaea) and the *Sola Scriptura* principle, similar to Tertullian's comment above. Yet, Nicaea took place one hundred years after Hippolytus' death, so the anachronism can only be solved in the light of some heretical origin of Nicea. Even if this may undoubtedly be done here and there, the answer is in the title of Hippolytus' work itself. It refers to "the heresy of one Noetus", a prominent defender of Modalistic Monarchianism, which is one of the very teachings condemned by Nicaea. Therefore, if Tertullian's statement ideally fits into our perception of Apostolic vs. predominant Christianity, it is only wishful thinking.

Oliver & Oliver's listing continues with Hilary of Poitier, Cyril of Jerusalem, and others. The married couple of scholars take the list as a confirmation that "The idea or principle of Sola Scriptura in the writings of the church fathers was expressed in (at least) three ways, namely the supreme authority, self-sufficiency, and clarity of Scripture" (Oliver & Oliver 2020:105). In the same line of thought, Pope Leo I. (cit. in Schaff 1997[5]:3/par.118) declared:

"It is not permitted to depart even in one word from the doctrine of the evangelists and the apostles, nor to think otherwise concerning the Holy Scriptures than according to the way the blessed apostles and our fathers learned and taught."[175]

The conclusion is that limiting the principle of *Sola Scriptura* to Martin Luther's and other reformers' positions would not do justice to History.

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[173] "Obmutescat, obmutescat ista blasphemia. Sufficiat Christum filium dei mortuum dici."

[174] Footnote 1651. [Online] https://biblehub.com/library/hippolytus/the_extant_works_and_fragments_ of_hippolytus/against_ the_heresy_of_one.htm#1 [retrieved 27 December 2021].

[175] *Epist. 82 ad Episc. Marcianum Aug. Opera, tom. i.* p.1044, ed. Ballerini, and in Migne, liv. p. 918: "Quum ab evangelica apostolicaque doctrina ne uno quidem verbo liceat dissidere, aut aliter de Scripturis divinis sapere quam beati apostoli et patres nostri didicerunt atque docuerunt,"

In fourth-century Italy, a religious man of letters named Helvidius (300-360)[176] published a pamphlet against the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity (Hunter 1993:1/1 /47–71). Helvidius is renowned for his exposure of Jerome of Stridon (347–420),[177] his challenger *par excellence.* Helvidius blamed Jerome for using unreliable manuscripts in his Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgata).[178] Although no copy of Helvidius' work has been preserved, copies of Jerome's one entitled *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary – Against Helvidius* are still available, in which he admitted to having altered the biblical text (Jerome 1890:6/338). A side effect of Jerome's controversy against Helvidius was the admission of his effort to bias his edition of the Bible. Thus, Helvidius' opponents rebuked him for being steadfast to the original corpus, which turned out to be an appraisal that could only ensure his popularity.[179]

Helvidius was a near-contemporary of a monk called Jovinian (330–390).[180] He was "so superior in scholarship that the united arguments of such learned advocates of the papacy as Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose, failed to overthrow his scriptural and historical arguments" (Wilkinson 2015[3]:69). The line continues with Jovinian's direct spiritual heir, Vigilantius (fl. c.400), "one of the earliest Protestant forefathers" (William Gilly 1844:12). He was the third after Helvidius and Jovinian to be attacked by Jerome. The latter called all three (Vigilantus, Helvidius, and Jovinian) "heretics". Vigilantus was particularly virulent in his attack against the veneration of the saints and their relics. While Jerome was gaining ground in the established theology, Vigilantius constantly grew in popularity among marginalized groups.[181]

Coming to Celtic Christianity, Patrick (born around 360)[182] is known as the "Apostle of Ireland". It is said about him:

> "By far the most influential book in the development of the Celtic Church was the Bible. It moulded [sic] their theology and guided the worship of the early Christians"

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[176] Or Helvetius.

[177] Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus.

[178] The Vulgate, or Vulgata, published in 305.

[179] In that regard, Wilkinson writes (2015[3]:72), "If the thunder of Jerome had not been turned against Helvidius, we would know less concerning him".

[180] Or Jovinianus.

[181] "To this class of opponents belong Helvidius, Jovinian, Vigilantius, and Aerius. The first three are known to us through the passionate replies of Jerome, the last through the Panarion of Epiphanius" (Schaff 1997[5]:3/par.46).

[182] St. Patrick; Latin, "Patricius"; Irish, "Pádraig"; Welsh, "Padrig".

(Hardinge 2005:29).[183] "His writings are crowded with Scriptural sentences and phrases, most of them probably quoted from memory" (Bury 1905:206).

Patrick himself said (in Leslie Hardinge 1905:30): "The words are not mine but of God and the apostles and prophets". Celtic Christianity took for granted that God's Word was the Bible – and the Bible only. One ultimate consequence of this position was to proclaim that all could – and should – understand the inspired text by themselves. Consistently upheld under the pen of the Celtic teacher, this principle pervaded the creed of the promoters of the biblical faith and laid the foundation of the German Reformation.

The next one chronologically mentioned in the apostolic line is Columba (521–597)[184] an Irish-Scottish missionary. History remembers him as the founder of the Church of Scotland and a key figure in the Hiberno-Scottish mission.

Skipping over several centuries (1057) a young man named Arialdo arrived in Milan and immediately felt a sense of urgency for a reformation. He began to preach against the excesses of the Milanese ecclesiastical establishment and was soon killed in an ambush. Still, he left behind him a group called the Patarenes[185] based on the desire to continue the mission of their champion. Arialdo's successors turned their protest to denouncing immorality, the custom of selling offices on the ecclesiastical ladder, and trading spiritual benefits for material gains. As we know, Martin Luther started the Reformation by publicly denouncing the practice of indulgences.[186] Therefore, the Patarenes should be remembered as forerunners of Martin Luther.

4.7　The Waldenses

Let us briefly come back to the end of the fourth century. Jovinian had subsequently become an opponent of ascetic tendencies in general, monasticism in particular, that appeared in his time. The message of the Spaniard's preaching reached in south-

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[183] However, Patrick did not translate the Bible into Irish; but "What Patrick and his foreign fellow-workers did was to diffuse a knowledge of Latin in Ireland" (Bury 1905:217).

[184] St. Columba. Latin, Colombanus.

[185] "Patarini", or "Patarines".

[186] In between, the fight against "simony", as the mercantile transactions within the church were named, became one of the central themes of the controversy between the ecclesiastical government of Pope Gregory VII and the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV. The polemic called "The Investiture Controversy" or "Investiture Contest" partly led to the Canossa tragedy and ended in 1122 with the Concordat of Worms.

central Europe. "The Jovinianist controversy burned its way across the centuries"[187] and broke through at the Reformation. Philipp Schaff (1997⁵:3/par. 46) praises him as an early reformer. Albert Newman adds about Jovinian's probable imprint on the movement I will deal with in this section – the Waldenses.

> "It is not unlikely that followers of Jovinianus took refuge in the Alpine valleys, and there kept alive the evangelical teaching that was to reappear with vigour in the twelfth century" (Newman 1933: 1/76).

In the early 1160s, Nikita, the Bogomil[188] bishop of Constantinople,[189] went to Lombardy[190] to manifest his support to the Patarenes, which implies that the latter were still very popular more than a hundred years after their formation. As we will see later in this chapter, Nikita himself was resuming the theological core principles of early Christianity. His visit happened in due course, while the Waldenses[191] became prominent in the valleys in the northern part of Italy.[192] Some historians, at least their opponents, have confused the identity of the Waldenses by associating their name with a wealthy merchant of Lyon named Pierre Valdo, who indeed became noticed in about 1175. Even though this man's story might be remarkable, there are no references to such a name in the earliest documents of the Waldenses – neither in their archival records nor in their confession of faith. Instead, there is strong evidence that the name "Waldenses" stems from the French word for "valleys" (*val*, pl. *vauds*). It makes sense, since the Waldenses settled around the town of Torre Pellice in the Alps of Piedmont.[193] Yet the reference to some valleys may be much older and taken in figuratively. A quote made in the early thirteenth century by a well-known avowed enemy of the Waldenses, Eberard of Béthune, leaves a remarkable hint into the debate (Bethunensis 1677: 24/1572):

> "There are some who are called Vallenses [sic], because they dwell in the Valley of Tears."

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[187] David Hunter's *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* provides a great analysis of the "Jovinianist controversy" (2007).

[188] This term will be explained later on.

[189] "Papa Nicetas".

[190] An province in the north of Italy.

[191] Or "Waldensians".

[192] The link between the Patarenes and the Waldenses has to be ascertained yet. The fact is that both had the strategy to spread their faith by going from door to door, as the origin of the word *patara* in Milanese dialect indicates, from *patee*, "rag" (Patarene, "ragpickers").

[193] Today in northwest Italy.

Indeed, the Waldenses track their origin back to the rupture that happened in Nicaea (325). According to our exposition in chapter two, this is the time when Sylvester received full support as head of the Roman congregation. About the year 1250, the Catholic writer Peter of Pilchdorffius mentions them as follows:

> "The Waldenses are those who claim to have thus existed from the time of Pope Sylvester." [194]

Originating in the Italian valley of Piedmont, the Waldenses exercised a strong impression on the Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger and became a part of the Calvinist heritage. "The Bible, and more precisely the gospels, represented the original, fundamental basis of Vaudès' beliefs" (Gabriel Audisio 1999:11). Consequently, in case the Waldenses' origin can indeed be traced back to the fourth century, the chain linking the first Christians and the reformers would be one of its most vital links.

4.8   The Bogomils

Another turning point of the religious past of south-eastern Europe happened with the publishing the Scriptures in the vernacular language. Cyril (826–869) and Methodius (815–885), two outstanding theologians of Slavonian origin, shaped the cultural progress of the Balkans. No wonder that ended up being "venerated as 'Apostles to the Slavs'" (Stefan Rohdewald 2008:290) in religious texts. The translation they made was later adopted as *lingua franca* under the name Old Church Slavonic, and it opened the eyes to the beauty of the apostolic message. At the same time, they uncover the theological deviations from official Christianity. In addition to the translation work, Cyril and Methodius' invention of the Glagolitic script decisively contributed to the growth of the Slavic churches.[195] One may wonder why the official religious authorities accepted Cyril and Methodius' invention but not their theology, despite their missions to the Khazars and the Slavs. At least, the provision of the Bible in understandable language paved the way for the propagation of Christianity in eastern Europe.

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[194] Petrus de Pilchdorffius, *Contra Haeres in Waldensium Tractatus*, ch. 1, in de La Bigne **(**2001) 25/ 278. The ecclesiastical historian Augustus Neander (1871:5th Period, sec. 4, p.605) comments: "But it is not without some foundation of truth that the Waldenses of this period asserted the high antiquity of their sect, and maintained that, from the time of the secularisation of the church, that is – as they believed – from the time of Constantine's gift to the Roman bishop Sylvester, the opposition broke forth in them and had been onging..

[195] In the ninth century, Simeon I commissioned a new script, the Early Cyrillic script, to replace the Glagolitic in the areas of Orthodoxy in his kingdom (Bulgaria). It was refined and adopted by Russia and Serbia later on. Only Croatia preserved the Glagolitic alphabet (until the eighteenth century).

Another unusual movement of "keepers of the true faith" (Oldenbourg 1959: 265) is located in the southern Balkans. Probably named after the Bulgarian priest Bogomil who came to Macedonia in 935 to preach the biblical message, the Bogomil faith expanded in that part of the Bulgarian kingdom around 1018.[196] Bulgarians today generally think that,

> "The Bogomils first appeared in the area around Plovdiv. This region had a long tradition of unorthodox beliefs. It was where a considerable number of Paulicians were transplanted from Asia Minor" (Bozhidara Georgieva 2016:n.p.).[197]

Some historians track the origin of the Bogomils much earlier and link their appellation to the common Slavic words for "God" (*Bog*) and "dear" (*mil'*) in the etymological sense of "under God's favour" (*milost'*). In case the definition is accurate, *Bogomil*[198] means "those under God's favour", which would be the Slavonic equivalent of the *Massaliani*, a sect whose name means "under God's favour". Indeed, several authors bridge the Bogomil and the Messalian faiths.[199] The Messalians are first mentioned in the 370s by Ephrem Syrus,[200] which indicates their apostolic origin. Yet, like the Waldenses, the link between them, the Bogomils, and the first Christians is not ascertained. A closer approach to their respective theologies brings us to the conclusion that they were "apparently different in early history, which contrasts with the use of their names in the later period" (Jan Mikolaj Wołski 2014:233).

Were some of Bogomil's ideas "might have been adopted from the Messalians or Paulicians" (Water Wakefield & Austin Evans 1969:15)? It can be debated. The following paragraph will show that "the ethical content of Bogomilism conceivably could have arisen spontaneously from a concentration on the New Testament and the fervent desire to achieve apostolic purity and simplicity".

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[196] However, it should be noticed that Bulgaria at that time included today's Albania, Greece, and the Republic of North Macedonia. The capital of Bulgaria was Ohrid, on the shore of Lake Ohrid bordering today's Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia.

[197] [Online] https://www.vagabond.bg/travel/foreign-travel/item/1126-the-last-of-the-bogomils.html [retrieved 31 August 2021].

[198] Sometimes called "Bogumils" or Bogomiles".

[199] Jan Mikolaj Wołski (2014:4) refers to the trial of Constantine Chrysomallus, in whose acts "the names bogomils and messalians are used as synonyms" (2014:236). Wołski mentions other examples supported by quite an impressive bibliography.

[200] Or Ephrem the Syrian, in his *Hymn 22 Against the Heresies*, 22.4. [Online] https//www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/ephrem_contra_haer_22.mellel.pdf [retrieved 31 August 2021]. The Mesallians are mentioned at the end of a list of those "who were thrown out of his (God's) house" (22.3): the Arians, the Aetians, the Paulinians, the Sabellians, the Photinians, the Borborians, the Katharaites, the Audians, the Mesallians".

4.9   Dualism, or "Apostolic" faith?

For many centuries, the label of "heresy"[201] damaged the Bogomils' reputation. Despite their roots going back to early Christianity, most historians confer on them some Gnostic or Manichaean origins.[202] Ferdinand Niel (1953:15/34) goes so far as pretending that their theology was not even a heresy but rather "a religion without anything in common with Christianity". The question is, how can one place the Bogomils into the apostolic line?

First, my visits to the Bogomilski Institut of Sarajevo confirmed that unfortunately, only few reliable records have subsisted. The attempt to obliterate every trace of them and to wrongly present their chronicles[203] is understandable given the Bogomil rejection of the official religion, going as far as to qualify Pope Sylvester "the Antichrist", i.e., the "Man of sin" mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (Moneta of Cremona, in Schmitz-Valckenberg 1971:51). The Bogomils (Moneta of Cremona, in Schmitz-Valckenberg 1971:412) defined Constantine's "conversion" the root of Christian apostasy, declaring the Roman Catholic Church *ecclesia malignantium* ("the church of the wicked"). At the same time, they held themselves for the *ecclesia sanctorum* ("the church of the saints").[204] The basis for this was that "the Catholic Church ceased to be a follower of Christ" (von Cremona, in Schmitz-Valckenberg 1971:224). Having listed such documents, Jan Mikolaj Wołski distinguishes between "reliable accusations" to be taken seriously and "heresiological *clichés*" that need to be eliminated (Wołski 2014:239). This differentiation is crucial to appreciating the Bogomils and other non-conformists. Their name has been misused to qualify of extremists and associate them with fanaticism. Such a process of stigmatisation – a common way to discredit enemies – would explain why the Bogomils are frequently portrayed in the annals of History as fanatical dualists and not so much like Bible-oriented Christians.

Negative branding often has its positives. Instead of proving their heretical character, several accusations against them claim their allegiance to the biblical message

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[201] In common usage, "heresy" denotes more than mere erroneous theology. It implies a defamatory connotation aiming at depreciating a movement or individuals belonging to it.

[202] Such as Roché (1992:45-64).

[203] Such alterations were typical in antiquity. It was common for winners to finalise their purging of the preceding regents by destroying all records of their past.

[204] Von Döllinger 1890:2/9,252,265f,287. See Psalm 26:5 and 149:1.

in contrast to the creed of their opponents. The few records still available[205] are lists of attacks. Some write, for example, that the Bogomils disregarded the authority of the *clerus* over the *laius* (Michael Costen 1997: 58). Such statements indicated the Bogomils claimed a leadership pattern based on the biblical priesthood of all believers and not the authority of papal dogmas.[206] They built "a counterchurch that quietly but decisively opposed the leadership of Rome" (Beverly Kienzle 2002:55). Such a statement of fact sets another seed of the Protestant Reformation into the soil of ideology.

What can be asserted: The Bogomils made headlines as a political faction against clerical oppression, maybe a socio-religious reaction to the Bulgarian authorities.[207]

If the Bogomils have been the most wantonly labelled among all Gospel sects, the archival evidence places them as leading representatives of one of the most unspoiled branches of Christianity. History has downplayed the Bogomils because of their alleged Manichaean theology. In reality, though, no trace of dualism has been found in primary sources. Likewise, no one has defined what "dualism" is about. After stating that "many studies have lacked such a definition", John van Schaik distinguishes "ontological dualism, cosmological dualism and eschatological dualism" (van Schaik 2004: 202). The general classification relates to the church father Augustine, who saw in Manichaeanism the principles of good and evil as being two gods, whereas (van Schaik 2004:202),

> "From a study of the Manichaean texts, especially the Kaphalia, it appears that the Manichaeans are consistent in calling the good principle 'God', but nowhere do they call the evil principle 'God'."

The Bogomils were believed to be "dualists" only because of their theological emphasis on God's perfect nature and unconditional love. God created the Devil as a blameless angel who became the fallen one by using his free will to rebel against his Creator. However, God did not destroy him. The result is that there are two rulers on earth: God and the Devil. As written in *Le livre des deux principes* (1998:141), an

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[205] Most of them are kept in the Institute of Bogomil Studies in Sarajevo, where I have been searching for non-apologetic primary sources but did not find anything noteworthy.

[206] See 1 Peter 2:9.

[207] Historians of the Communist era have praised them for being the forerunners of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

anonymous treatise by (a) Bogomil writer(s),[208] "God is not responsible for evil, yet Satan has perverted the world, and Salvation from evil happens by living out Christ's example and instructions." That implies that the accusation of dualism against the Bogomils strikes the same chord as Manichaeanism because it teaches the biblical account of the fall of Lucifer.[209] The Bogomils describe the fallen angel as a created being[210] who became proud and jealous, which ripened into open hatred. Satan fomented a rebellion against God[211] and was cast down on earth with his angels.[212] To me, this sounds in perfect accordance with the biblical view of the cosmic conflict.

In the year 970, the Byzantine emperor John I Tzimiskes transplanted the impressive number of 200.000 Paulicians from eastern Anatolia to Europe and to the area around Philippopolis.[213] Linguistically, this apostolic entity was assimilated with the Bogomils under the name *pavlikiani*,[214] i.e., "Paulicians." The use of this title in the tenth century in connection with Bulgaria confirms the continuity – over almost one millennium – of the reference to the apostle Paul to call Christians in Bogomil populated areas.[215] Also interesting is their general designation *Krštjani*, or *Kristijani*, "Christians", given by their bitter enemies, implying by default that other "Christians" do not deserve this qualification.

Today, the Bogomil community is alive in and around Sarajevo, the capital city of Bosnia-Herzegovina, still considered its centre.[216] Organized as "the Church of Jesus" and formally recognized as a predominant confession, the faith of the Bogomils[217] still matches the basic principles of reformed Christianity[218] in which one will hardly demonstrate any evidence of Manichaeanism. Even the Catholic author Daniel Rops (1971:232) comes to admit that,

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[208] Probably Johannes de Lugio.

[209] Isaiah 14:12-14.

[210] Ezekiel 28:12-17.

[211] Revelation 12:9.12.

[212] Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4.

[213] Today's Plovdiv in Bulgaria.

[214] The Byzantine Greek word for Paulician.

[215] Zoé Oldenbourg (1959:35), a specialist on Catharism, states, "Mighty in Armenia and Asia Minor, the Paulicians were defeated by the Greeks[215] and deported to the Balkan Peninsula by the emperor. There they founded the nucleus of the Bogomil Church".

[216] In several visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina, I could track groups of Bogomil descendants in Donja, Drežnica, Kreševo, or Sarajevo, and in the valleys of the Jablanica, Neretva, and Rama.

[217] I will expound later that many Balkan Muslims claim to be the descendants of the Bogomils.

[218] In today's Bosnia, the descendants of the Bogomils know that their forefathers used to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. Unfortunately, no one knows when they ceased to do so.

"There is no evidence about a possible Manichaean origin of the Bogomils and the Cathars."

No wonder the Bogomils have often been referred to as "Paulicians" due to their desire to live by the message of the Apostle Paul. Consequently, we should bring attention to their "very ancient roots in the early centuries of Christian belief" (Costen 1997:58) instead of some possibly strange features. Walter Adeney (1908:218) quotes the Bogomils as follows:

"Mariolatry and the intercession of the saints are rejected; image worship, the use of crosses, relics, incense, candles, and resorting to sacred springs are all repudiated as idolatrous practices. The idea of purgatory is rejected. (…) We meet with no Sunday observances, and possibly the Saturday Sabbath was maintained."

The numerous Bogomil graveyards on the old communication axes along the rivers Bosnia and Neretva[219] display Christian crosses on their gravestones without any Manichaean symbolism. That speaks for their Christian orientation. On many of the 59.500 tombstones listed so far (Dubravko Lovrenović 2010:35) – probably the largest archaeological mystery in Europe – the visitor can read epitaphs introduced by the mention "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" (Ševko Kadrić 2010:106). The referral to the Trinity corresponds to a non-dualistic theology. Lovrenović insists on their "acute similarity in motifs, themes, and style to stone relieves on Romanesque and Gothic churches" (2010:42). "This relation is emphasized by the location of many necropolises with *stećci* in the shadow of church buildings both Orthodox Christian and Catholic, and churches whose denomination has yet to be established" (Kadrić 2010:18). Finally, the no less than 200 odd inscriptions collected on them (Lovrenović 2010:31) and the absence of further evidence are sufficient ground to stop discrediting the Bogomils.[220] Rather, the Bogomil phenomenon should be acknowledged as a bridge linking the apostolic time to Lutheranism.

4.10 The wide acceptance of the Bogomil faith

Even if the question of the origin of the Bogomils may not be fully answered, their dynamism is indisputable. Their presence has been first tracked in Thrace, the Euro-

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[219] In today's Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[220] The abundance and the beauty of well-preserved *stećci*, tombstones in today's Bonia and Herzegovina, has fascinated many authors. Dubravko Lovrenović has done the most thorough inspection of the graves and questioned their Bogomil origin.

pean part of today's Turkey, in the twelfth century. Situated at the border of Asia Minor, Thrace was predestined to be a place of exchange of ideas. We know that the first Bogomil bishops had their seat in the city of Constantine until they transposed their centre to Serbia. There, they were oppressed by the "Veliki Župan" (the Grand Prince) Stjepan I. Nemanja of Serbia (1113-1199). Yet it is said that the new faith impressed Ban Kulin,[221] the head of Bosnia from 1180 to 1204. He and his wife openly claimed to belong to this denomination and eventually declared Bogomilism a state religion (Oldenbourg 1959:36). The Turkish author Ayşe Betül Kayahan (2016:3) adds:

> "Kulin and the then Roman Catholic bishop of Bosnia converted to Bogomilism. After Kulin died, another Catholic ruler was appointed by the pope, although he later accepted the Bogomil faith. That was the last straw for the papacy."

Due to the religious freedom they enjoyed in Bosnia, the Bogomils came from different regions to settle there (1180). Thanks to their skills, the period around the twelfth and the fourteenth century is remembered as "the cultural climax of Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Eugene Roll 1979:61). That might be one reason why Ban Kulin remained "one of Bosnia's most prominent and notable historical rulers and had a great effect on the development of early Bosnian history" (Noel Malcolm 1996:364). No Catholic mass was celebrated in Bosnia after 1220 due to empty church buildings, and the country became the place of predilection for expelled Bogomils. In 1225, Bosnia was discredited as "the official centre of heretics in Europe" (Roll 1979:78).

In the year 1199, the Serbian prince Vulkan Nemanjić [1202–1204] wrote to Pope Innocent III that 10.000 servants of Ban Kulin followed his (Bogomil) example. One year later, the pope sent a letter to King Emeric of Hungary to warn him that "a significantly small number of Patarenes"[222] had moved from Split and Tragurium to Bosnia (von Döllinger 1890:1/70). One of the often quoted sources stems from Anselm of Alessandria. The inquisitor reported the diffusion of Bogomil theology along the Adriacatic coastlands by traders heading to Constantinople. The Dalmatians embraced the "heresy" and carried it home (*Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 1950:20/ 162,211). Tragurium[223] became the central hub of Bogomilism. In the cities of Ragu-

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[221] Title of the local representatives of Hungarian Kings.
[222] Note how the Bogomils are integrated into the Patarenes.
[223] Trogir.

sa,[224] Split, and Zara,[225] nearly the whole nobility was said to be adhering to the new religion at the time (Ignaz von Döllinger 1890:1/70).

In the second half of the twelfth century, most eastern European kingdoms granted the Bogomils full liberty and state aegis. That was the case in Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Dalmatia, Hungary, Istria, and even territories under Greek domination (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Thrace). The Bogomils are even known to have expanded up to Russia (Daniel Shubin 2004:1/160). There, we find their traces in the middle of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth under "Strigolni-ki" – after Karp Strigolnik, who preached the Bogomil doctrine in Novgorod a few decades before (Thomas Thomov 1973:1/87-88). Dimitri Angelov mentions their spiritual legacy in the county of Kiew (in Privat, ed., 1979:14/256).

In order to regain his control over the Balkan states, Pope Innocent III crowned Kaloyan [1197–207] emperor of Bulgaria under the name of Ivan II. In return for his loyalty to Rome, the new tsar was to provide assistance against Byzantium whenever needed. Kaloyan was pleased to receive such a blessing in pursuing his predecessors' policy of distrust and distance regarding the Byzantines. In fact, he remains notorious as "the Greek slayer" due to his slaughter of thousands. Yet, when Innocent invited Kaloyan to merge his faith into the Roman Catholic one (Constantin & Dinu Giurescu 1975:184), the tsar responded by expecting the Vatican to recognize the head of the Bulgarian Orthodoxy as a patriarch. No need to add that fulfilling such a request would be out of consideration for Rome. This denial led the aggressive tsar to revise his friendship toward the *Romaîoi*. It is understandable why Kaloyan "the Good John" (Greek: *Kaloioánnis*) was soon renamed *Romaioktónos*, "the Roman-slayer" (Warren Treadgold 1997:661).[226] At the same time, Kaloyan developed a deep affinity for his former allies, the Bogomil lords of his kingdom, to whom he henceforth gave unlimited support. As a side effect, this guaranteed religious toleration to the Bulgarians ever since.

It is how Bogomilism could flourish a second time after its climax in Bosnia. I stress these facts because the dazzling success of the Bogomil faith has been downplayed by their antagonists, i.e., by the dominating Christianity. Sadly, History mainly records their existence as a negligible fringe group of eccentrics not even worthy of

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[224] Dubrovnik.
[225] Zadar.
[226] See the book with the title "Tsar Kaloyan the Roman-slayer" (Veselin Ignatov 2019).

being labelled "Christians." Still I hope to have demonstrated that this is far from true. Besides the full support of the Bogomils granted by Ban Kulin and Kaloyan, the need for an explanation for their growing popularity must be taken into account. One could be that the Balkan Slavs were hostile to the Latin rite and clergy. They would opt for the Greek liturgy more appealing to their practices.

4.11   The Albigenses

From Bosnia and Dalmatia, the Bogomil ideas circulated westwards to Lombardy and the Piedmont regions. The Bulgarian historian Nikola Derzhavin (1946:39-51) was the first to demonstrate the theological mark of the Bogomils on the Waldenses and even on Johan Hus in the fifteenth century.[227] Elizabeth Gordon (1912:237-238) states that "The splendid city of Milan, in northern Italy, was the connecting link between Celtic Christianity in the West and Syrian Christianity in the East" at around 1160.

We have noticed that Nikita, the bishop called Papa Niceta ("Pope Nikita"), went to the Patarenes in Italy. His partisans arrived there soon after him. Niceta wanted to show his support. From the Balkans, the bearers of the apostolic flame sent representatives to southern France, where a large number of believers remain known either as "Albigenses"[228] ("from the city of Albi") or as "Cathars". Both appellations are generally employed as synonyms[229], whereas the latter's origin is uncertain. Some refer to the Greek *katharoí*, "pure". Others associate them with the Katharaites mentioned in Ephrem the Syrian's *Hymn Against Heresies* (around 370). In it (Hymn 22, paragraph 3),[230] the prominent oriental theologian lists "those who were thrown out of his (God's) house: Arians, Aetians, Paulinians, Sabellians, Photinians, Borborians, Katharaites, Audians, and Mesallians". It is also unclear whether the Bogomils brought the apostolic message to France or if they had heard about their spiritual cousins and wanted to provide visible support in terms of theological and intellectual synergy. The fact is that their bishop Nikita continued his journey to southern France in 1167, where he called

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[227] For Johann Hus, see chapter eight.

[228] French *Albigeois*.

[229] « Cathare » is employed in France, "Albigenses" is more common in English texts.

[230] [Online] https://archive.org/details/EphremSyrus HymnsAgainstHeresies22 [retrieved 8 November 2021].
However, "Though the term *Cathar* has been used for centuries to identify the movement, whether the movement identified itself with this name is debated" See Pegg & Mark (2001:181–195).

out the First Cathar Council (in Saint-Félix de Caraman[231]). He confirmed the episcopal office of six Cathar bishops who represented six parts of France, including the North. His invitation addressed to a Bogomil pope to preside over the council confirms the Albigensian proximity to the Bogomils.

The westward expansion of the Bogomils is noticeable in their incorporation into Catharism in early medieval literature even though they have entered History as two separate groups.[232] Several authors attest the link associating the Celtic Christians, the Bogomils, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses. Surprisingly, none less than the French philosopher Voltaire[233] named them as follows (John Morley 2015:242):

> "Those who were called Manichaeans, and those who were afterward named Albigenses, Vaudois, Lollards[234], and who appeared so often under different names, were remnants of the first Gaulish Christians, who were attached to several ancient customs, which the Church of Rome thought proper to alter afterward."

Worthy of notice is that Voltaire lived in the eighteenth century (1694-1778), i.e., two hundred years *after* Martin Luther. Consequently, his mention of such Christians several centuries *after* their apparition as the "remnants of the first Gaulish Christians" witnesses the general opinion about them, preserved over centuries after the beginning of the Reformation. In fact, the historian Georges Livet confirms (1962:56) the Protestants' affiliation with the Cathars:

> "One of the Protestant movements organized in France in the second half of the sixteenth century carries the name 'Albigeois', which shows the relationship and identification with the Cathars."

The Cathars took over several works authored by Bogomils (Wakefield & Evans 1969:447). Last, like the Bogomils, they have often been stamped "heretics". Yet, their

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[231] Near the city of Toulouse. For the relationship between Bogomils and Cathars, see Ernst Werner's study, "Θεοφιλος – Bogomils", in *Balkan Studies*, vol.7 (Thessaloniki, 1966):49-60.
"This event indicates how much Cathars and Bogomils were keen on proclaiming their church as universal and supranational – not as being a sect or a movement of opposition but an established church, a real one" (Oldenbourg 1959:36).

[232] This has not always been the case. See Mestre i Godes (2002:35). A bibliography on this point of view is found in Kienzle (2002:47, footnote 94).

[233] His real name was François-Marie Arouet.

[234] Disciples of the British reformer John Wycliffe. See chapter seven of my thesis.

foundational creed may be considered biblical. Anyone who reads their *Rituel Cathare*[235] will hardly find any heretical content in it.[236]

John van Schaik (2004:201,204) concludes his brilliant dissertation on the question of whether the Cathars were Manichaean dualists or not with the words:

> "Apart from the epithet 'Manichaeism', the sources until about 1150 do not give us reasons to suppose that the persons concerned actually were Manichaeans. No source reports any dualism. They do however speak of heretics that criticize the church and the sacraments. (…) There is no sufficient similarity between the teachings of the Manichaeans and the radical Cathars to substantiate the claim that Manichaean dualistic ideas influenced the dualism of the [radical] Cathars."

By correcting the general opinion on the Bogomils and the Cathars, van Schaik's thesis should be commended as a milestone. In the West, those forerunners of the Reformation gained such importance that the abbot Bernard de Clairvaux[237] reports in the thirteenth century (Roll 1979:65):

> "The Cathars are so numerous in the county of Toulouse that the [Catholic] churches remain empty."

After the death of Simon de Montfort the Elder[238] during the siege of Toulouse (1218), the Legate Conrad de Porto (Oldenbourg 1959:239) complained:

> "The Cathars of Bulgaria, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Hungary just elected a new pope. The emissary of this heretical pope, a certain Barthélémy Catres, has come to the country of the Albigenses and attracted a large crowd of believers."

Notice the localisation of the Cathars in "Bulgaria, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Hungary" in today's Balkans and beyond it. It speaks in favour of the proximity of both movements in name and theology. Moreover, evidence is found of their presence up to Flanders and the Rhine valley.[239] For instance, the French king Louis VII the Young

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[235] Shortened version in Clédat (1959:381-384).

[236] In his work dedicated to the theological rehabilitation of the Albigenses and Waldenses, George Faber (in Van Schaik 2004:56) mentions the purity of their scriptures:
> "Now this single circumstance alone, independently of all other evidence, is amply sufficient to demonstrate the impossibility of their pretended Manichaeism".

[237] *Bernardus Claraevallensis* (1090–1153). He was the primary reformer of the Cistercian Order.

[238] Simon V de Montfort 5th Earl of Leicester. Also known as Simon de Montfort the Elder, he was key leader in the fight against the Cathars.

[239] It is assumed that the dissidents came from Rhineland, Germany, where they spread between 1159 and 1177. See Kienzle (2002:52,110).

informed the pope of "the evil caused by the Manichaeans in the Flanders" (in a letter dated 1162, in Imbert 1975:2/28).

4.12   Persecution of the "heretics"

We have noticed in chapter two that, very soon after Constantine the Great's death, institutional Christianity began to fight against so-called "heretics". Then, Justinian laid the foundation for their mistreatment, stipulating:

> "All Jews, Gentiles or Christians who did not embrace and profess the Catholic faith within three months were declared infamous, and, as such, excluded from all employments […] and their estates confiscated."[240]

The statement inevitably reminds us of the actions taken by Constantine's predecessors in terms of intolerance. Had Diocletian not issued a decree against the Manichaeans (296, in Marta Sordi 1975:2/22)?

> "No new religion is allowed to supplant the previous one. We are determined to punish the obstinate perfidy of those who replace the ancient cult with new sects. (...) The plague of this evil [Manichaeism] must be extirpated and annihilated."

Such a declaration implies that Christianity was split from the earliest centuries. Those who chose to remain attached to the biblical message were labelled as "schismatics". We may assert that one of the essential duties of the bishops was to ensure the conformity of the faith of their parishioners.

Those who did not comply with the papal authority and denounced clerical excesses have always been a thorn in the eye of the *religio catholica*. Logically, the cornerstones of religious liberty (the freedom to stand by one's conscience and to uphold the Gospel as the ultimate basis of faith) could not please the priests forever. Wherever these "Apostolic" believers gained ground, they were apprehended as a threat consequently incensing mainstream Christianity. In almost every century, the official religion attempted to oppress those it defamed as rebels for their commitment to rely only on the Word of God. Indeed, the figures are beyond every cruelty witnessed in the human chronicles. John Dowling (1871:282), for instance, writes:

> "It has been estimated by careful and credible historians that more than fifty million of the human family have been slaughtered for 'the crime' of heresy by popish

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[240] Found in Bower (1844-7:1/334).

persecutors, an average of more than forty thousand religious murders for every year of the existence of popery. (…) No computation can reach the numbers who have been put to death, in different ways, on account of their maintaining the profession of the Gospel, and opposing the corruption of the Church of Rome. A million of poor Waldenses perished in France, and nine hundred thousand Ortho-dox Christians were slain in less than thirty years after the institution of the order of the Jesuits. (…) The Inquisition destroyed, by various tortures, one hundred and fifty thousand within thirty years."

To take a more specific report (Juan Antonio Llorente, in Imbert 1975:2/ 31), the Inquisition in Spain is responsible for 291.450 sentenced to death. Among them, 31.912 people were burnt alive, and 17.659 were hung in effigy. Add to this "thousands of Jews between the eleventh and the fourteenth century (Hubertus Mynarek 1999:187), sixty thousand so-called witches" (Kathrin Utz Tremp 2014:3), and probably far more victims. Jean Imbert (1975:2/31) comments:

> "Even though these figures might be difficult to be verified, and even if we divide them by two or three, they remain considerable."

Several developments and institutions stand out in human infamous memories: the Inquisition and the crusades. The Society of Jesus[241] was founded in 1534 and launched in 1540. It coincided when the German Reformation was in full swing, which is why I need to mention it briefly. Its founder Ignatius Loyola[242] was highly concerned about the swift progress of the Reformation. To halt this growth and eradicate all "heretics", the Jesuit institution had the specific purpose of fighting against them wher-ever he could meet them and in every possible way. In addition to the pledge to obey the pope and the Catholic Church above all else, those who aspired to be accepted into the Jesuit Order were required "to exterminate the heretics from the face of the whole earth". The wording of the Oath of the Jesuits has remained unchanged and has been keeping its full validity to this day.

4.13   The Albigensian Crusade

The idea of "crusade" is often associated with the slaughter of Muslims in the Middle East. The word stems from the Latin *crux*: "cross" and inevitably relates to one of the stumbling stones separating Christians and Muslims: the death of Jesus on the Cross.

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[241] Societas Jesu.
[242] 1491-1556.

But few are aware that this terrible undertaking did not only target "the Children of the East" but also the Children of the West.[243] Indeed, about a hundred years after "the First Crusade" of 1095, the name "Albigensian Crusade" refers to a *Christian* campaign directed toward *Christians*. Between 1022 and 1163, no less than eight local councils dealt with the Cathars. The Roman Church declared that all of them "should be imprisoned, and their property confiscated". Consequently, Rome dispatched legates to southwestern France and Catalonia (1198), intending to accelerate the dissuasion process. As a result, the renegades were committed to the flames.

All the measures failed to secure the expected results. A new level of brutality had to be found. The climax of the oppression was reached in 1204 when Innocent III sent missionaries[244] to "convert" what he thought to be the last Albigenses. When Raymond IV, the reigning Count of Toulouse, was commanded by the French crown to wage a total war of extermination of his fellow citizens. Finally, in 1208, the pontiff proclaimed a crusade against the Albigenses, insulting them as "heretics worse than the Saracens (Oldenbourg 1959:7).[245] He declared a blanket remission of all sins ever committed to whoever was ready to enrol, which amounted to "the same promise of spiritual benefits for the warriors as that offered to those fighting the Turks" (Estep 1992^2:10) in the Mediterranean crusades. Such a promise attacked the most wicked. In the "twenty-one years of sporadic warfare, indiscriminate butchery, and bloody conquest" (Pegg 1963:4), the Albigensian Crusade (1209–1229) was nothing else than a military raid initiated by Rome to eradicate heresy in the Languedoc.[246] Its only justification was that some of them had offended the Catholic authorities by denouncing the riches and immorality of the clergy.

Georges Bordonove (1991:135) explored the contemporary chronicles about the climax of the Albigensian Crusade, known as the "Genocide of Béziers" (Henri Gougaud 1984). In July 1209, the troops of those allied with Rome were encamped around the fortified town of Béziers. Even though most of its inhabitants were fervent adepts of Catholicism, it is recorded that the town was "completely infected by the poison and the perversity of the heretics" (Bordonove 1991:135). Out of solidarity with their fellow citizens, the Catholic population refused to surrender, so the barons came

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[243] Chapter six will deal with that specific aspect of the crusades.

[244] The "Dominicans".

[245] The word "Saracen" comes from the Arabic *Sharqiyūn*, Easterner.

[246] The geographical centre of the Cathars in southern France.

to ask the pope's envoy how they should spot the Catholics to spare them from the planned butchery. Arnaud Almaric, the leader of the crusade, retorted with the verdict: "Kill them all! God will recognize His own".[247] A massacre followed, so violent that the command that unleashed it became proverbial to this day. For several years, the baleful slaughter extended from one city to the next. As a non-negligible effect, it created a wave of anger all around Europe, i.e., far beyond Roman Catholic countries. I may say: an unintended consequence of this useless carnage was that the moral standing of the papacy suffered a severe blow.

4.14   The beginning of the Inquisition

The first Inquisition was set up in the Languedoc in 1184, and the Genocide of Béziers in 1209 was part of that undertaking. On 15 May 1252, Innocent IV issued a bull with the unequivocal name *Ad extirpanda* ("for the eradication"). In it, the pope explicitly authorized torture for inducing confessions out of "heretics" during the Inquisition and burning recalcitrant subjects alive. Around 1290, a Dominican friar named Bernard Gui (1261–1331)[248] published his *Liber sententiarum* (the book of the sentences) an exhaustive list of the punishments to be meted out against "heretics", "a complex mechanism for the production of power" (Caterina Bruschi & Peter Biller, eds., 2018). Shortly after that, he authored the *Practica inquisitionis heretice pravitatis* (practical investigation of heresy), a comprehensive manual on how to question suspected dissidents.[249] A few excerpts give an idea of the measures taken:

> "From the beginning of the process, the judge can proceed according to his arbitrary judgment and mood. The slightest suspicion and the vaguest denunciation give him the right to start a procedure against anyone. Assigned at residence or imprisoned, the accused must swear to tell everything he knows about the heresy, himself and others, whether alive or dead. He is under obligation to self-incrimination and has no right to be assisted by a defender.

> "In case of refusal to confess, two witnesses against him are sufficient to bring a guilty verdict. He is neither allowed to know these witnesses' names nor to get a chance to be confronted with them.

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[247] « Tuez-les tous ! Dieu reconnaîtra les siens ».
[248] Bernardus Guidonis, bishop of Lodève.
[249] *Practica Inquisitionis heretice pravitatis* (1888, in Guillaume Mollat, ed., 1964:29-30).

"If a heretic stubbornly refuses to retract his errors, the church has no choice but to hand him over to the authorities. Those have to deliver the impenitent to the secular arm with no alternative but to commit the heretic to the flames or to excommunicate him for having opted in favour of heresy."

The church justified the atrocities of the Inquisition with her claim of having exclusive access to salvation[250] and Paul's misinterpretation of the sentence (1 Corinthians 3:15): "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through the flame".

In a letter sent to the Archbishop of Tarragon in 1208 (Gervais Dumeige, ed., 1975:247), Pope Innocent III, the one who had initiated the Albigensian Crusade, declared:

"We believe from our heart and profess with our mouth the existence of only one church – not the heretics' but the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church. We believe that outside of her, no one is saved."

Needless to say, such a privileged position would never tolerate the slightest form of religious pluralism. A remarkable precedent took place in England. The kingdom issued the Magna Carta (15 June 1215),[251] a political protestation against the pontifical abuse of prestige. Pope Innocent III signed the bull *Pro rege Johanne* (24 August), declaring the English document "null, and void of all validity forever".[252] Beginning on the same year (11 November), the Fourth Council of Lateran repeated Cyprian of Carthage's adage (Epis 73, ad Iubaianum, c. 21: PI 3, 1169 a, in Gervais Dumeige (1975:18): "*Salus extra ecclesiam non est*" – there is no salvation outside the church. The logical consequence was that, since non-Catholics would be damned anyway, it was wholly appropriate to kill them.[253]

The very same Council of Lateran put a general *anáthema* on the Waldenses. Just before that, in 1210, Emperor Otto IV sent a mandate to the bishop of Turin aiming at their complete expulsion from his territory. Around 800.000 of them settled in the north of Europe, especially in Germanic areas (Amedeo Molnar 1974:205). It is un-

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[250] Based on Matthew 18:18 "Verily, I tell you: Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven".

[251] *Magna Carta Libertatum* (Latin name of "the Great Charter of the Liberties").

[252] See (Lanarès 1975:2/7).

[253] "No one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagan, but also Jews, heretics or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but they will go to the 'eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels' (Mt. 25:41), unless before the end of their life they are received into it [the Catholic Church]." *Bulle Cantate Domino*, 1442 (in Dumeige 1975:253).

known how many have been killed before reaching the boundary of this notoriously unsafe area and further on the way.

Several Muslim authors have addressed the topic of the Bogomil quasi-extinction.[254] One of them, Tayyib Okiç (1964:108-33), has centred his research on Turkish tax documents. In them, he detects the traces of an ongoing presence of Bosnian Christians under the Turks over a long time. Having lived in Albania (2006 to 2009), I remember very well the words of several leaders, including Sali Berisha, who served as president of Albania (1992 to 1997) and prime minister (2005 to 2013):

"We Muslims in the Balkans are the descendants of the Bogomils" (2008:3).

Sadly, most modern inhabitants of the places formerly populated by the Bogomils,[255] Cathars,[256] and Waldenses[257] are barely aware of the rich faith of their ancestors. Nor are they conscious of the trials their forefathers endured to try to heed the undefiled apostolic faith. If the inhabitants of cities like Donja, Drežnica, Kreševo, or Sarajevo still recall their Bogomil ascendance, they do not have the slightest idea of what their ancestors were standing for.[258] Nevertheless, several visits to Bosnia and Herzegovina convinced me of the interest of people living in the valleys of the Jablanica, Neretva, and Rama for their Bogomil legacy. The same remark applies to the Albigenses. On a journey in the southern provinces of my home country, I was surprised to discover how much some areas are eager to foster local tourism by offering "Cathar menus", "Cathar souvenirs". Very few know that this appellation is associated with one the cruellest chapters of French history.

4.15   Summary

A look into the mirror of the past confirms the existence of a certain number of movements tracing a more or less unbroken line uniting the beginning of Early Christianity with the Reformation. The denigration of these Christians as "heretics" or "schismatic"

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[254] Muhammed Tayyib Okiç (1964), Nedim Filipović (1976:141-167) and Muhamed Hađijahić (1975: 1309-1328).

[255] Mainly in Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Church of the Bogomils still exists in Sarajevo and many small towns around hope to maintain evidences of their heritage alive.

[256] In France, some Protestant pastors wrestle to maintain memories alive. However, the population in general is not aware of their heroic past and does not seem to show any real interest.

[257] In Italy, the Waldenses still hold regular memorial services in Torre Pellice.

[258] Yuri Stoyanov (1994) has compiled a list of spiritual descendants of the Bogomils.

has covered the fact that most of them, if not all, had a Bible-based theology. Several fundamental principles in their credo define them as promoters of the apostolic faith.

Despite their various appellations, the dissidents built a network spanning Anatolia (Paulicians), Ireland (Patrick's spiritual heirs), and Russia (Strigolniki) via the Balkans (Bogomils), Italy (Waldenses), and southeast France (Albigenses). It demonstrates that they were not a marginal group. On the contrary, these believers partly outnumbered those of the established church. They included the influential social classes. Bogomilism was the legal religion in Bosnia during the most prosperous period of the country. However, in an attempt to destroy reliable records and to play down their positive contribution to European spirituality, the role of non-conformist Christians as reformatory agents has been relegated to a footnote. That is why presenting them in a contrasting light is crucial for our appreciation of the German Reformation.

Last, if we qualify "Apostolic" Christians as precursors of Martin Luther, an analysis of their possible relationship with Islam would be the first tangible consideration in favour of including Islam as an agent of change. The Qur'ān commends those who live according to "the Book" (the Bible), as "near to the Muslims". I may pretend that the "Apostolic" groups fit into this description. Therefore, the next questions to be answered are whether early Islam knew about the presence of "another Christianity" in contrast to the drifting church, and how Muslims reacted to it, and if they had a theological foundation in their perception and interaction with them. If so, the role of Islam in the blossoming of non-complying trends deserves to be understood.

That will be presented in the next chapter.

The rise of Islam on the eve of ecclesiastical decadence

5.1   Introduction

After having given some elements that indicate the presence of two distinct branches in early Christianity, I will consider the possible role of Islam as a new component that emerged at that time.

As stated in Ṭabarī's classical biography (*sirāh*, or S.I.N.), Muḥammad was born around 570, i.e., five years after Justinian's death (14 November 565). We may say that Islam appeared at a time when Christianity urgently needed reformation. Does it imply that the Umayyads and the Abbasids could have a say in the reformatory process long before the Ottomans and Martin Luther? What about a quranic legitimation for it?

To answer this question, I need to assess the Islamic awareness of "Apostolic" Christianity. I will first scout the common ground bringing quranic theology closer to the Bible as the base of apostolic theology. Then, I will search the text for the guide-lines advocated in the holy book of Islam regarding Christians, if there is any evidence of various appearances of Christianity, and how the answer to these questions echoed in the early Islam view of Jesus' disciples.

5.2   The aftermath of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon

Let us first return to Justinian the Great, one of the greatest persecutors in Roman history. His reign was (Gibbon 2008: chp.47, par.24) "a uniform yet various scene of ill-treatment; and he appears to have surpassed his indolent predecessors, both in the contrivance of his laws and the rigor of their execution." Whatever did not fit into the Byzantine *Imperator*'s worldview had to be eradicated. In his hatred, he targeted several religious offshoots, the adherents of Arianism in particular. They had been heeding their theological persuasion long after Nicaea. No theological debate ever solved the controversy between the Arian and Nicene factions, but it degenerated into a battle for the control of Christianity.

Yet, the discussion gained momentum at the end of the fourth century. Wulfila (c.311–383)[259] remains famous for his translation of the Bible. "Little Wolf", a bishop of Cappadocian Greek descent, developed the Gothic alphabet so that his people could read the sacred pages in vernacular terminology. The result is one of the earliest written documents in any Germanic language. Wulfila's diffusion of the biblical message, together with intense missionary activity, brought the Gothic tribes to a gradual conversion to Arianism.[260]

Wulfila entered the Arian Controversy and passionately taught the subordination of Jesus to the Father. His notoriety among the Germans was such that it shaped the whole fifth century. It was the time when the Ostrogothic Kingdom dominated the Western Empire.[261] Remember that most Goths were Arians, and the Latins Trinitarians. Over sixty years (c.493 to c.553), Christian groups developed parallel hierarchies independently from one another, each one serving peculiar ways of defining the nature of Jesus the Messiah: the Arian and Nicene entities.

In the meantime, a critical move occurred when the Third Ecumenical Council (Ephesus, 22 June to August 431)[262] repeated the decisions of Nicaea and formally condemned Nestorianism. Nestorius, the Constantinopolitan patriarch, pleaded to endorse the title *Christótokos*, "Birth-giver to Christ" and not *Theotókos*, "Birth-giver to God", for the Virgin Mary. Ephesus turned down Nestorius' plea and anathematized him as a heretic. In fact, the assembly voted to condemn him on the very day of the opening. The council immediately deposed Nestorius, and "the outcome of Ephesus was the triumph of *theotókos* over *Christótokos*" (Henri Marrou 1963:1/384-385).

Yet, Christians in the East never accepted Nestorius' condemnation. In turn, they welcomed him; and those who in the West did not agree with *theotókos* left the Western Empire eastwards. The acceptance of the newcomers must have been so strong that the name "Nestorian Church" was alternatively applied to several branches of the Orthodox faith.[263]

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[259] Also known as Ulphilas and Orphila.

[260] "The Gothic Bible of Wulfilas was available for the Vandals and other Germans whose speech was closely akin to Gothic" (Bury 1905:297).

[261] Officially called the *Regnum Italiae* ("Kingdom of Italy").

[262] Near the present-day city of Selçuk, Turkey.

[263] All Eastern Syrian Rite churches, including those that did not necessarily support the Nestorian creed in all points, became affiliated with "Nestorianism".

Twenty years later, the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon[264] (8 October to 1 November 451) amended the concept of *Theotókos.* The Confession of Chalcedon[265] reformulated the dual nature of Jesus "Perfect both in deity and in humaneness. This self-same one is also truly God and truly man" and officially uses the term "Mother of God" for Mary. The Chalcedonian dogma was another stumbling stone for many Christians, and there were several attempts to reconcile the non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian Christians. Philip Schaff remarks (19975:3/par.82) that the councils did not intend the way to Mariolatry; but,

> "From this Mariology follows Mariolatry. If Mary is, in the strict sense of the word, the mother of God, it seems to follow as a logical consequence that she herself is divine and therefore an object of divine worship. This was not, indeed, the meaning and purpose of the ancient church. In fact, it never asserted that Mary was the mother of the essential, eternal divinity of the Logos. She was, and continues to be, a created being, a human mother, even according to the Roman and Greek doctrine. But according to the once prevailing conception of her peculiar relation to deity, a certain degree of divine homage to Mary and some invocation of her powerful intercession with God seemed unavoidable and soon became a universal practice."

5.3   The Second Council of Constantinople and the emergence of Islam

In 551, Justinian issued a condemnation against the opponents of Chalcedonian theology. Two years later, the Second Council of Constantinople (5 May to 2 June 553) insisted on the *theotókos* dogma, declaring it appropriate to venerate "Mary, Mother of God"; but those who did not accept the decision would be banished from the Byzantine Empire. Some found refuge in Rome under the Gothic Theodoric the Great – himself an adept of Nestorian theology. No wonder the Holy See soon turned her wrath upon them with the result that non-complying Christians were chased out of the Western Roman Empire. Justinian's triumph over the Gothic Kingdom of Italy allowed him to clean up the theological stage to reinforce his position. We have remarked in chapter two that his action originated the supremacy of the Catholic Church and the victory of Trinitarianism, at least in occidental Christianity.

Incidentally, while Justinian was hoping to eradicate Nestorianism and Arianism within the *Imperium*, his policy strengthened Christianity in the Middle East. His next

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[264] A part of today's Istanbul on the Asian side (Kadıköy).

[265] [Online] https://www.creeds.net/ancient/chalcedon.htm [retrieved 28 May 2020].

move was to prompt the Heruli to accept Chalcedonian Christianity (Alexander Saran-tis 2005 in F. Curta, ed. 2011:372). The Heruli did not accept the new theology and were constrained to leave Rome. They proceeded eastwards to Armenia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Syria. Since the Oriental Orthodox congregations had disdained the decisions of the Council,[266] the Heruli settled where Christians would share their ideas and offer them hospitality. That is how the notion of a single nature of Christ imme-diately gained in popularity, and the Nestorian Church expanded …

> "in Upper Mesopotamia, from the Mediterranean Sea to as far afield as China, Mongolia, Central Asia, Anatolia, the Arabian Peninsula, and India. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the church experienced a final period of expansion under the Mongol Empire, where influential Nestorian Christians sat in the Mongol court" (Peter Jackson 2014[2]:97).

Yet, middle in this crisis, another dominance was preparing its part in the break-through of the Reformation: Islam. Could it be that "Mohammedanism was in part a revolt against this degradation" (Oliver Thatcher & Ferdinand Schwill 1979:338)? Was it a Christian-based repercussion of the disputes coming from Ephesus and Chalce-don? Or was it perhaps an apology for the Nestorian refutation of *theotókos*?

The logical way to search for an answer to these questions is to return to early Islam. For multiple causes, though, this is not easy; first, because of the danger of being accused of misrepresenting it; second, due to lack of verifiable records. The historian Ṭabārī is the one who published Muḥammad's biography. His voluminous *Tariḫ r-Rusul wa l-Mulūk* became the Standard Islamic Narrative. According to it, the Quraish chief of Mekka sent a four-year-old boy named Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hā-shim[267] "into the desert, as it was the custom. The lad would learn the Arabic language in its uncorrupted original form and grow in a healthy environment to become independent, a courageous person of integrity and a strong personality".

In my literature review (chapter one), I have mentioned that the Standard Isla-mic Narrative of what happened then in Mecca and Medina has been challenged. The doubt started with the publication of a comprehensive list of non-Arabic words within the quranic corpus by Siegmund Fraenkel (1886, 2006[4]). Arthur Jeffery, an Australian

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[266] ... and have not revised their position until today.

[267] Further on referred to as Muḥammad, sometimes The Messenger. The Arabic *rasūl* (messenger) corresponds better to Muḥammad's mission than *nabī* (prophet). The Qur'ān uses both terms.

professor of Semitic languages in the School of Oriental Studies in Cairo from 1921 to 1938, popularized the topic. Jeffrey (1938) completed Fraenkel's list. More recently (beginning of the twenty-first century), Christoph Luxenberg (2002) refined Jefferey's listing and amplified the similarities with Judeo-Christian ideas reflected in the joint vocabulary. By doing so, Luxenberg threw a stone against the dogma of verbal inspiration of the Qur'ān. This has vindicated the typical approach of Islam, given a historical-critical definition of it, and as such, lightened the thunders of those thinkers who clung to their traditional view. Independently of how one assesses the generally accepted theory about the beginning of Islam, no one will hardly deny its correlation with Abrahamic roots.

5.4   The linguistic proximity of the Qur'ān to Judeo-Christian sources

The first striking fact is found in the similarities of the Arabic and the Syriac alphabets. Even the National Museum of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh[268] informs its visitors that "The alphabet system was invented between 2000 and 1500 BC in Syria by redefining existing cuneiform signs as letters." The first example mentioned is the *bā*, a simplification of the picture of a house (*bayt*), that is part of the Arabic alphabet and, like most letters, bears the same name in Syriac and Hebrew.[269] The general assumption is the Nabatean origin of the Arabic writing.

Further evidence is the surprising frequency of non-Arabic words in the Qur'ān. For the sake of my study, I need to expose their Judeo-Christian. We find them in the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of the Torah.[270] Other words testify of a common origin, which is no wonder due geographic proximity of Semitic languages. A prominent case is the origin of the name *Allah^u*: Etymologically speaking, *Al – lah^u* is not very far away from *'Ĕl* in the Old Testament, only slightly varying in its vocalic form. The phonemic resemblance between *Allah^u* and *'Ĕlāhā* in biblical Aramaic[271] can hardly be denied.

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[268] King Abdul Aziz Historical Center.

[269] The explanation continues: "By about 1000 BC, two families of alphabets had developed in Arabia. In the North, one of them was Phoenician, from which Moabite, Hebrew, and Aramaic scripts evolved".

[270] See one of my books (Romain 1979:31-32).

[271] *Lāḵ'Ĕlāh 'ăḇāhāṯî, məhōwḏê ūməšabbaḥ 'ănāh* …: "O God of my fathers, I thank you and praise you…" (Daniel 2:23); *Min-qəšōṭ dî 'ĕlāhăḵōwn, hū 'ĕlāh 'ĕlāhîn ūmārê malḵîn* …: "Truly, your God is a god above all gods and a Lord above all kings …" (Daniel 2:47); *Wəhiṯnabbî bəšum 'ĕlāh Yiśrā'êl* …: And the prophets …. Prophesied in the name of the God of Israel (Ezra 5:1); See also Ezra 7:19 (*Bêṯ 'ĕlāhāḵ*: "The house of your God"; *'Ĕlāh Yərūšəlem*: "The God of Jerusalem"); and *'Ĕlāh šəmayyā*: "The God of Heaven" (Ezra 7:23).

The same applies to the Aramaic *'Ĕlo* found in the New Testament[272] and *'Ĕloah* or *'Ĕlohim* in biblical Hebrew. The shift of pronunciation from "e" like in "pen" into *'Ĕlo* to "a" in Allah is similar to vocalic adjustments like letters according to linguistic preferences. Take as an illustration the phonetical variations between the English *God*, the German *Gott,* and the Swedish *Gud,* or Latin *Deus*, French *Dieu*, and Spanish *Dios*; or to make it more simple: Look at the spelling differences between American and British English (honor/honour, license/licence, kilometer/kilometre, organize/ organise, etc.), not to mention the different pronunciations.

Adaptation is necessary when two alphabets do not have the same phonetic sound. That is the case in Arabic, where there is no sound equivalent to the English "e" (like "Eddie"). *Bitrūl* becomes English petrol, *al-iksīr* elixir, *harīm* harem, *līmūn* lemon, whereas *muslim* becomes "moslem" or remains "muslim". This illustrates the switch from *'Ĕl* (pronounced like "El Paso") into *Īl* (pronounced like "Illinois"). In the Qur'ān, the name of God is abbreviated at the end of theophoric nouns like *Ǧabrā'īl* or *Ǧibrīl* (Hebrew Gavri – *'Ĕl*, "God is my strength") and *Ismāʿīl* (Ishma – *'Ĕl*, "God hears me"). Here we read the name for God in the Hebrew diminutive form of *'Ĕl* and not, as we would expect, the Arabic *Allah*. In addition, the Arabic appellation for God (*Al - lahᵘ*) is in use among all Arabs, regardless of whether they are Christians or Muslims, and by today's Aramaic (*'Alâhâ*) and Maltese (*Alla*) Christians.

Moreover, the full name of Muḥammad ("Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim") includes his father's name 'Abd Allah: "Servant of Allah". Allah's mention attests to the belief in a God named "Allahᵘ" *before* the birth of the Messenger of Islam. It demonstrates that Islam, at its beginning, was established on a belief in God similar to the One revealed in the Bible, with various forms of the same name that was merely vocalized distinctly under classical philological rules.

Another observation is that not all expressions current in the Muslim rhetoric do occur in the Qur'ān, but they all appear in the Bible. In fact, they are still part of the oriental Christian repertoire:

- *Lā ʾilāha ʾillā llah*, the foundational insistence on the unity of God ("no god except God"), is reiterated sixteen times in the Bible. We will come back to it later.

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[272] *'Ĕli, 'ĕli, lema sabachthani*?: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46) in some manuscripts and in the parallel text in Mark 15:34, we read *'Ĕlōi, 'ĕlōi*, ("my *'Ĕlō*") in which the Aramaic word *'Ĕlō* is clearly attested.

- *Bi-'smi-llāhi* ("in the name of God"), counted 163 times in the Bible in various forms and contexts.
- *As-salāmu ʿalaykum* ("peace be upon you"). The expression was common in ancient time.[273] Jesus himself[274] commanded his disciples to greet with it.[275]
- *Inchā'a-llahu* ("if God will"), recommended by the Apostle James before making concrete plans for the future.[276]

The linguistic kinship is so striking that the oldest Arabic manuscript of the New Testament, *Codex Leydensis* – dating back to the tenth century, i.e., more than 200 years after the Qur'ān – introduces the Gospel of Matthew with the expression *Bi-'smi-llahir-raḥmāni-r-raḥīmi*: "In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and merciful".

To close these considerations, let us notice that almost all prophets and messengers mentioned in the Qur'ān have Hebrew or Aramaic-sounding names.[277] Going through their stories along the pages of the Qur'ān will convince us of the parallels to the Bible, whereas the Qur'ān seldom develops the biblical narratives nor paraphrases them. Instead, it invites us to meditate upon its Judeo-Christian pendants. Doing so, it takes for granted that, while hearing the Qur'ān, the listener would know the story or read it in the Bible.

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[273] The Bible mentions it several times in the Judeo-Christian context and from the pen of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as *Šəlāməḵōwn*, "Peace be upon you" (Daniel 4:1). The Persian king Artasasta employed the same greetings *Šəlām*, "peace!" (Ezra 4:17) and King Darius the Mede *Šəlāməḵōwn*, "peace be upon you" (Daniel 6:25/26). Thus, the Old Testament attests the peace-greeting in no less than four different ancient cultures.

[274] *Éstē en mésō autōn kaì légei autoís, Eirēnē hymin*: "He [Jesus] stood in their midst and said, peace be with you" (Luke 24:26).

[275] *Eis hēn d'àn eisélthēte oikían prōton légete, Eirēnē tō oíkō toutō*: "Moreover, whenever you might enter a house, say, peace be upon this house" (Luke 10:5).

[276] *Antì tou légein hymas, ean ho Kyrios thelēsē, kaì zēsomen kaì poiēsomen touto e ekeino*: "Instead you should say, if the Lord wants and if we are alive, we will do this or that" (James 4:15). See also the Apostle Paul's promise to his listeners: *Pálin anakámpsō pròs hymas tou Theou thélontos*: "Again, I will return to you – God willing", in the Acts of the Apostles 18:21 and *Eleúsomai dè tachéōs pròs hymas eàn ho kyrios thelēsē*: "I will come back to you in a short time, of the Lord wants" (1 Corinthians 4:19); *Ean ho Kyrios epitrepsē*: "If the Lord permits" (1 Corinthians 16:7).

[277] *Abīl* for Abel, *Ādam* for Adam, *Ayyūb* for Job, *Dāwūd* for David, *Hārūn* for Aaron, *Ibrāhīm* for Abraham, *Ilyās* for Elijah, *Isḥāq* for Isaac, *Ismāʿīl* for Ishmael, *Mūsā* for Moses, *Nūh* for Noah, *Yaʿkūb* for Jacob, *Yūnus* for Jonah, *Yūsuf* for Joseph.
Israel is called *Isrāʾīl*; and Mary (both Moses' sister and Jesus' mother) *Maryam*. The New Testament sometimes names her "Mary" (Greek *María*), sometimes "Maryam" (*maryám*). The Hebrew word is *Miriam*. *ʿĪsā* for Jesus is phonetically closer to the Greek *Iêsus* than the Hebrew *Yeshua*.

5.5 The common ground between "Apostolic" Christianity and Islam

We need to ask whether the paradigm switch from the S.I.N. to a revisionist view of Islam confirms, modifies, or removes the basis for mainstream Islamic belief. Whether we approve or question the classical narrative of the birth of Islam, our position does not affect the study of the Qur'ān in its common ground with Judaism and Christianity.

- The two revelations insist on the necessity to worship the Unique God.
- All ninety-nine Islamic names of God are compatible with those in the Old and New Testaments.
- Both the Bible and the Qur'ān present God as "Creator of Heaven and earth in six days".[278]
- The eschatological scenario anticipated by Muslims and Bible-oriented Christians offers far more similarities than differences.[279]
- Offerings, fasting, and prayer are three pillars of the Islamic faith that are one central concern of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew Chapter 6).
- The Qur'ān repeatedly refers to the Bible as *al-kitāb* ("the Book" *par excellence*),[280] *kalāma l-lahi* ("God's Word"),[281] *hudan* ("guidance") unto the truth.[282] The Gospel is *nūr* ("light"),[283] written for the benefit of the whole mankind.[284]

But the most striking theological convergence is probably the concept of *tawḥīd*, the unicity of God.[285] The expression *Lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llah^u* ("There is no God except Allah") occurs several times in the Qur'ān,[286] and the belief in God's oneness constitutes the foundation of Islam. It is formulated in the Qur'ān as follows:

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[278] *Kî šêšet̲-yāmîm ʿāśā Yahweh ʾet̲-haššāmayim wǝʾet̲-hāʾāreṣ*: "Because in six days, the Lord has made the heaven and the earth" (Exodus 20:11); *Inna rabbakumu l-lahu alladhī khalaqa l-samāwāti wal-arḍa fī sittati ayyāmin thumma is'tawā ʿalā l-ʿarshi*: "Indeed your Lord is Allah, the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then, He ascended His throne" (al-A'rāf 7:54).

[279] See my book about Christian and Islamic eschatology (Romain 2013).

[280] An-Nisāʾ 4:136 and many other *āyāt*.

[281] In the Qur'ān, the noun *kalimāt* in the plural may refer to the Qur'ān, but all four appearances in the singular form *kalām* refer to the Bible (al-Baqarah 2:75; al-A'rāf 7:144; at-Tawbah 9:6, and al-Fatḥ 48:15).

[282] Ahqaf 46:30.

[283] Al-Māʾidah 5:46.

[284] Āli-'Imrān 3:4.

[285] For an introduction to the Qur'ān, see my work (Romain 1979).

[286] *Al-lāhu; lā ʾilaha ʾillā huwa*: "Allah; no God but Him" (Āli-'Imrān 3:2).

an-Nisā' 4:136

"O, you who have believed! Believe in Allah and His Messenger, in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book He has previously revealed. Whoever hides something about Allah, His angels, His books, His Messengers, and the Last Day has truly lost (his way) and drifted far away."

In addition, the Qur'ān states that the People of the Book (Jews and possibly Christians) and Muslims do have the same God:

al-'Ankabūt 29:46

"And only argue with the People of the Book most courteously, except with those who do wrong; and say: 'We believe in what has been revealed unto us and to you. Our God and your God is one, and we surrender [*mus'limūna*] unto Him'."[287]

It is important to remember that the unicity of God is asserted in the Old and the New Testaments. The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses begin with:

Exodus 20:2-3

"I am the One who is and will always be; your God, the One who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You will not have any other gods facing Me."[288]

This command is rehearsed twice in the Old Testament:

Psalm 81:9

"There shall be no foreign god among you, and you shall not worship any god of the foreigners!"[289]

Hosea 13:4

"I am the One who is and will always be; your God, the One [who brought you] out of the land of Egypt. You will not know any god except Me, and no liberator is facing Me."[290]

On the walls of almost every synagogue, one can read the Ten Command-ments displayed in their short version, rendering the first with the two words: *Lō YaHWeY*, the linguistic equivalent of *lā ʾilāha.* The sentence "No other God beside God" is found several times in the Old Testament. I may add that the pronouncement

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[287] *Wa-ilāhunā wa-ilāhukum wāḥidun wanaḥnu lahu mus'limūna.*

[288] *ʾĀnōḵî Yahweh ʾĕlōheḵā, ʾăšer hōwṣēṯîḵā mê'ereṣ miṣrayim mibbêṯ 'ăḇāḏîm. Lō yihyeh-ləḵā ʾĕlōhîm ʾăḥêrîm 'alpānāya.*

[289] *Lō yihyeh ḇəḵā ʾêl zār; wəlō ṯištaḥăweh, lə'êl nêḵār.*

[290] *Wə'ānōḵî Yahweh ʾĕlōheḵā mê'ereṣ miṣrāyim; wêlōhîm zūlāṯî lō ṯēḏā', ūmōwōšîa'ʿayin biltî.*

Lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llahu pervades biblical theology in the sense of θεο – λογία / *theo – logía* (the "logic" about God):

> Deuteronomy 4:35
>
> "You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides Him, there is no other."[291]

> 1 Samuel 2:2
>
> "There is none like You."[292]

> 2 Samuel 7:22
>
> "For there is none like You, and there is no God besides You."[293]

> 1 Kings 8:60
>
> "So that all nations on earth may know that the Lord is God, and there is no other."[294]

> Joel 2:27
>
> "I am the Lord your God, and there is no other."[295]

Prophet Isaiah insists on the unicity of God in nine verses within four consecutive chapters[296]:

> Isaiah 44:6
>
> "I am the first, I am the last; apart from me, there is no God."[297]

Further on, the heart of the Jewish confession of faith – the equivalent of the Islamic *Šahādah*" – begins with the words:

> Deuteronomy 6:4
>
> "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."[298]

The Gospel of Mark (12:28) reports the story of a Jewish scholar who went to Jesus and asked him which was the most important commandment. In the next verse, Jesus answered him by quoting Deuteronomy Chapter 6:

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[291] *Yahweh hū hā'ĕlōhîm;'ên 'ōwḏ milḇaddōw.*

[292] *'Ên bilteḵā.*

[293] *Kî 'ên kāmōwḵā wə'ên'ĕlōhîm zūlāṯeḵā.*

[294] *Ləma'an da'aṯ kāl'ammê hā'āreṣ, kî Yahweh hū hā'ĕlōhîm;'ên'ōwḏ.*

[295] *'Ānî, wa'ănî Yahweh'ĕlōhêḵem wə'ên 'ōwḏ.*

[296] Isaiah 43:11; 44:8; 45:5, 6, 14, 18, 21, 22; 46:9.

[297] *'Ănî rišōwn wa'ă·nî 'aḥărōwn, ūmibbal'āḏay 'ên 'Ĕlōhîm.*

[298] *Šəma' Yiśrā'êl; Yahweh 'ĕlōhênū Yahweh 'eḥāḏ.*

"The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'."[299]

In Verse 32, the scribe commended Jesus:

"Well said, teacher! You have truly spoken, for He is One, and there is no other besides Him."[300]

As we can see, the New Testament quotes the Jewish confession of faith with the very words used by the Muslims on their own! Other verses confirm God's unicity:

1 Corinthians 8:4
"There is no God but one."[301]

Galatians 3:20
"But God is one."[302]

Ephesians 4:5
"[There is] one god."[303]

1 Timothy 2:5
"Because [there is] one god."[304]

James 2:19
"Do you believe that God is one? You do well! "[305]

Our observations bring us to conclusion that the quranic context of the unicity of God may have been vindicated against some polytheists in Arabia or some Christian denominations embracing a wrong idea of the Trinity; but it is by no means in opposition to biblical theology.

Another critical issue is the assumption that the One God of the Jews and Christians is not identical to the quranic *Allah*. The *Gottesbild* may differ from one adept to the other, but this also happens within the very same faith. At the same time, the scriptures of all three religions present God mainly as *ar-raḥmānu-r-raḥīmu,* mostly

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[299] *Hóti heís estin kaì ouk estin állos plēn autou.*
[300] *Kalōs, didáskale, ep' alētheías eipes hóti heís estin, kaì ouk éstin állos plēn autou.*
[301] *Oudeìs theòs ei mē heís.*
[302] *Ho dè theós heís estin.*
[303] *Theós heís.*
[304] *Heís gàr theós.*
[305] *Sy pisteúeis hóti heís estin ho theós? Kalōs poieis!*

translated as "the Compassionate and Merciful" (or: ready to forgive), a combination of two divine attributes. Except for the ninth one, each sūrah begins with the Basmallah, an Arabic formula meaning "By the name of God, the Compassionate and Merciful" whereas *raḥīm is* the same word as the Hebrew *raḥūm* (compassionate / merciful). In their linguistic equivalents, both the Old and the New Testaments mention these attributes as essential descriptive elements of God's character. When Moses asked Yahweh to reveal His Name, He answered that He would manifest His glory to the prophet and, through him, to the world. Then, He revealed Himself as "gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth":

> Exodus 34:6
> "And Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow at anger, and abundant in goodness and truth'."[306]

> The attributes are repeated in the New Testament, like in James 5:11, where the parallel with the quranic *raḥmānu-r-raḥīm* is striking:

> "You have heard of Job's patience and have seen what the Lord made a wayout. The Lord is very compassionate and of tender mercy."[307]

I have chosen to present the *Gottesbild* in Islam in comparison with its biblical equivalent as a representative illustration of similarities between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In fact, the three share the unicity of *God* (*mono – théos*). We could go on and on with the central doctrines of the three monotheistic religions. Christians and Muslims are quick to engage in a selective reading of their text, tending to highlight the differences over the common ground.

5.6   The nature of Al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā as an answer to conciliar Christology

Dealing with the perception of God, the major stumbling stones touch the nature of Al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā Ibn Maryam (The Messiah Jesus, Son of Mary):

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[306] *Yahweh, Yahweh, ʾĒl raḥūm wəḥannūn; ʾerek ʾappayim wərab ḥesed we ʾĕmet.* See also Exodus 33:19, in which Yahweh says to Moses, *Wəqārātî bəšêm Yahweh ləpānekā; wəḥannōtî ʾet'ăšer ʾāḥōn, wəriḥamtî ʾet'ăšer ʾăraḥêm*: "And I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

[307] *Polysplanchnós estin ho Kúrios kaì oiktírmōn.*

- One God (and not three): "So believe in Allah and His messengers, and do not say 'Three'. Desist! (It is) better for you! Allah is the Only God. Glory to Him!"[308] (an-Nisāʾ 4:171).

- God has no partner: "Allah does not forgive that partners should be ascribed to Him. He forgives all, except some to whom He refuses. Whoever ascribes partners to Allah has apostasised" (an-Nisāʾ 4:116; al-Māʾidah); "Do not make another god besides Allah; you would sit in disgrace" (al-Isrāʾ 17:22).

- God does not beget and cannot be begotten: "He does not beget nor was begotten"[309] (al-Ikhlās 112:3).

- God has no child: "Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a child" (an-Nisāʾ 4:171); "How can He have a child, when He has no spouse?" (al-Anʾām 6:101).

- No one should say that God is the Messiah: "They are surely hiding something, those who say that Allah *is* the Messiah, the son of Mary"[310] (al-Māʾidah 5:72).

Such statements are regarded as some of the major stumbling blocks in discussions between Christians and Muslims. This is where a closer look at them[311] unveils that the two religions are much more in accordance on those issues than in conflict. We can say that they reflect the theological controversies that were widely discussed in sixth-century's Arabia, such as[312]:

- The quranic denial of *theotókos* over *Christótokos* promulgated in the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus and the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople is found in al-Ikhlās 112:3 ("God cannot beget and be begotten").

- The support of Monophysitism[313] against the concept of Jesus' dual nature (Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and Second Council of Constantinople).

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[308] *Walā taqūlū ʿalā l-lahi illā l-ḥaqa* (…) *walā taqūlū thalāthatun intahū khayran lakum. Innamā l-lahu ilāhun wā-ḥidun.*

[309] *Huwa l-lahu aḥadun. Al-lahu l-ṣamadu. Lam yalid walam yūlad.*

[310] *Laqad kafara alladhīna qālū inna l-laha huwa l-masīḥu ub'nu maryama.*

[311] For a more comprehensive analysis, see one of my books (Romain 1991, 2019⁵:129-163).

[312] My goal is to present an overview of the various christologies in the sixth and seventh centuries.

[313] Or Monophysism.

- Adoptionism, a non-Trinitarian group[314] that appeared at the beginning of the second century. It taught that Jesus was a man who reached perfection and got rewarded for it by becoming an "associate" with God. God adopted Jesus as His "Son" when he was baptized. This is one point the Qur'ān refutes, vehemently rebuking those who associate any partner with Allah.

- Modalism, another non-Trinitarian creed,[315] teaching that the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit does not consist in three simultaneous identities within the Godhead but in three intermittent apparitions of the same and unique God. Consequently, the full godliness was in Jesus while on earth. In answer, the Qur'ān denies that God is (only) Jesus.

- Collyridianism taught that the Virgin Mary was united with God in a marriage-like union, and that Jesus was their real child born of that carnal alliance (Gibbon 2008:432). While Gibbon mentions that the Collyridians moved from Thrace to pre-Islamic Arabia, there is no evidence of their presence in Muḥammad's time. Indeed, the Qur'ān responds to similar Christological debates and may be considered partly an apologetic work against Collyridianism. Islam interprets "Son of God" as the result of a physical relationship uniting God and Mary and denies it by wondering, "How can He have a child when He has no spouse!"[316] (al-An'ām 6:101). I have previously mentioned the role of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople that set the doctrine of Mary, mother of God, and thus implies that Jesus is the physical son of God. This is the very concept Islam categorically denies.

At the same time, we should analyse possible common elements between biblical and quranic Christology. The two revelations agree that,

- o Jesus had no earthly father,
- o God has no carnal desires,
- o There was no physical act involved in the conception of Jesus,
- o Jesus was born through the Holy Spirit,
- o At that time, Mary was a virgin,
- o Jesus was a "spotless" child.

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[314] Sometimes called "Historic Sabellianism" or "Dynamic Monarchianism".

[315] Also known as "Modalistic Monarchianism", "Modal Monarchism", or "Patripassianism".

[316] *Annā yakūnu lahu waladun walam takun lahu ṣāḥibatun*.

Moreover, the Qur'ān confers to Jesus several supernatural attributes, such as:

- o *Raḥmah minnā*, "Mercy (coming) from Us / Allah" (Maryam 19:21),
- o *Rūḥ minhu*, *Rūḥ minnā*, "Spirit (coming) from Him", "from Us", or "from Allah" (an-Nisā' 4:171; al-Anbiyā' 21:91),
- o *Kalimatu minhu*, "Word (coming) from Him /Allah" ('Āli 'Imrān 3:45),
- o *Wajīhan fī l-dun'yā wal-ākhirati*, "Glorious in this world and the hereafter" ('Āli 'Imrān 3:45),
- o *Mina l-muqarabīna*, "among those close to Allah" ('Āli 'Imrān 3:45),
- o *Mubārak*, "blessed" (Maryam 19:31),
- o *Qaūl al-ḥaqq*, "the expression of the truth" (Maryam 19:34).[317]

The similarities between the two religions could have played a decisive role in the way Apostolic" Christians perceived Islam: maybe as some odd Christians that were closer to the Bible than those who dictated to venerate Mary and the saints. Or could the Qur'ān be an apologetical work against the theological threat of Christians who brought Adoptionistic, Modalistic, and Collyridianistic tenets into Arabia?

5.7   Islam as a state of mind rather than a new religion

While seeking an answer, it is necessary to clarify which etymon stands behind the word "Islam". It stems from the Arabic verb *aslama*: to surrender. Per definition, a "Muslim" is someone who abandons his life and will to God. If that interpretation is correct, Islam is primarily not a new world religion starting with Muḥammad but, in the strict sense of the word, a state of mind, and it may be why the Qur'ān raises the question:

an-Nisā' 4:125
"Who can be better in religion than the one who surrenders his whole self [*aslama*]
to Allah, doing good and following Ibrāhīm's state of mind, him the straightforward
in faith? Allah [Himself] chose Abraham for a friend."

Here, like in several āyāt, Islam is defined as Abraham's religion, and should, therefore, be traced back to his time, i.e., nearly 2400 years *before* Muḥammad.

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[317] For a thorough study on this and on the meaning of "Son of God" in the Bible, see one of my books (Romain 1991, 2019[5]).

Āli-Imrān 3:67

"Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but was an upright man who had sur-rendered to Allah [*Mus'liman*]; he was not of the idolaters."

al-Ḥaǧǧ 22:78

"And strive for Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship; the faith of your father Abraham is yours. He has named you Muslims [*mus'limīna*] of old time."

al-Baqarah 2:131-133

"When his Lord said unto him: 'Surrender [*aslim*]!', he said 'I am surrendering [*aslamtu*] to the Lord of the Worlds'.

"The same did Abraham enjoin upon his sons, and also Jacob, saying: 'O, my sons! Allah has chosen for you the true religion; therefore, do not die except as men who are surrendering [*Mus'limūna*] unto Him'.

"Or were you present when death came to Jacob when he said unto his sons: 'What will you worship after me?' They said: 'We will worship your God, the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the One God unto Whom we are surrendering [*mus'limūna*]'."

Such statements could explain why Muḥammad qualified those among the Jews and Christians as "Muslims":

al-'Ankabūt 29:46

"And only argue with the People of the Book most courteously, except with those who do wrong; and say: 'We believe in what has been revealed unto us and to you. Our God and your God is one, and we surrender [*mus'limūna*] unto Him'."

Indeed, the Qur'ān characterizes devoted Children of Mūsā/Moses and 'Īsā/Jesus as truly submissive (Arabic *mus'limūna*):

'Āli 'Imrān 3:52

"And when 'Īsā felt some unbelief in them, he said: 'Who shall be my helpers in Allah's way?' The apostles said: 'We are the helpers in Allah's way. We believe in Allah and testify that we are surrendering to Him [*mus'limūna*]'".

al-Mā'idah 5:111

"When I revealed to the Apostles to believe in Me and My messenger, they said: 'We believe and testify that we are surrendering to Him [*mus'limūna*]'".

The concept of submission expressed in the Arabic word *aslama* is mentioned in the Old Testament with the same Semitic root and identical meaning. Besides the derivative *šālōm*, commonly understood in the sense of "peace" but also well-being or happiness, the root *ŠLM* describes the harmony between God's will and one's own will. As such, it has a profound spiritual connotation. Generally translated with "perfect", the adjective *šālêm* qualifies the unity of the heart with God's plan. In his *Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Willhelm Gesenius (1962[16]:837) takes *šālêm* in the sense of "fully surrendered", which corresponds to the Arabic term "Muslim." The affiliated noun *šelem* designates a "peace offering", i.e., a sacrifice to seal an alliance or friendship. It is found several times in the Old Testament to express the idea of renouncement, the purpose of the offering being more to symbolize an inner attitude of submission to God than to refer to peace.

The Hebrew verb *šālām* occurs several times in the Old Testament in Hiphil (causative) as *hišlîmū*. It is mainly understood in the sense of "to make peace" when it introduces the preposition *'eṯ*, translated in this case as "with."[318] Outside of the sacrificial context, Gesenius (1962[16]:837) translates *hišlîmū 'eṯ*: "to make peace with." Whenever *'eṯ* is replaced by *'im*,[319] dictionaries apply *hišlîmū* to the notion of "surrender." Yet, the parallel text to 2 Samuel 10:19 found in 1 Chronicle 19:19 uses the same wording with the slight difference of the use of *'eṯ* instead of *'im*. This implies that *'eṯ* and *'im* are interchangeable.

Consequently, all mentions of *hišlîmū*, no matter if followed by *'eṯ* or *'im*, express the idea of surrender. Granted, the subjects of the action reported in the texts of Samuel and Chronicles (the Gibeonites and the servants to Hadarezer) made peace with Israel. But these, texts taken as a whole, convey the idea of devotion rather than a truce. "Peace" was not just defined as the absence of war but the result of the Gibeonites' readiness to serve. That is why *hišlîmū* should instead be rendered with "They were devoted to Israel" and not, as often translated, "They made peace with Israel".

The correlation between "surrender" and "service" is familiar to Bible and Qur'ān readers. In the Torah, the prophets were called "servants of God",[320] and the Apostles

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[318] Joshua 10:1 (*hišlîmū*), Joshua 10:4 (*hišlîmāh*); 2 Samuel 10:19 (*yašlimū*); Proverbs 16:7 (*yašlim*).

[319] Deuteronomy 20:12 (*ṯašlîm*); 1 Chronicle 19:19 (*yašlîmū*); *hišlîmāh* followed by *'el* in Joshua 11: 19.

[320] Especially Moses (Exodus 4:10; 5:15; 14:31; Numbers 12:7; Deuteronomy 3:24 and many other texts. See the name Obadiah, "Servant of the Lord". Rather than *Diener* ("servant"), the German translations generally use the word *Knecht* related to the English "knight."

of the New Testament gave themselves the very same title.[321] The word ʿabd (ʿāḇeḏ) occurs one hundred and twenty times in the Qur'ān and forty times in the Old Testament in connection with God Many Muslims name their children ʿAbd-ullah, "servant of God" or prefer using other attributes of "Allah" like His wisdom ('Abd-ul-Ḥakīm), His rectitude ('Abdul-Ḥaqq), or His compassion ('Abdur-Raḥīm).

I should not forget to mention the Hebrew məšullām, a current proper name in the Old Testament. Its frequent usage as a cognate form and some others (məšillêmîṯ, məšelemyāh, šəlōwmîṯ, and šelemyāh) shows, regardless of how we may exactly translate this name as "being given peace", "being at peace", or "immersed into God's peace", the phonetic similarity with the word "Muslim" can hardly be ignored.[322]

My overview of the signification of "Islam" demonstrates that the origin of this concept is much older than is the religion carrying the same name. The notion of Islam in its Hebraic equivalent was known thousands of years before Muḥammad. Moreover, it was employed to render the same virtue Islam defends today: devotion to God. Notice that in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul urges Christians to surrender their will to God, as the definition of "their reasonable service":

> Romans 12:1
> "brethren, I beseech you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The Greek word found here[323] occurs seven times in the New Testament with the idea of giving or presenting, e.g., an argument,[324] a present,[325] or the handing over of a prisoner.[326] When God is the receiver, the verb implies the idea of a renouncement and dedication to Him.[327] Paul invokes the consciousness of divine compassion the very motive for our submission. We have found out that compassion is God's highest attribute in both the Bible (Old Testament ruḥāmāh) and the Qur'ān (raḥmāh).

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[321] Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1; James 1:1.

[322] 2 Kings 22:3; 1 Chronicle 3:19; 5:13; 8:17; 9:7, 8, 11, 12 (məšullām and məšillêmîṯ); 9:21 (məšelem-yāh); 2 Chronicle 34:12; Ezra 8:10 (šəlōwmîṯ),16; 10:15, 29; Nehemiah 3:4, 6, 30 (šelemyāh and mə-šullām); 6:18; 8:4; 10:7; 11:7; 12:13, 16, 25 and 33.

[323] *Parastēsai.*

[324] Acts 24:13.

[325] 2 Corinthians 11:22.

[326] Acts 23:24.

[327] Luke 2:22; Romans 12:1; Colossians 1:22; 2 Timothy 2:15.

What about the Aramaic language – Jesus' mother tongue? Aramaic lexica[328] display an abundance of derivatives of the root *ŠLM*: "to be whole", in particular, the participle adjective *məšallam* or *məšalman*: perfect, complete. Even though this word is not mentioned *expressis verbis* in the Peshitta,[329] the root *ŠLM* is frequent in Christian Palestinian Aramaic, where the word for "perfection" is *məšallam*.[330]

In conclusion, we may say that, as stated in the Old and the New Testaments and according to Aramaic semantics and the Qur'ān itself, the word "Islam" cannot be exclusively associated with the foundation of the religion carrying the same name.

5.8   The early Islamic perception of "Apostolic" Christianity

The Qur'ān declares that the God of *ahla-l-kitābi*, the "People of the Book", is the one true God, confirming the validity of all the biblical prophets. The S.I.N. describes Muḥammad's ongoing controversies with the Jews of Yathrib (Medina) on the messianic character of the one named Al-Masīḥ ʿĪsā Ibn Maryam: Jesus the Messiah, son of Mary. Indeed, the polemic against the Jews on the Messiah is one of the central issues in quranic theology. The prompt acceptance of Islam is explainable given the controversy around the nature of Jesus. The confusion probably induced many to welcome Muḥammadʿs clear statements against Christian heresies. On top of that, the new messenger spoke their language and brought a Scripture in Arabic. Therefore, when he exhorted the Arab tribes to turn away from idolatry and surrender to the will of the God that the earlier scriptures had revealed, it should be no surprise if many readily accepted his message – which indeed happened.

Consequently, the beginning of Muḥammad's preaching was not necessarily perceived[331] by those who knew the Bible as an entirely new religion called "Islam", but rather as a reformatory invitation to go back to an attitude of *islām*: genuine surrender to God. After all, whoever embraces Islam says, "I have *submitted* my life to Allah".

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[328] [Online] http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/oneentry.php?lemma=%24lm+V%20&cits=all [retrieved 4 January 2020].

[329] The Peshitta is the Syriac version accepted by the core of eastern Christianity.

[330] That is why Mark Siljander (2008:21) is right in his conclusion:

> "Jesus was defining what he meant when he urged his followers to go 'convert' the world, to cause people to 'shalem' [surrender]. Teaching people to love God, he was saying, to *shalem* [surrender] with everything you have – your heart, your passion, your mind, intellect, emotion, body, strength and actions toward others – to your neighbors. That said, Jesus was total surrendered, total *shalem*".

[331] This assumption can hardly be proven, but the similarities between the Qur'ān and the Bible must have been appealing to many Christians.

In parallel, someone who joins a Christian Evangelical denomination testifies that he has "*given* his life to God". Likewise, though, Evangelical Christians sing hymns like "All to Jesus I *surrender*". It implies that both attitudes come together, provided they are meant earnestly. This definition of *aslama*, to surrender, indicates that Christians who spoke Semitic languages claimed the word "muslim" or one of its derivatives for themselves long before the arrival of the caliphs and their commanders to express their attitude of surrender to God. Such ideological proximity would have facilitated their acceptance of Muslim immigrants. It could demythologise the proofs for the rapid increase of Islam, defined in this case as a branch of Christendom.

5.9   The Children of the East

Monotheistic beliefs existed in Arabia long before Muḥammadʻs time. He himself could have been among those sincere Arabs who were thirsting for a revival of the undefiled Abrahamic faith. The self-definition of Islam in the Qurʾān is "not Muḥammad's religion, but Abraham's. In addition, the essential rites performed in Mekka during the Ḥajj relate to no one else than Abraham, and one of the most solemn celebration Islam knows is ʿĪd-ul-aḍḥā, the commemoration of the sacrifice of Abraham's son. It implies that the quranic message did not appear in a religious vacuum. Instead, the new religion must have reactivated Abrahamic reminiscences among the Semitic populations. Take the example of Melchizedek,[332] who blessed Abram with the words:

> Genesis 14:19
>
> "Blessed be you, Abram, by God the Most High,[333] owner of heaven and earth, and blessed be God the Most High."

Bārūḵ ʾaḇrām lǝʾêl ʿelyōwn qōnêh šāmayim wāʾāreṣ. This formulation resembles the qurʾanic *rabb il-ʿālamīna* ("Master of the Universe") of e.g., Fātiḥah 1:2. Notice that Melchizedek, "king of Šālêm" (same root as "Islam")[334] worshiped the same God as Abram did, (ʾÊl ʿelyōwn, i.e., "ʾÊl, the Most High").

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[332] Probably the prophet Sāliḥ, mentioned nine times in the Qurʾān.

[333] *ʾÊl ʿelyōwn.*

[334] Genesis 14:18. Notice the use of the word *šālêm* (peace, perfection, harmony), which may apply to an actual kingdom or a state of mind so typical for Melchizedek that he was named "King of Salem".

Similarly, we know that when Moses fled Egypt, he stayed at the house of Jethro,[335] priest[336] of Midian. We may wonder why Moses, who was devoted to his God while being raised in Egypt, chose to live with someone who exercised his priesthood in a foreign land that, in the light of Judaism, we would call heathen. The answer is that Jethro is also named *Rə'ū-'Êl* (Reuel),[337] a proper noun related to the God 'Êl.

Those two examples demonstrate that the worship of 'Êl did not refer to Isaac's and Ishmael's descendants only but was part of Semitic traditions, some of them being assuredly the ancestors of several Arabic tribes. The essential reference to the origins of (Abrahamic) Islam is to be found in the story of Abram.[338] Genesis 12 records that, just after the account of the Flood and the Tower of Babel, Abram, later renamed Abraham,[339] received the divine order to leave his home country. Joshua, Moses' successor, provides background information about Abraham by saying to the Israelites: "Your fathers, and even Teraḥ, Abraham's father, served other gods."[340] That is why God took Abram and led him to Canaan.[341] We read that God blessed Abram "and, through him, all nations."[342] In Genesis 17:6, God gave him an oath:

"I will make you fruitful, and from you will several nations come out, and also kings."

Many Bible readers have underlined the blessings announced to Isaac, but few realise that Ishmael, as spiritual father of Muslims, also received abundant promises from his father's god.[343] The Torah addresses a twelvefold dedication to Ishmael as Abraham's first child. His name means "God shall hear." Another detail is that Ishmael was circumcised, which builds one of the most vital relations between Abraham's grandchildren.[344] The Children of the East are mentioned several times in the pages of the Bible. The records of their active role in holding to the true religion and helping

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[335] The prophet Shuʿayb is mentioned eight times in the Qurʾān.

[336] Exodus 18:1.

[337] Exodus 2:18.

[338] 'Aḇrām.

[339] 'Aḇrāhām.

[340] Joshua 24:2.

[341] Verse 3.

[342] Genesis 12:2-3.

[343] Genesis 16:10; 17:20; 21:13,18. Listed and well documented in Kai Mester (2017:25-39). The missiologist Jon Culver (2000:64) adds, "God is willing to bless Ishmael, even if he rejects him as the covenant successor".

[344] "So along with giving Ishmael sovereignty as a nation, God was making him a true partaker in the true religion. This is probably symbolic of the fact that God's plan was to make the descendants of Ishmael participants in the plan of salvation that circumcision played a major role in foretelling. Ishmael's descendants' religion in their new nation would be the religion of Abraham" (Hardt 2012:26-27).

the believers in the One God are remarkable. The benediction placed upon them is rehearsed time and again. Therefore, Ishmael's descendants formed a spiritual line that possibly became a crucial element in the rise of Islam.[345] No matter whether one considers the emergence of Islam was part of a divine plan or not, no one can deny that Muḥammad ranks among the most influential agents of change in human history. Above all, the Qur'ān is a plea to restore undefiled monotheism, while apostate Christians, Constantine in particular, have distorted the concept of the unity of God. Indeed, such a message brought billions of humans to the conviction that the Messenger was genuinely God-sent.

Another question worth pondering is why oriental Christianity faded away and was mainly absorbed into Islam. Was it perceived as a new religion coming out of the blue or maybe a new branch of monotheism – if not a reformation of it? One answer may be that the birth of Islam was, first of all, a revival of the Abrahamic faith and not so much a new religion. In addition, "the persecution of the Eastern Church by the Western Church including the death of an estimated one million Eastern Church members; and the corrupt government of the Christian rulers which left them vulnerable to the acceptance of Islam" (Profeta Philipps 2003:5). The general disillusion probably facilitated its success far beyond the Arabic peninsula. In this case, Islam would likely encounter openness and even acceptance. In particular, those "dissident" Christians who, in the time of medieval Christianity, were tired of the oppression and falsehoods of Catholic and Orthodox theology could have been an easy target.

5.10 Muḥammad and his followers' attention to "Apostolic" Christianity

The last element deals with my main research question, as it might have shaped the communication between Christians and Muslims over centuries. It is about the quranic distinction made among Christians. According to the S.I.N., Muḥammad himself, i.e., at the very beginning of Islam, praised faithful Christians as fully submitted (*muslimūn*)

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[345] "The Bible relates the story of the Children of the East from their origins as the firstborn son of Abraham through their role in the Old Testament to bring the sons of Isaac back to the worship of the true God all the way to the Messiah and the birth of Christianity to the rise of Islam and the end of the world. Isaiah the prophet predicts that the Children of the East, as represented by the Muslims, will be part of God's last day people [Is.19:19-25]" (James Appel 2011:122).
"Finally, Isaiah prefigures heaven and those who will be there. Once again, joining the children of Isaac are the children of the East coming (…) to worship God together throughout eternity [Is.66:18-23]" (Appel 2011:123).

to Allah in the same way he was. He who preached the one and only God and fought against the pagan deities paid respect for those Christians:

- In 615, Muḥammad advised some Muslims to flee the polytheists' oppression in Makka and seek refuge in the (Christian) kingdom of Ethiopia.
- In 630, he allowed the Christians from Aba as-Saʿūd[346] to celebrate Easter in the Mosque of al-Madīnah al-Munawwara.
- He spread out his cloak so that the visiting Christians could sit on it.
- When Christians were oppressed for any reason, he would grant them refuge.

As soon as Abū Bakr, the first caliph, had secured his authority, he sent a notice to his army leader Usāma ibn Zayid (Ṭabārī 2007:2/246):

"Do not be dishonest! Do not deceive anyone! Do not hide your spoils of war! Do not kill women, older people, and children! Do not burn date palms! Do not cut down fruit trees! Do not slaughter a goat, a cow, or a camel – only for consumption! You will find people who have renounced the world and retired to a monastery. Leave them in peace!"

Even though a *ḥadīth* attributed to Mālik ibn Anas (2014, chp. 21, Ḥadīth 10)[347] quotes differently, all those texts reflect the same spirit prevailing during the Islamic campaigns as a continuation of the divine command and how Muḥammad applied it:

"Yaḥya related to me from Malik from Yaḥya ibn Said that Abū Bakr as-Siddiq was sending armies to ash-Sham.[348] He went for a walk with Yazid ibn Abi Sufyan who was the commander of one of the battalions. (…) Then, Abū Bakr advised Yazid, 'You will find people who claim to have given themselves to Allah. Leave them to what they claim to have given themselves. You will find people who have shaved the middle of their heads. Strike what they have shaved with the sword!'."[349]

The "religious persons who live retired in monasteries" happened to be (Nestorian) Christians. We have noticed that they had rejected the Mary-Mother-of-God theology

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[346] The city is called today Najrān in the southwestern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia near the border with Yemen.

[347] Mālik ibn Anas ibn Mālik ibn Abī ʿĀmir ibn ʿAmr ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Ghaymān ibn Khutthayn ibn ʿAmr ibn al-Ḥārith al-Aṣbaḥī (711–795).

[348] Damascus.

[349] The text goes on with Abū Bakr saying, "I advise you ten things: Do not kill women or children or an aged, infirm person. Do not cut down fruit-bearing trees. Do not destroy an inhabited place. Do not slaughter sheep or camels except for food. Do not burn bees, and do not scatter them. Do not steal from the booty, and do not be cowardly".

and were hated by the dominant religion. But the Muslims took them under their auspices. Indeed, their policy of the inviolability of Christians is full of memorable lessons up to the twentieth century. For instance, during the Indo-Pakistani conflict that followed the independence from the British Empire (1947–1948), thousands of Muslims were killed by Hindus and Sikhs, and vice versa.[350] But the Christians, i.e., the adepts of the colonial religion and could have been subject to retaliation, were spared from the purge. According to Roger Darnell (1995:88),

> "As late as 1948, a Pakistani general went back into history and pulled out that same command and recited it to his troops in Pakistan to make a difference when they came to churches as to what they destroyed and what were places of appropriate refuge for the people they were fighting."

5.11   The Covenant of Muḥammad

The library of St. Catherine in Egypt displays several copies of the "Muḥammad's Covenant (or Testament)."[351] In it, the Messenger wrote "to all the people as a trust on the part of Allah to His creatures" (Muhammad ibn Sa'd & Anton Haddad 2004:132):

> "Whenever Christian monks, devotees, and pilgrims gather together (…), verily we are [at the] back of them and shall protect them, and their properties and their morals, by myself, by my friends and by my assistants, for they are of my subjects and under my protection.
> (…)
> "I shall exempt them from what may disturb them: of the burdens paid by others as an oath of allegiance. They must not give anything of their income but that which pleases them – they must not be offended, disturbed, coerced, or compelled. Their judges should not be changed or prevented from accomplishing their offices, nor the monks disturbed in exercising their religious order, or the people of seclusion be stopped from dwelling in their cells.
> (…)
> "No one is allowed to plunder these Christians, destroy or spoil any of their churches and houses of worship, or take any of the things contained within these houses. He who takes away something from them has corrupted the oath of God

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[350] The figure of how many were killed by whom depends on which side you ask.

[351] Also known as „Muḥammad's Ashtiname", Persian for "Book of Peace" (*Āshtīnāmeh*). The Ashtiname should not be confused with the Constitution of Medina (*Dustūr al-Madīnah*), which regulates intertribal conflicts in Yathrib with the Jewish population, and which text does not mention Christians at all.

and, in truth, disobeyed His Messenger.

(…)

"*Jizyah*[352] should not be put upon their judges, monks, and those whose occupation is the worship of God; nor is any other thing to be taken from them, whether it be a fine, a tax, or any unjust right. Verily, I shall keep their compact, wherever they may be, in the sea or on the land, in the East or West, in the North or South, for they are under my protection and the testament of my safety, against all things which they abhor.

(…)

"No tax or tithe should be received from those who devote themselves to worship God in the mountains or from those who cultivate the Holy Lands. No one has the right to interfere with their affairs or bring any action against them.

(…)

"Do not dispute or argue with them, but deal according to the verse recorded in the Qur'ān, to wit: 'Only argue with the People of the Book in the most courteous way' [al-'Ankabūt 29:46]. Thus, they will live favoured and protected from everything which may offend them by the Callers to religion [Islam], wherever they may be and in any place they may dwell.

(…)

"They must not be forced to carry arms or stones. But Muslims must protect them and defend them against others. It is positively incumbent upon every one of the followers of Islam not to contradict or disobey this oath until the Day of Resurrection and the end of the world."

Even though the validity of Muḥammad's Covenant has been contested, Muslims have referred to it for centuries as an authoritative document. Therefore, no matter if it is genuine or not, the Covenant has significantly contributed to the attitude of openness displayed by Muslims. It is reported that during the first 270 years of the time when Egypt was a province of the Ottoman Empire (1517-1798), the Pasha annually reiterated the protection of Christians based on Muḥammad's *Ashtiname* (Brandie Ratliff 2008: 17).[353] Therefore, while in pre-Crusade Arabia, it was "virtually impossible for Muslims to trade and reside in most Christian lands, European Christians

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[352] Poll tax.

[353] [Online] https//www.academia.edu/2137444/The_Monastery_of_Mount_Sinai_and_the_Cult_of_ Saint_Catherine [retrieved 5 May 2021].

could live in many Islamic societies as 'People of the Book'" (Daniel Goffman 2002: 15).[354]

5.12   The *dhimmī*

On the other hand, the Islamic elite wanted to regulate the rights and duties of all religious communities and their interrelations in the spirit of Muḥammad's Covenant. This regulation served as a model for the subsequent caliphs and for the codification of Islamic jurisprudence later on.

History records the existence of several treaties between Muslims and non-Muslims. Their purpose was to guarantee security and integration as foundational elements of social stability. Another advantage was the peculiar status granted to non-Muslims. The *dhimmī* ("protective covering") was regulated by a separate jurisdiction that allowed religious minorities to operate under their adapted legislation. At least two other alliances were concluded during Muḥammad's life. The first one depicts the case of Tabūk, a town where the Messenger stopped in 630. There, he received John ibn Ru'bah, the Christian governor of Aylā,[355] and offered him the choice to fight or to live in neutrality under Muslim governance.

> "John opted for a peace treaty and pledged to pay an annual sum of 300 dinars as *jizyah*. It was approximately equal to the number of adult men in the city and thus meant a levy of one dinar per person" (Abdel Fadeel 2006:81).

The second was ratified in 631 when Muḥammad sent Khālid ibn Walīd to the Christians in Najrān,[356] inviting them to accept Islam. Despite their refusal, Khālid concluded a peace treaty with them. The document guaranteed the protection of those Christians in exchange for an annual *jizyah* of 2.000 garments (Abdel Fadeel 2006:82). The terms of the treaty[357] specify that (Abdel Fadeel 2006:84),

> "Allah's protection and the guarantee of security of the prophet extend to the inhabitants and its environs in respect of their souls, faith land and property. (...)

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[354] Jean Corbon (in Andrea Pacini, ed., 1998:95) adds, "In their tolerance towards the 'Peoples of the Book', the Muslim regime marginalized them in their 'communities' [*ṭawā'if*] and entrusted their patriarchs with authority over everything related to personal status".

[355] Today's Eilat.

[356] Najrān in the southwestern province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia near the border with Yemen.

[357] Known as the Covenant of Najrān.

No bishop shall be moved from his see, no new one from his monastery, no priest from his parish."

Following Muḥammad's death, similar written arrangements were made. They are all modelled after the Covenant carrying his name, the two well-known examples of Tabūk and Najrān witness: As long as non-Muslims did not act contentiously, the wish was to conclude viable agreements with them without expecting their conversion to Islam as *condicio sine qua non*. In other words, the purpose of the treaties was to dissuade non-Muslims from their faith, not to protect them. The parties took into account the Islamic state's interest and the sentiments of the Muslim majority so that each term was adapted to the local features and respected the diversity of the circumstances. We also notice the simplicity characterising all contracts.

The pledge of non-interference in their partners' affairs indicates that it was in the Muslim's interest to help people under the *dhimmī* be satisfied with their status. Thus, they would remain loyal to their Muslim caliphs and sultans and rely on their support, particularly in times of crisis or case of attack. At best, regulating the relationship between the two groups prevented the uncertainty of arbitrariness and provided a legal basis to prevent and sanction possible abuses. Such clarifications on lifestyle and property – and, first and foremost, freedom of religion – gave minorities a quality of life they had not enjoyed under most Christian potentates. The stabilisation of political and economic structures is also remarkable, given the swiftness of the conquest. This is comprehensible if we remember that Islam generally views non-Muslims under two distinct aspects: faith and social-political relationships.

"The agreements constituted a religious duty since Islam claims to be not only a religion but also a moral code and a legal system" (Florian Wörtz 1998/ 99).[358]

As to be expected, the *dhimmī* was bound to some *mustaḥabba* ("obligations"), the essential ones being:[359]

1. to wear an outer garment, a wool coat, and a turban with distinct colours,
2. not to build their houses and buildings higher than those of the Muslims,
3. not to let their bells ring loudly,

[358] [Online] http://www.kodabu.de/amnesty/jur-ak-koeln/beitraege/woertz01.html#_ftn20 [retrieved 23 August 2021].

[359] Abdel Fadeel (2006:50). The author adds that "The legal scholars had different opinions, the predominant being is that of the Hanafites. According to them, all those of other faiths were allowed to live in Islamic territory except in Mecca."

4. not to drink wine in public and not to wear the crucifix in public,

5. to bury their dead secretly only,

6. not to ride horses.

Muslim intellectuals pretend that the dress code did not aim at restrictive discrimination. Instead, its purpose was to make non-Muslims recognisable in order to ease the collection of taxes specific to them. They place the policy of a tribute payment into the context of antiquity, where it was a common rule, and therefore refuse to consider it a *novum* or a mark of contempt, and with the difference that:

> "While it was a usual sign of triumph, superiority, and authority, sometimes exploitation; in Islam, it was not a sign of oppression" (Abdel Fadeel 2006:53).

If those under the *dhimmī* had their own taxation system, should this be interpreted as unjust treatment? Since I am touching on a sensitive point, it would be good to define the quranic position. The Muslim justification for *jizyah* is found in one particular text that draws a diverging picture:

> at-Tawbah 9:29
>
> "Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, those who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful, and those who were given the Book but do not acknowledge the religion of Truth. Fight until they pay the *jizyah* in humiliation (*ṣāghirūna)*."

Even though many translators have understood *ṣāghirūna* as submission, the Arabic word refers to humiliation.[360] Yet, notice that the āyah only applies *jizyah* to "those among Jews and Christians (those who were given the Book) that do not believe in God and the last days." Again, this presents a contrast between at least two groups. Yet, his distinction has not been carried out when it came to *jizyah*, since it was required from *all* non-Muslims without exception. Furthermore, *jizyah* in the context of poll tax may convey the notion of "punishment". This is how the word is usually translated nowadays. That being said, Muslims do not detect any moralistic connotation in it. In the context of righteousness by works, *jizyah* is nothing more than compensation. It neither touches the moral integrity nor the reputation of its subject.

I have briefly addressed this issue to illustrate the diverging views on the Muslim attitude toward other faiths. Both sides have their appropriateness. Yet, no matter how much humiliation the concept of *jizyah* may include, the arguments in favour of the

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[360] A translation endorsed by most orientalists, for example, Arthur S. Tritton (1930:11).

protection of Jews and Christians speak for themselves and deserve a special attention. If Muslims did not pay the *jizyah*, they had to pay duties instead: *zakāh* (almsgiving), *fidyah* (reparation),[361] *kaffāra* (compensation in the form of help to those in need), *sadaqah* (charity), whereas all of them were more mandatory than voluntary. Non-Muslims were exonerated; and if it is true that the taxes imposed on them and other believers were higher than those laid on Muslims, being under the *dhimmī* status was still advantageous because, compared to what Christian regents used to impose, it was an acceptable burden.

> "Especially when the taxes levied to finance wars became so high, that, even with their own imposing taxes, Ottoman rule looked more desirable financially" (Cyril Horáček in Hrbek, ed., 1956:105).[362]

On the other hand, the *dhimmī* tax rate was higher than what Muslims had to pay, so it probably motivated the Muslim emirs to preserve Christianity as a source of extra income.[363] The reverse is that non-Muslims could have sensed this difference as a pragmatic impetus to join Islam – which probably happened here and there. As mentioned in the Covenant of Muḥammad, the exemption from military obligations granted under the *dhimmī* status was another privilege no non-Muslim would lightly forfeit. In that respect, the *jizyah* was compensation, for instance, for not participating in the wars waged by the state. On top of it, children and minors, women, the elderly, the infirm, and the mentally ill were exonerated – as well as priests and clergy. The amount of *jizyah* had to be adjusted to the financial means of the subordinates. Poor and needy, for example, did not need to pay it at all.[364] Such exceptions confirm that the purpose of having higher taxes was not to create an incentive for "infidels" to change religion or to disadvantage them.

Last, as a warranty, it was stipulated (Abdel Fadeel 2006:64,121) that a Muslim failure to respect the terms of *dhimmī* would release non-Muslims from their obligation.

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[361] Literally "redemption". See one of my books (Romain 2010:65-73).

[362] See also Vocelka (1977:16-17).

[363] In fact, "the ruling class did not look with favour on the mass conversions in the conquered lands, and the new Muslims (…) still had to pay taxes. (…) This and other abuses were the main cause that brought the fall of the Umayyad and the coming of a new dynasty, the Abbasid" (El Fasi, in Hrbek, ed., 1992:3/26).

[364] For a more extended analysis of the signification of *jizyah* in the various Islamic schools of interpretation, see Fadeel (2006:53-64).

"In the event of the state's inability to protect the dhimmitic community from any external attack, the jizyah would be revoked."

5.13 Religious co-existence

Even though some of those measures appear discriminatory, the *dhimmī* status regulated the protection of Jews and Christians. Under such a situation of mutual profit, their co-existence worked well. In the long run, the old sociological axiom may have applied that the less pressure was imposed, the better the expected result would be. Moreover, this attitude was not just a strategic reflection but rather the product of an explicit quranic principle:

> al-Baqarah 2:256a
> "Let there be no compulsion in religion! Truth stands out clear from error."

The way this quranic instruction was cherished is of particular interest. We have read the terms of Muḥammadʿs Covenant securing the privilege to live out faith, religious rites, and ceremonies in Islamic territories as everyone's custom and conviction requests. The general policy can be compared to the current concept of non-interference. Imagining the economic outcome of imposing a conversion to Islam, it is evident that Muslims would have gained immense advantages had they appropriated the religious edifices and landholdings belonging to the clergy. But remarkably, the protection of the *dhimmī* included the assurance that places of worship belonging to non-Muslims may neither be destroyed nor misused by Muslims.[365]

On the contrary, the positive attitude of Islam toward minorities can be attributed to their unconditional respect for houses of prayer in general. As a case in point, after the largest synagogue in al-Ruha[366] had been destroyed by an earthquake, Caliph Muʿāwiya [661–680][367] ordered that it be restored (Hassan Ali Hassan 2005:120/95, cit. in Abdel Fadeel, 2006:93-94). In Egypt, the first church edifice in the town of al-

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[365] At that point, it seems that the conversion of the Hagia Sophia into a mosque by Sultan Mehmed II was rather a matter of prestige than a binding example. Over time, however, many churches were repurposed into mosques, which happened naturally but not systematically. No one should also ignore the opposite case: Where Christians regained Muslim-occupied territories, they turned mosques into churches. See the *Gázi Kászim pasa dzsámija* (The Mosque of Pasha Qasim the Victorious) in Pécs, Hungary, that was rebaptized *Belvárosi Gyertyaszentelő Boldogasszony templom* (The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) by the Hapsburg-Hungarian forces after they reconquered the area in 1702.

In Egypt, mosques and churches are often built close to each other until today.

[366] The former Edessa, today's Şanlıurfa in southeastern Turkey.

[367] Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān

Fusṭaṭ was built by Māslama ibn Mukhallād ibn Samīt al-Ansārī. Māslama, a close companion of Muḥammad, became head of Egypt in 667 (Tritton 1930:41). Likewise, his successor 'Abdul ‘azīz ibn Marawān (d.703) is remembered for having initiated the construction of a church in the city of Ḥelwān.

We skip to the time of the Abbasids (750-1258). Abdel Fadeel reports (2006: 102) that the third caliphate built three of the most reputed monasteries in Baghdad: al-'Azrā, Dirmās, and ar-Rūm.[368] To include the Ottomans in our reflection, let us mention Sultan Mehmed, who guaranteed religious liberty to all Bosnians. When they entered their country, the Ottoman sultan and his companions immediately ordered the restoration of churches. I will develop this aspect in chapter eleven.

5.14   Oppressed by Christians, protected by Muslims

We may wonder why Muslims were so benevolent to Christians living among them. Some may argue that receptiveness was calculated goodness. Another idea might be that, by allowing conquered people to still cling to their religion, the conquerors preserved the identity of their subjects. As an essential by-product, this policy took away a good cause to revolt. In other words, the less those under Muslim authority felt oppressed and disturbed in their private interests, the more they would be satisfied and accept new governance. In return, the fulfilment of the primary wishes guaranteed the Muslim commanders a high level of submissiveness.[369] After all, by bringing such improvements, the foreigners were as welcome as the contentment they procured.

But our question is whether kindness shown to Christians was rooted in quranic principles. Were all those who walked in Abraham's footsteps identified as *muslimūn* (submitted)? If Muḥammad favoured some Christians as such, it would be challenging to document to which extent the āyāt about the steadfast Christians played a role. At last, the record of Abū Bakr's policy directed toward two distinct Christianities when he entered Egypt confirms that Muslims knew about them. Obviously, they must have had solid ground to do so. Furthermore (Hrbek 1992:3/32),

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[368] Abdel Fadeel (2006:195) adds that "One cannot deny that some of Egypt's newly built churches and synagogues were destroyed under the Abbasid caliph Hārūn ar-Rāshīd. However, the destruction resulted from the Coptic revolutions (156, 186 187 and 191 of Hijra) against the Egyptian government. However, all these places of worship destroyed by the Egyptian governor ‘Alī ibn Sulaymān were later rebuilt on the orders of his successor Mūsa ibn ‘Iisa".

[369] Albert Howe Lybyer is the one who developed the concept of *Pax Ottomanica* in his work *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the time of Suleiman the Magnificent* ([1913], 1966²).

"Paradoxically, it was under the Fātimids and the Ayyubids – both of them dynasties that were regarded as champions of Islam – that the non-Muslim subjects enjoyed a freedom of religion rarely seen in earlier or later periods."

For centuries, while dissident Christians suffered discrimination, Muslims manifested high esteem to them. Wherever it happened, the protective measures were not necessary depending on which Christians were nearer to the Truth than others. It seems to have been the fruit of a policy of tolerance that would harbour endangered groups and their freedom, regardless of whether they were theologically sound. Take the example of the Jews. When, in 722, Emperor Leo III [717–741][370] forced the Jews and Montanists in the Byzantine Empire to be baptized (Treadgold 1997: 350), the Islamic-governed countries readily granted refuge to those who did not comply. The same happened with the Nestorians[371] in 910.[372] Muslims offered these Christian refugees a new haven of peace. At that time, the metropolis of Baghdad counted between 40.000 and 50.000 of them (George Kirk 2006:22) as two respected Islamic historians write (Isma'il & Lois Al Faruqi 1986:61):

"When the Arab Christians were hereticated [sic] by the Church of Rome and persecuted by the Byzantine Empire, they took refuge in the desert. (…) Both Jews and Christian immigrants to the desert found a ready welcome among those Arabs who upheld the Mesopotamian-Abrahamic tradition. Together they consolidated that tradition in Peninsular Arabia."

5.15 Christians in influential positions

The positive attitude was more than tolerance in the sense of a status quo, for instance, for the sake of peace. In fact, the rapid Arabic expansion greatly benefitted from existing structures wherever they were efficient. It is particularly true if we think of the lack of administrative know-how among Muslims – or simply the shortcoming of a qualified workforce. It implies that the decisive role of non-Muslims in the expansionistic strategy of the Islamic empire did not limit itself to commercial activities. A notorious precedent is Muʿāwiya I (661–680)[373]. The first caliph of the Umayyad hired a Christian

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[370] Leo III the Isaurian.

[371] Nestorius' adepts were the leading opponents to the "Mary – Mother of God" theology. After the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople, this term was applied broadly to eastern Christians.

[372] "The eastern Christian Church, which had been persecuted and excommunicated by the western church, was not destroyed by Islam. The first physicians in the Muslim centers of medical learning and treatment were Nestorian medical professionals" (Profeta Philips 2003:4).

[373] Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān.

as a foster father for his son Yazīd. Later on, Yazīd commissioned a priest to train his son (Ali Hassan 2005:120/98, cit. in Abdel Fadeel 2006:91).

Another case is that of the Melkite Christian Sarjūn ibn al-Mansūr, who had been responsible for levying the taxes of the region. This position was filled by his father Mansūr in the time of Emperor Heraclius [610-641],[374] and Sarjūn was reappointed to continue his father's duty. Yet, one may wonder how Muʿāwiya, a Muslim regent, could preserve such a prominent Byzantine official in a position of trust, like the responsibility over tax issues. Then, Sarjūn's son was called to serve for a time. He was the Christian apologist John Damascene (676-749), best known for his strong vindication of icons. Again, one can only marvel at how Muʿāwiya chose him to serve at his court as a high official until he retired to a monastery. One must admit that this does not fit into a narrative of hatred against Christianity.[375]

Over time, though, non-Muslim civil servants began to lose their positions. With the consolidation of Umayyad governance and the growing religious self-confidence of Muslims, the caliphs started intervening in the internal affairs of the various religious communities. It happened in particular when the occupation of patriarchal and episcopal seats became a subject of contention. Things changed again in the time of the broad-minded Abbasids. Under them, different believers could be fully integrated into society.[376] Al-Mansūr, their second caliph (754-775),[377] invited to Baghdad a physician named Jurjis ibn Bukhtishu. Even though Jurjis originated in an Assyrian Nestorian family, he was nicknamed "Gondishapuri" after the Academy of Gondishapur in Persia. Medical doctors came from and remained the caliphs' chief physicians for six generations (250 years). They were respected "as a genuine medical dynasty" (Edward Browne 1921:23). That is one example among many non-Muslim learned persons who reached influential positions in Islamic courts (Ahmed Tarek Amer 2004:40).

5.16   Religious freedom for Christians

Levten Stavrianos (2008[4]:29) describes the free space given to Christians under Islamic governance:

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[374] Flavios Iraklios.

[375] This topic is developed in Fauzi Mardam Bek's thesis (2003:20).

[376] See chapter seven.

[377] Abū Ja'far 'Abd Allah ibn Muḥammad al-Mansūr.

"Generally speaking, Christians had never enjoyed such freedom in the East: Taxes were low, business was good, and administration was efficient. They had every reason to support their Saracen rulers. Moslem rule, social and political was the best the Mediterranean world had known since the finest days of the Roman Empire. The peoples of what had once been the Roman World had suffered four hundred years of governmental oppression, lack of organization and barbarism."

Henry Treece (1962:157), famous for his research on the crusades, summarizes it in the following terms:

"Under the liberal and tolerant Moslem regime, most Christians of the lost Eastern Empire became indifferent to the claims of the weakened emperor of Constantinople (…)

"The Christians in the East paid their poll tax to the Saracens, at a lower rate than their own emperor had once exacted, and went on with their almost uninterrupted worship, delighted at the lack of persecution. As for the heretics among the Christians, their hearts 'rejoiced at the domination of the Arabs – may God strengthen it and prosper it'.

"The fact was that the Arabs, unlike the Eastern emperors, were realists. They accepted a tax in lieu of military service, guaranteed the rights of belief of all whose religion was based on the Bible and allowed each sect to live as a self-governing community within the Arab state. Christians were even allowed to build new churches, provided they did not overtop the mosques in height!"

5.17 Summary

An attentive look at the traceable context of the quranic message has accentuated the proximity of Islam to the other Abrahamic religions. The language of the Qur'ān and the theology of *islām* in the etymological sense of the word ("submission") define the quranic-oriented religion as a branch of Abrahamic monotheism much closer to biblical Christianity than commonly assumed. Moreover, the birth of Islam as defined by the S.I.N. coincides with the aftermath of Justinian's "cleansing" from Christian groups who did not adhere to imposed dogmas. Most fleeing Christians were victims of the Second Council of Constantinople (551) that set *theotókos* over *Christótokos* as the enforcement of Chalcedon and, as its implication, the dogma of Mary, "Mother of God". That is the context in which the Qur'ān asserts that God has no child. This denial is

often confused with Jesus' sonship but does not apply to it. Therefore, contrary to the common assumption, the Qur'ān does not follow the variations mainly imported to Arabia at that time (Adoptionism, Arianism, Collyridianism, and Modalistic Monophysitism). On the contrary, quranic Christology could be an apologetic presentation of Jesus *against* those deviations. An attentive reading of the Qur'ān reveals that Islam supports the Nestorian approach of Jesus *against* Mariology. It indicates that most of those who had to flee the Roman empires were in theological harmony with the Bible and the Qur'ān on the nature of Jesus.

Besides the question of whether the dissidents' beliefs were biblically justifiable, those expelled from the empire found refuge in the Middle East. At least up to the end of the Abbasid period, the special status granted to them and other non-Muslims builds an indisputable lesson of interfaith cohabitation. The treaties guaranteeing protection applied to all Christians without making any difference between them, represent a stark contrast to European regents who often victimized those "heretics". Overall, living under Muslim governance was beneficial for all parties. All habitants were equal in rights and duties. I may say that had Christianity learned from the tolerance of Islam in its early period, humanity may have taken a different course. Per definition, the principle of religious liberty is to grant the same rights to all, regardless of each one's convictions. Therefore, a specific treatment for "Apostolic" Christians could only be observed on two levels:

- Christians chased or persecuted by the state church were welcome to settle down in Muslim– dominated places. Not all of them were necessarily disadvantaged due to their Apostolic" nature.

- During the annexation of Egypt and other territories, the commanders had the explicit order to spare those Christians who did not belong to mainstream Christianity, whereas the same remark as above applies.

Even though this amiable cohabitation was sometimes lost, our point is to emphasize that generally, relationships between the two religions were positive. After all, had Islam only been observed as a threat, why would Europe have developed so much interest in orientalism since the time of Marco Polo and partly long before then?

But how do such tolerance and respect relate to the apocalyptic dimension characteristic of the Arab conquest? What did it left in its wake? The discrepancy requires our attention and brings us to the question: Were not the Arab invasions a succession

of massacres and forced conversions? In the next chapter, I will analyse the sources documenting the early Muslim unfolding in western Europe, with an attempt to detect the areas of pressure, tolerance, active support, and in particular, how it modified the way Muslims interacted with Christians in times of overall pacific co-existence.

CHAPTER SIX

Can a religion of the sword help Christianity?

6.1   Introduction

The hypothesis of a possible effect of Islam on the course of the German Reformation may sound enigmatic. How can one dare envisage that the "religion of the sword" could be of any help to Christianity? If it is the case, the answer benefits in challenging the stereotypes of western thought about the Islamic threat. Then, the way for a positive interaction between Christianity and Islam will be at least thinkable. Suppose our mind associates early Islam with bloodthirsty raids. In that case, we may wonder how anything positive may emerge from Muslims and Christians in their mutual animosity and what we are interested, on the German Reformation.

The previous chapter has offered a definition of Islam contrasting with the one generally exposed. The following pages will focus on the early conquests, which theological foundation was under them, and how the new jurisdiction related to the Christian populations it met –particularly those devoted to the apostolic creed. Answering these questions will help us have understanding for the Ottoman's attitude toward Luther, provided their expansionist initiatives had the same motives as their Arabic predecessors.

The first observation is that whoever approaches such a sensitive issue should take into account that all sides have overrated their reports in ways serving their own interest. It is a commonplace to say, History is written by the winners, especially in the context of conquering. The framing of the protagonists into heroes or losers may reverse depending on who tells the story. The same applies when someone is labelled "good" or "villain."

While western sources predictably depict the Islamic invasions as cruel, accounts coming from the East call attention to their peacefulness.

In the context of Christian – Muslim conflicts, one of the best illustrations of different narratives is the Battle of Tours, also called the Battle of Poitiers (732).[378]

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[378] Called in French « la bataille de Poitiers » (the Battle of Poitiers) and in Arabic Ma'arakat Balāt aš-Šuhadā, "the Battle of the Palace of Martyrs".

6.2   Poitiers: Whom to believe?

The military action of Poitiers remains in western memories as "decisive for world history, as it preserved Western Europe from Muslim conquest and Islamization" (Nigel Cawthorne 2004:52-53). After having crossed the Pyrénées, the Ameer of al-Andalus as-Samḥ ibn Mālik al-Khawlānī [719-720] reached Narbonne, the capital of the province Septimania. Interestingly, as-Samḥ pacified Narbonne and other cities. The reason for this pacific attitude could have been (Joseph O'Callaghan 1983: 142) that the Narbonnais were mainly Arianist Christians. The fact is that Septimana, the Roman name for modern-day southern France, became a Muslim province without much bloodshed. Toulouse, the main town of Aquitaine, came next. Ten years later (732), 'Abd-ur Raḥmān, himself a fugitive Umayyad prince, stormed Bordeaux's fortifications and failed to conquer the city. The Battle of Garonne shadowed this bitter defeat. The Duke of Aquitaine Odo the Great had to ask for help. He fled to his rival Charles nick-named "Martel" (the Hammer), prince of Francia [718-741]. Charles took advantage of Odo's unfavourable circumstances to extend his authority southwards.

'Abd-ur Raḥmān, also known as the "Falcon of Andalus", led his troops up to the frontier of the then-independent Duchy of Aquitaine. There Charles Martel stopped in its track what was hailed for centuries as one of the major invasions of France. Charles Martel supposedly defeated the Arabs near Moussais, a hamlet not even big enough to have its own church – let alone a cathedral or a fortress. Named "Touraine", the area is proverbial for its hundreds of kilometres of plain around Châtellerault and Poitiers, where no natural obstacle would facilitate a military outcome of such historic proportion. Could this be the exact spot where the diversion of the most robust Umayyad contingent ever built – estimated at 80.000 fighters – got to the top?

Why did the Franks not let the Muslim army move another ninety kilometres north, for instance, where the banks of the Loire, the second longest and the widest in Western Europe, could have easily derailed them? One explanation is that the Arabs had chosen such an insignificant location as a place to rest – maybe as their head-quarters – and were, therefore, surprised by the sudden onset of the Frank infantry.

Only fragmentary sources survived the period. Predictably, Muslim writers have reported a divergent version of the story. Called in Arabic historical records "Maʿarakat Balāt aš-Šuhadā" (the Battle of the Palace of Martyrs), the hostility of Tours casts the Saracens in the role of victims of an assault taking place. At the same time, they allegedly

wanted to save the Occident peacefully. The fact is that the commander 'Abd-ur Raḥmān was killed, so the year 732 indeed marks a decisive turn in European geopolitical developments. Long before the launching of the crusades, such an aftertaste of a successful raid against the Muslim invaders – who, in their sight, had come to save the occidental world from evil – carries a heavy connotation. That is all the more so as this battle was named after the city of Tours, believed to be "holy" thanks to the shrine of one of the most familiar Catholic saints, Martin de Tours, even though there is no rationale to think the battle took place there.

Another non-negligible outcome of the narrative is the legitimation of Charles Martel's rise as the founder of the Carolingian Dynasty. After Poitiers, the Aquitanians surrendered to Charles' son Pépin le Bref [751-768],[379] who secured his domination over them.

The next step proceeded when Pépin's son Charlemagne [768-814][380] became Emperor of the Romans and annexed Aquitaine into the Frankish realm. The *momentum* happened on Christmas Day of the year 800. Charles the Great knelt at the Roman altar to receive from Pope Leo III the imperial crown. His new name *Imperator Romanorum* marked the beginning of the *Sacrum Imperium Romanum,* the "Holy Roman Empire" that would last over a thousand years. In modern days, Charlemagne was called "the father of Europe".[381] In that perspective, the victory of Tours provided the perfect pretext for Frankish nations to lay the cornerstone of the Carolingian Empire, marking at the same time the formal union between church and state – with the church holding the upper hand.

Therefore, we can quickly figure out why Charles the Hammer's triumph has been hammered into the minds of generations of French pupils as *the* climax of France's glorious past under Frankish domination. Incidentally, if "apart from the military endeavours, Charles Martel is remembered being a founding figure of the European Middle Ages" (David Lewis 2008:183), he is also "credited for one of its most debilitating achievements: the establishment of feudalism" (Lynn White Jr. 1962:2-14). The new social structure gave the knights almost unlimited authority in their fiefdoms. There-

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[379] Pepin the Short.

[380] Latin, Carolus Magnus (Charles the Great).

[381] When Pope Johannes Paul II received the Karlspreis (Charles Price) in Aachen on 20 May 2004, he commended Charles the Great as "Pater Europae", (the Father of Europe). [Online] https://web.ar chive.org/web/20120117201819/http://www.karlspreis.de/englische_texte/the_prize.html [retrieved 2 August 2021].

fore, the slavery-like conditions that characterized the Old Continent for over one thousand years can arguably be depicted as Charles Martel's legacy. Thus, the dark destiny of Christendom has been justified by such heroic acts as stopping the Islamic invasion. In such a context, it is easy to conclude who the benefactors are and who the villains of the story.

It is true that, after the battle of Tours, the kingdom of Francia nearly doubled in size, stretching down to the Pyrénées. The settlement of Bodo, Charlemagne's friend, in Sevilla, illustrates this well: As long as it was in Muslim hands, the municipality of Andalusia was reputed for her "tolerance toward the Jewish and Christian so-called 'People of the Book' and the privilege they granted to them" (Clévenot 1999:5/ 23). How could this happen if, as the same time, Charlemagne was planning to expand his realm by expelling the Muslims out of Spain? Part of the answer is that, on the way back from his unsuccessful expedition, the emperor's raid was immortalized in the legendary *Chanson de Roland*.[382] The end of the lyrics describes the onslaught and extermination of his soldiers by the inhabitants of the Pyrénées mountains, all of them being Christians (Clévenot 1999:5/23).

Likewise, concerning the occupation of Aquitaine, the question needs to be answered, why would Muslims leave the Iberian Peninsula they had blessed with openness, progress, and religious freedom? Why should they go north in order to fight some *jihād* against Christians? There are tangible indications that many among those who came were actually Christian fellows. That is why Antonio Ubieto Arteta, one of the most renowned Spanish historians, qualifies the hatred between Muslims and Christians – as typically portrayed in literature – *absurdo* (Antonio Ubieto Arteta 1967[4]:62). Wherever the truth about the Battle of Tours may lay, the fact is that Charles Martel's success made him into a mythical hero well into the twentieth century and amplified the damning of Islam as the incarnation of evil.[383]

6.3 Bloodstained expansionism?

Arteta's (1967[4]:64) assertion, "the real conflict only started during the sixteenth century, when the religious and political problems in Europe identified Islam with the Turkish threat" seemingly ignores the centuries before the Ottomans. Or is the

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[382] "The Song of Roland". Roland's Latin name was Hruodlandus.

[383] Fortunately, this narrative was recently deleted from French schoolbooks out of concern about ramping islamophobia.

characterisation of Islamic expansion as an endeavour to destroy Christianity another *imagen absurda*? Whether we look at it in terms of a succession of cold-blooded military ventures in the footsteps of Muḥammad's warlike achievements[384] or as a peaceful migration movement – possibly with some occasional pillaging raid – something worth our attention happened. Let us look at some facts.

We begin in June 622 – for Muslims, the Year Zero: As recorded in the S.I.N., the Messenger of Islam and his seventy *ansar* ("helpers") ventured from Mecca to Yathrib. They behaved like members of one large family and shared everything for the sake of the 'Umma, Muslim brotherhood. The goal of the *muḥājirūn*[385] was to find a temporary refuge from oppression. Yathrib became today's Medina, *the* "city" *par excellence*.[386]

Indeed, the starting point of the Muslim unfolding was al-Madīnah, from where a "beam of light" called "Islam" began to "irradiate" the world. The profile of those emigrants is one of "fugitives flocking from Mecca and proselytes from the tribes of the desert, (were) men of resolute spirit, skilled in the use of arms, and fond of partisan warfare" (Martin Sommer 2015:82). After staying in Medina in peaceful cohabitation with the mainly Jewish population, the Helpers returned to Mecca, this time 10.000 in number. With minimal casualties, Muḥammad[un] seized control of the town and immediately began fighting paganism. Beginning in Makkah al-Mukarramah ("Mecca the Noble"), Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa at the speed of galloping Arabian thoroughbreds.

The one hundred years of conquests started with the Hegira. Ten years later, Muḥammad died (8 June 632). His close companion Abū Bakr [8 June 632 – 23 August 634][387] claimed to be his legitimate heir and named the first Islamic state accordingly: *al-Khilāfah ar-Rāšidah*, "the rightly guided caliphate". The word *rāšid* expresses the caliph's claim against the *Shīʿatu 'Alī*, "the followers of Ali", but also symbolizes the velocity of the Sunni achievements. Like a high-speed train on the straight, the Rashidun units quickly reached its first station: Ajnādayin (July/August 634). After wresting the town – located only fifty kilometres southwest of Jerusalem – out of By-

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[384] Like the battle Dhī Qār against the Sassanides, marking the first Arab independence (date uncertain).

[385] Sing. *muhājir*, from *hājara*, to depart.

[386] An abbreviation of *Madīnat-un-Nabī* ("the city of the prophet"), or more commonly called al-Madīnat-ul-Munawwarah ("the radiant city").

[387] Abū Bakr ʿAbdullāh ibn 'Uthmān Abī Quhāfa.

zantine hands, the helpers headed northeast into the province of Syria. A month later, Damascus, one of the oldest and most prestigious cities, fell and became the centre of the Umayyad dynasty.[388] Finally, six days of fighting along the Yarmūk River (August 636) convinced the Byzantine emperor Heraclius that he had no other choice but to withdraw and abandon Syria to Muslim-Arab domination.

This triumph must have galvanized the energy of Omar, the second Rashidun caliph [23 August 634–3 November 644],[389] under whose leadership the Arabs went to Jerusalem. After six months of assault on the City of Peace – highly coveted for her strategic position and viewed as holy by the three Abrahamic religions[390] – Sophronius, the then patriarch of Jerusalem, chose to surrender.

Islam had conquered a significant part of the world. That is as far as our overview of the Arab invasions goes. It would be fascinating to go through every campaign:[391] Mesopotamia,[392] Persia,[393] and Central Asia up to the Talas River at the outskirt of the Chinese Táng dynasty,[394] where the Abbasids were stopped in 751. Six thousand kilometres away, at the western end of the Mediterranean Sea, the crowd crossed the Strait of Gibraltar,[395] occupied Hispania,[396] and advanced inside half the French territory. We have seen that it was ultimately held back (10 October 732). One century had passed since the presumed date of the Messenger's death.

6.4   A tentative explanation for the success of the conquests

The swiftness of the early Islamic growth has been a matter of much debate and has given birth to an impressive number of explanations. This proliferation is remarkable and inevitable, first due to the scarcity of reliable sources and second because the ancient records are mostly the product of black-and-white thinking. Medieval Christian

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[388] Under Caliph Mu'awiya in 661.

[389] 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb'.

[390] For Muslims third holiest city after Mecca and Medina.

[391] I will address the annexation of Egypt as a case study under the subtitle, How much resistance to the invaders?

[392] Victories of Mosul (627), Qadisiya (636), Basra (656), and Kerbela (680).

[393] Victory of Nehavend (642).

[394] In today's Kyrgyzstan. The Táng Dynasty lasted from 618 to 907.

[395] Victory of Rio Barbate (711).

[396] They stopped in the North (defeat of Covadonga in 718).

writers[397] have unanimously described Islam as the incarnation of evil, Muḥammad being called in the Middle Ages *primogenitus sathanae* (the firstborn of Satan).[398] Therefore, the success appears either grossly exaggerated in their pathos or edulcorated by its romantic longings. Connecting the dots – and with the awareness that those elements may pave the way for further extrapolation[399] – several vital components need to be noted.

Any attempt to comprehend the speed of the early Islamic expansion inevitably starts with the political vacuum surrounding its beginning. The best illustration is provided by the ongoing battles facing the Byzantines and the Sasanians of Iran (602-628). After varying gains, but without any party achieving decisive winnings, those two empires situated at the edge of the Arabic Peninsula were hollowed out, and the hostilities ended for lack of sufficient human and logistical strength. What is certain, the torment mutually inflicted by the two rivals weakened them so much that they could not retaliate to any invader's move, regardless of how weak or strong he would be.

Furthermore, the Persian army was decimated by the Plague of Sheroe, an epidemic said to have killed half of its densely populated western provinces (628). Possibly, the memory of a similar calamity in Constantinople eighty years before pushed the Romans to flee every potential exposure to their enemies. Kyle Harper points out that the Justinian plagues (five or six of them) had decimated the Byzantine Empire. Sixty percent of the population was gone, and the Imperium was likely to fall like a deck of cards. The Justinian Renaissance in Byzantium of the fifth century that had started so well was (Harper 2017:21),

> "violently halted by one of the worst environmental catastrophes in recorded history – the double blow of bubonic plague and a little ice age. Demographic shock played out in a slow-motion failure of empire, culminating in the decisive territorial losses to the armies of Islam."

In addition, new pest outbreaks recurred in Syria and reached Palestine and Mesopotamia in 626-628 and again in 638-639.

> "In the sixth and seventh centuries, the concatenation of plague and climate deterioration spawned an age of eschatology within Christianity, Judaism, and

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[397] I will present the Muslim view later in this chapter. Muslim historians viewed them as a reflection of the religious zeal of the conquerors and evidence of divine approval.

[398] I will present the main expositors of this view in chapter ten.

[399] One more reason not to go into detail is that I will mention most of these factors in our further study.

that last offspring of late antiquity, Islam. The precise conjuncture of environmental damage, political disintegration, and religious ferment decided the final sequence of Rome's demise. (…) Materially and imaginatively, the ascent of Islam would have been inconceivable without the upheavals of nature. This was the end of the world" (Harper 2017:249).

The pandemic provided Caliph Abū Bakr the perfect opportunity to channel the energy of his helpers from the Arab civil war (656-661) to a common foe. After all, diverting from internal frictions by creating a *Feindbild* and promising territorial gains – always accompanied by the prospect of looting – energized his companions more than whatever ongoing conflict took place on their native soil.

The second observation concerns the lack of unity of European players in front of the attackers. Instead, the West tacitly welcomed the Muslim threat in Eastern Rome as a chance to widen its sphere. One notorious example is the First Crusade, in which the Roman Catholic regents refused to support the Orthodox states. By doing so, they achieved their long-cherished dream: the creation of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

The third element for success could have been the superiority of Arabs in desolate places. Just like the Greeks and the Vikings were masters of the sea, the nomadic-rooted warriors knew how to live, survive, stay mobile in the desert, attack or retreat in such an environment. At that point, the naval victories scored by the Muslim armies allow several questions. How could people raised in the inland be sailors? Did they hire coastal inhabitants like the Yemenis who were at ease on the seas or some Christians from the costal areas?

Here again, there is room for further study.

Generally speaking, the Muslim battalions were reputed for their high level of discipline. An exciting study of this notable aspect would be, for instance, the effect of the fermented juice of sun-ripened Mediterranean vineyards on "Christian" warriors passing by, compared to the legendary abstinence of Muslims for whom *al-kuḥūl* – the original word for alcohol – was *ḥaram*, forbidden.

Furthermore, the population of the Middle East had a genealogical sense of belonging to the winning team insofar as they have the same Arab blood or, if we include the Jews, of common Abrahamic descent. No matter whether the rulers were Byzantines or Sassanids, they were foreigners. The slightest internal conflict could only leave a feeling of dishonour, and the switch to an Arab authority style must have

sounded like liberation in a tribalistic sense. For instance, Arab Christians and Jews supported their Muslim cousins against the advancing Byzantines.

One more underestimated dimension – maybe for its more subtle nature[400] – is the demographic factor. First, whether the Muslims appeared as mercenaries or refugees, possibly with their families, the fact is that they came. Massive migration movements reach their breaking point when the strangers become so numerous that they do not feel the necessity to integrate. The new culture – or religion – is first perceived as a negligible minority that captures one's attention at most for its exotic character. Depending on whether the appreciation is branded as beneficial or harmful, it opens a disputation that ends up with acceptance or rejection of their position. Whatever the result of the debate, polarisation, exaggeration, and victimisation split society. With time, the perception of the migrant is likely to be adjusted from invaders to victims, which allows them to gain recognition. In addition, the Qur'ān[401] permits Muslim men to marry Christian women under the condition that the children grow up in Islam. To what extent mixed marriages and polygamy have played a role in accentuating the effect of such migrations has not been fully explored in the context of the early Arabic and the Ottoman waves of expansion.

Let us close the list of facilitators[402] with the impression left by these strangers on locals, partly due to their legendary discipline. Mentioned earlier in this chapter, Abū Bakr's order to his commander Yazīd during the Egyptian annexation to avoid what we call today "collateral damages", stands in diametrical opposition to the records of mostly undifferentiated massacres that characterize medieval wars. Muslims still evoke this order, implying that it must have set a precedent in their policy. Therefore, even if available sources differ in their narrative, the long-term image of Muslims may have impressed by being quite the opposite to preconceived ideas.

6.5   How much resistance to the invaders?

Our previous reflection leads to the next: How much counterweight did the conquered territories offer to the invaders? As stated by numerous eyewitnesses, it was not exceptional for Christian populations to welcome the Muslims' arrival. The conquerors

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[400] At least until Kyle Harper's work on the plagues of that time.

[401] Sūrat l-Baqarah 2:21.

[402] The next chapter will present more facilitators of the success of the conquests, especially those related to the Ottomans.

also had the support of many Jews, and even authors who are reputed for their opposite views on Islam confirm this, such as Simon Dubnov (1968[4]:2/324):

> "Beladhori related that Caesarea, a city where numerous Jews and Samaritans lived, was betrayed to the Arabs by a Jew named Yusef. (…) There is nothing surprising about such an incident. Persecuted by the Byzantine, the Jews had no reason for manifesting more patriotism than the Christians of Palestine."

One key to the Arab success was their respect for other religions, strongly diverging from the policy of segregation endured by several social and religious groups like, for instance, the Coptic Christians. One may also wonder to which extent those left behind welcomed the Arabs and even were ready to be enlisted into the Muslim corps or to offer logistical support whenever the issue was to fight against the oppressive majority.

> "Hundred years later, the stirrings in the Arabian Peninsula would take advantage of this. We can only speculate what might have been the outcome if Christianity had been something other than it was" (Sigve Tonstad 2000:5).

In this regard, the annexation of Egypt – the most prosperous agricultural province of the Byzantine Empire – remains a laudable example.[403] It happened in the time when the Coptic patriarch Pope Benjamin I of Alexandria [662–661] was eliminated by his rival Cyrus, the bishop of Phasis, with the full support of Heraclius. Cyrus' assignment was to curb religious separatism in Egypt in 631. Then, in 639, the Ameer ibn as-Sahmi[404] brought his units to Egypt on his own initiative and immediately issued a safe conduct for Pope Benjamin to return. The one remembered as one of the greatest Coptic patriarchs negotiated with the Arabs the restoration of churches that had been damaged by the Byzantines and the restitution of the church properties confiscated. That helps us imagine why "The Copts did not offer the slightest resistance but, on the contrary, welcomed the Arabs as their deliverers from the Byzantine yoke" (Hrbek 1992:3/32). Peter Brown, one of the leading scholars of the Byzantine era, writes (Brown 1971: 193):

> "The cradle of Christianity stood in the Near East, yet Palestine, Syria and Egypt were the first countries to come under Muslim dominion. The transformation of the political landscape was soon followed by a profound shift in religious affiliation. Contrary to a view still widely held in the West, this shift did not come about

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[403] Victories of Heliopolis in 640 and Alexandria in 642.
[404] 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀṣ as-Sahmī.

because of forced conversions under the menace of advancing Moslem armies. Historians have long pondered the factors that caused the majority of the Christian population in these countries to turn their back on their religion, adopting in its place the new faith emerging from the Arabian Peninsula. In the eyes of the common person, including the middle class, the new religion appears to have been seen at least as an equal to the old one. In some respects, it was regarded as simpler and more straightforward and thus better suited to meet the needs of ordinary people.

(…)

"The Arabs gained as much by treaty as by the sword: Key cities, such as Damascus and Alexandria, fell because the Muslim high command was instantly prepared to offer generous terms, particularly protection and tolerance in return for a fixed tribute."

The statement indicates that a good reputation preceded the newcomers. Were they expected – and even hailed? No matter the answer, reality contradicted the apocalyptic vision of Islam, and those who had promoted a negative image were likely to be accused of defamation.

Historians recorded that when Caliph Omar arrived in Jerusalem, he desired to visit the Church of the Resurrection. Patriarch Sophronius, who had just sworn fealty to him, invited him in to pray. This anecdote shows no systematic hatred between the Byzantine dignitaries and the caliph. Notice that Omar Muḥammad's father-in-law; and the invitation of the leader of a religion known for denying Jesus' death on the Cross to pray in a church erected to celebrate Jesus' resurrection[405] must be interpreted as a sign of mutual respect and acceptance.

Another Jewish source recalls that Omar ordered the repatriation of Jerusalem's Jewish inhabitants, who had been entirely banned by Heraclius (Dubnov 1968: 326). The caliph also made a treaty with them with terms that have remained engraved for posterity:

"This is the guarantee that the Emir of the faithful Omar ibn al Khattab gives to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. It covers the security of their lives and properties, their churches and crosses. (…) No one may occupy or demolish their churches. (…) No one may put pressure or wrong them in religion. (…) For

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[405] However, it is said that in order not to set a precedent nor to jeopardize the status of the Christian edifice, Omar declined the invitation and prayed on the steps of the church (Jürgen Krüger 2000:72-73). At a later date, the church became the "Mosque of Omar". The caliph's prayer remains in the memory of Christians and Muslims alike as an example of goodwill between religions.

this letter, Allah and His Messenger are witnesses, and the caliphs are responsible as long as they [the locals] pay the *jizyah*" (Abdel Fadeel 2006:87).

The positive impression made by such a gracious reaction must have significantly relieved the Jews victim of segregation, and those Christians, the Nestorians in particular, who had refused to sanction the conciliary Christology and Mariology. As I mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, they and other groups who did not comply were chased out of the Western and the Byzantine Empires alike. Many found refuge in the Middle East, mainly in Syria, where the oriental Orthodox congregations had never accepted the Chalcedonian creed. Some were likely to accept Muḥammad's strong monotheistic stand. Others would often manifest more affinity for the new masters than for Christian leaders who supported the Chalcedonic creed on Jesus and Mary.

> "It has been suggested that some Jews and Christians in the Sassanid Empire and Jews and Monophysites in Syria were dissatisfied and welcomed the Muslim forces, largely because of religious conflict in both empires" (Barbara Herstein Rosenwein 2018[5]:71-72).

Subsequently, the plain Muslim theology – the unicity of Allah, the authority of one prophet, and their straightforward profession of faith – would have enticed many to convert to Islam.

> "Reigning with wisdom and justice, Muslims treated Christians and Jews with tolerance and respect with the result that many embraced Islam" (Gabriel Jackson 1972:32, cit. in Profeta Philips 2003:96).

Another subject of contention was the proliferation of icons after the reign of Justinian I. This trend culminated when in 692, Justinian II [685-695 and again 705-711] ordered that a likeness of Jesus Christ be engraved on Byzantine gold coins.[406] In the same year, he held the Quinisext Council in Constantinople, in which several pagan practices were disallowed; yet, in Canon 82, the council gave approval to images of Christ. The spiritual discontentment grew and degenerated into a socio-political division that climaxed in the Byzantine Iconoclasm (726 to 842). Given that context, it is easy to suppose in which favourable light Islam –strictly prohibiting the veneration of pictures – could have been perceived.

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[406] Coin i85480. [Online] https://www.trustedancientcoins.com/first-gold-jesus-christ-portrait-692ad-ancient-coin-of-byzantine-christians-justinian-ii-coin/amp, posted 5 August 2020 [retrieved 8 May 2021].

The mainstream Christians' drift away from biblical concepts, and the Muslims' strict adherence to their guidance, or at least their consistency in conduct, must have provided a recurring matter of discussion and promoted a growing sympathy with Islam. It prepared the minds of the Jews and "Apostolic" Christians who had suffered one atrocity after the other to accept the winners and their conditions. On top, the latter offered greater freedoms in return for their new subjects' loyalty.

6.6 Al-Andalus: A case study

Let us take the case of al-Andalus, conquered twenty-one years only before Charles Martel's alleged triumph in Poitiers. Despite the geographic distance between Mecca and Medina and the Iberian Peninsula, the Islamic history of al-Andalus started soon after the beginning of the Umayyad consolidation.[407]

Due to the proliferation of partly contradictory sources between Arabic and Spanish historiographies[408] it appears impossible to reconstitute what happened. At least, they provide some background about the crowd who crossed the sea into the Hispanic Peninsula. There is a consensus that Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād and 7.000 fighting men entered Visigoth Hispania.[409] Curiously, it took only one major victory to conquer (battle of Guadalete, 711). The first consideration brings us back to the occupation of Western *Ifrīqiyā*, as the northwest part of Africa was named. Without going into a rather complicated and lengthy reflection,[410] the first clue is to be found in the conversion of the local chiefs and clan elders. That is where Hrbek (1992: 3/31-49) puts the turn to Islam into the following perspective:

> "This was mainly a matter of form. (…) As soon as the Arab armies withdrew or were expelled – and this happened many times during the seventh century – the Berbers reverted to their traditional beliefs."

Then, the Arab settlers "changed their policy and started to select young men of noble origin, (…) trained them and appointed them to high command in the army" (Hrbek 1992:3/34). Logically, the promotion of some of them to the status of comman-

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[407] More about the expansion of Islam at the end of this chapter.

[408] Since this is not my primary concern, I can only mention them briefly without going into analysis and refer to comprehensive recensions such as Roger Collins' (1989) and Kenneth Wolf's (1999).

[409] Present-day Spain and Portugal.

[410] The chronicles of the North African conquests have been well documented by Hrbek (1992:3/24). One of Hrbek's essential sources is the History of the Berbers and the Muslim dynasties in North Africa by Ibn Khaldun (1852).

ders under the condition of their conversion to Islam may have created an incentive to adopt the new religion, but not because of some deep religious conviction. One wonders how much energy such warriors were ready to spend for the Islamic cause and against Christians. On the other hand, Titus Burckhardt (1972:23) writes:

> "Judging by the names they gave to places and cities, one can conclude that many of the Berbers who arrived with the Arabs were still Christians."

According to Norman Roth (1976:2/1456), there were only a few Muslim Arabs among the Berber recruits. He argues that many of the soldiers had Christian names, which raises several new interrogations. Firstly, how could Muslim warriors attack a Christian land by having "many" Christians in their ranks – regardless of whether it was a "missionary" campaign or a war about territories? Secondly, what about those converted Berbers who were not Arabs? Did not Arabs treat them like second-class Muslims? Those questions insinuate that other dynamics were possibly at work. Apart from the fact that most invaders were Christians, historians tell us that Berber raids into Hispania had been taking place for many years before the battle of Guadalete, in which Roderic, the last Visigoth king, died. Therefore, Guadalete was not the actual beginning of the invasion but only its culmination.

The second reflection deals with the question: Could someone, maybe some victims of the predominant religion, be instrumental in that achievement by opening the gates to these strangers? Rops (1971:2/400) shares the opinion expressed by one of them:

> "It is the god of vengeance who has sent us the Arabs to free us from the Romans."

Gabriela Philipps (2005:1/96) adds that,

> "It is more appropriate to refer to the native people as accomplices rather than conquered people."

Therefore, several questions remain to be answered:

1. What was Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād's identity? That he was presented alternatively as a Berber, a Jew, a Persian, or a Turk, shows how unreliable some records may be.

2. What was his religious affiliation? He is sometimes mentioned as a Muslim, occasionally as a Christian.

3. Had a process of degradation and demoralisation already set up the Visigoths to fall?

4. Did treason in his ranks provoke King Roderic's defeat?

5. Did the Iberian Jews, known for having suffered severe discrimination, tip the scale in favour of the invaders?

6. What was the point of departure of the ships launched for the invasion?

7. Did the vessels originate from Africa, or did Iberian accomplices provide them?

8. What was the motive behind the crossing? Was it looting – which would be supported by multiplied raids back and forth – or was it an invitation by Roderic's rivals?

Here, I need to mention the name of Julian, who invited the North Africans to cross over to the continent. He was an influential count in the south of the Iberian Peninsula who was intent on taking revenge on Roderic for the rape of his daughter. He is sometimes depicted as a possible ally of the Byzantines in their eagerness to take control of the area. Therefore, Julian may have been a power-hungry renegade or a threat to Roderic. Eventually, he is sometimes associated with Urban, a Berber Catholic supported by his church to destabilize the Bible-oriented Visigoths (Walter Kaegi 2010:132-133).

As the least, I can conclude that it would be daring to claim that the invasion of al-Andalus was conducted in terms of a destructive "holy" war; or that it was fuelled by the drive to force "infidels" to convert to Islam.

6.7   The Islamic "crusades" versus the "Christian" crusades

Were the Islamic conquests largely destructive or rather protective? To answer this question, let us first note that atrocities are part of every war. Muslims destroyed Belgrade and countless other cities. The torment inflicted on local populations defies description. Even though the Muslim invasions have traumatised European memory as a dark page for the destruction they left in their wake, the same can be said of many other warriors, be they Christians, Mongols, or others. A case could even be made demonstrating that, had it not been for the atrocities the western forces committed, many cities would have been spared the fate inflicted on them by Muslims.

An inglorious symbol for that is the First Crusade (1095/6–1099), which remains a bitter memory for Middle Eastern Muslims to this day. In the town of Barbastro (Spain) alone, 50.000 Muslims were massacred after suffering grievous mistreatment and torture (Hans Kühner 1964:84). When lastly (1099), the crusaders reached Jerusalem, they put the entire population to the sword, neither sparing women nor children, no matter whether Muslims or Jews. Fifty thousand Christians who lived there sought refuge within the precinct of the Omar Mosque, where Muslims granted them asylum. Michael Brown, a contemporary Messianic Jew and prolific author, writes (1992:192) that "Jews fought side-by-side with Muslim volunteers to defend Jerusalem against the crusaders." Yet, the aggressors were inhumane enough to enter the mosque and slaughter all 50.000 of their brothers and sisters in faith so blood was floweddown the streets of the Holy City. William of Tyre (in Philipps 2005:8-19), a later Frankish writer, described the terrible scene with the words:

> "Everywhere lay fragments of human bodies, and the very ground was covered with the blood of the slain. Still more dreadful was it to gaze upon the victors themselves, dripping in blood from head to foot."[411]

Steven Runciman (1951-1954:188) reports that when Raymond d'Aguilers[412] visited the Temple Mount on the morning of the subjugation, "he had to pick his way through corpses and blood that reached up to his knees". The Holy City was the scene of savagery and such cruelty inflicted in the name of the Cross. As if this had not sufficed, amid the Third Crusade (1189–1192), Richard the Lion-Hearted ordered the extermination of 2.700 defenceless Muslim prisoners, most of them women and children, in just one day 1189). Dana Munro (1935:168-169) supplies the following insight into the grievous treachery committed by Richard:

> "When a ransom was not paid promptly, Richard the Lion-Hearted ordered 2,700 hostages to be slaughtered in cold blood before the eyes of other Muslims."

In 1191, the Lion-Hearted seized Cyprus. The Greek emperor could not stem the onslaught of Richard's fury on Cyprus.

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[411] The text goes on: "After having killed these pagans, our people seized a huge number of men and women and killed or let alive whomever they felt like. The Crusaders run around the whole city, plundering the houses and looting gold, silver, horses and then, shouting of joy, they went to the grave of our savior to worship as they had promised to do".

[412] the Chronicler and author of *The Siege and Capture of Jerusalem*.

"His soldiers were streaming over the island, burning churches and crops, butchering cattle, raping women, cutting the throats of old men and children, in a three-week nightmare. (…) This was the man who, in 1182, raided the pilgrim route to Mecca and planned shipping in the ports of Medina and sank a ship laden with pilgrims for Mecca. Standing by, speechless with laughter as the Muslims, many of them old and infirm, cried for help in the bitter waters" (Treece 1962:185).

Several illustrations could be added, but suffice it to say, it can be amply demonstrated that no one armed force ever held the monopoly on atrocities. However, one should keep in mind that not Christendom as such promoted this massacre, but only some of its adepts. Moreover, the crusades were not explicitly directed against Muslims but also against Jews and Christians. No one dealing with those fearful campaigns should miss this point. Therefore, Goffman (2002:4) raises the question:

"Did the early Habsburg state, the French state, or the English state somehow *not* live for war? (…) Were Peter the hermit, who led a group of peasants against seasoned *delis*,[413] others who led Christian children on suicidal crusades, and numerous Christian extremists not just as fanatically committed to faith as were frenzied Ottoman soldiers? (…) Should we then believe that the Habsburg Charles V or the French Francis I were less bellicose than their Ottoman contemporary Süleyman?"

Back to the Arab conquests, it is said that the commanders did not lay siege against a place before offering its inhabitants the option of submitting to the new religion – or at least to its principles (Abdel Fadeel 2006:88).

6.8   Exegesis of the word *jihād*

But what about the "holy war"? The obligation to fight the *jihād* is often referred to as the sixth pillar of Muslim theology. In the context of Islamic invasion, its meaning and application deserve more study. At its origin, the Arabic triliteral root *jīm hā dāl* expresses the idea of tension, hence the figurative sense: "to strive". Classical Arabic–English dictionaries (Edward Lane 1863:474) render the concept with "labour, toil, effort, endeavour, energy, diligence, painstaking etc.", and modern Arabic–English lexica (Hans Wehr & James Cowan, eds., 1979[4]:169) add *jahd* and *mahjūd* for "voltage" and "electric tension." *Jihād* includes the idea of a fight, but in the general sense

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[413] *Deli* (sg.) means "deranged" in Modern Turkish. This word was employed in Ottoman Turkish for soldiers who risked their souls, so that *deli* should be translated as "brave" or even "heroic".

of making every effort possible, and that is why I have chosen to translate the verb *jāhada* with "to do one's utmost" and the noun *jihād* with "struggle" or "struggling". The term and its derivatives occur forty-one times in the Qur'ān.[414] The similarities between most of its usages are striking, and almost all of them refer to "those who believe, have emigrated, and did their utmost (*jāhādū*) in the path of Allah." Take for instance Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:218:

> "Those who have believed and those who have departed and did their utmost in the path of Allah – those expect Allah's mercy. Allah is forgiving and merciful."

The description is repeated in al-Anfāl 8:72, 74, and 75 with the exact wording. al-Anfāl 8:72, at-Tawbah 9:20, and aṣ-Ṣaf 61:11 add to it "with their wealth and lives" (*bi-amwālihim wa-anfusihim*). At-Tawbah 9:88 shortens the sentence to "those who have believed and done their utmost with their wealth." An-Naḥl 16:110 adds, "and were persistent", which is echoed in Āli-'Imrān 3:142, though in slightly different terms:

> "Or do you think you will enter Paradise while Allah has not yet made known those who did their utmost and those who persevere?"

At-Tawbah 9:81 inserts, "Those who … live in the path of Allah." The list of common elements starts with "those who believe" (*āmanū*). Most *hāyāt* do not unveil what this expression conveys. Even though they respect the same sequence, two of them (al-Ḥujurāt 49:15 and aṣ-Ṣaf 61:11) restrict the word "believers" to designate "only" those who believe in "Allah and His Messenger." A third *āyah* (at-Tawbah 9:19) adds "in Allah and the Last Day". The first verb, to believe, reflects a state of mind rather than an action. The second has to do with a move since *ḥājara* suggesting a departure. The standard translation "to emigrate" inevitably reminds of the Islamic conquests since *ḥājara* relates to *jāhada*, "to make *Jihād*." Nevertheless, most verses I have mentioned give to the "exodus" of the Hegira a specific direction: Those who believe should "depart" and "do their utmost in the path of Allah" (*fī sabīli Allahi*).

Except for Yusuf Ali's translation,[415] most English editions[416] miss the link between the departure and its goal by rendering *sabīl* with the ambiguous word "way"

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[414] The occurrences are equally dispersed among the Meccan and the Medinan sūrahs; 27 times as the form III verb *jāhada*, four times as a noun *jihād*, five times as the verbal noun *jahd*, and four times as the form III active participle *mujāhidīn*". [Online] https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=jhd #(4:95:9) [retrieved 26 July 2021].

[415] For example, al-Baqarah 2:218: "[They] fought (strove and struggled) in the path of Allah".

[416] "[They] fight in the way of God" (Mishary Rashed Alafasy). "[They] struggle in God's way" (Arthur John Arberry). [They] struggle in the way of Allah" (Hasan al-Fatih Qaribullah and Ahmad Darwish). "[They] have striven hard in the way of Allah" (Abdul Majid Daryabadi; same in Muhammad Muhsin

("path" or "manner"). Others translate with a blank "cause" of Allah"[417] or "for the sake of God".[418] *Sabīl* occurs 176 times in the Qur'ān in reference to Allah.[419] This word is not *ṣirāṭ*, the one employed[420] in general to designate the way to Paradise (*ṣirāṭ al-mus'taqīma*, "the way of the righteous"). It does not exclude the spiritual dimension of *sabīl*; on the contrary, *sabīl* occurs in al-'Ankabūt 29:69 in connection with a "guidance" (*hudan*), a quranic word referring to the way to Paradise.[421] Therefore, "the way" has nothing to do with "a cause" engaging in some war, no matter how holy the matter.

Moreover, the Qur'ān uses four times the plural *mujāhidīn* – the active participle of *jāhada* in form III – to qualify "those who passed the test of endurance" (Muḥammad 47:31). The context differentiates them from "people who cherish hatred", using the derivative of *jāhada* with moralistic connotations. In the other three mentions,[422] the Qur'ān makes a distinction between those who "do their utmost" and those who "sit because they are disabled". It corresponds to the exhortation in at-Tawbah 9:86,

> "And when a surah was revealed [enjoining them] to believe in Allah and to do their utmost with His Messenger, the wealthy men among them asked your permission and said, 'Leave us to be with them who sit'."

Notice that there is no indication that the action of *hājara* should end up in a bloody conquest. Instead, the verb *jāhada* explicitly applies to an inward battle. As suxch, it excludes any undertone of some holy war, for example[423] in 'Ankabūt 29:6,

> "And whoever does his utmost is only doing it (*yujāhidu*) for himself (his soul). Indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds."

Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali, and in Safi-ur-Rahman al-Mubarakpuri). "[They] strive in the way of Allah" (Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall). "[They] strove hard in the way of Allah" (Muhammad Habib Shakir). "[They] wage jihad in the way of Allah" (Ali Quli Qarai).

[417] "[They] fought in Allah's cause" (Ahmed Raza-Kahn). "[They] fought in the cause of Allah" (Amatullah Bantley, Sahih International). "[They] fight for the cause of God" (Muhamad Sarwar). "[They] strive hard in God's cause" (Muhammad Asad), "[They] strive for God's cause" (Maulana Wahiduddi Khan). "[They] exert their utmost in His cause" (Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi*)*.

[418] Translation by Talal Itani. The list of translations of al-Baqarah 2:218 mentioned above has been taken online from https://tanzil.net/#2:218 [retrieved 26 July 2021].

[419] In at-Tawbah 9:24, *jihādin* is the object of the battle is not "the way of Allah", but "His Messenger".

[420] With two exceptions out of 22 occurrences of "the righteous" as a noun and 13 as an adjective.

[421] Al-Mā'idah 5:46 "Injīl is Guidance and Light, and Tawrāt a Guidance and an Admonition to the God-fearing". Sūrat al-Aḥqāf 46:30 mentions "a Book revealed after Mūsā, confirming what came before it and guiding into the truth and to a right way".

[422] All three appearing in one verse only (an-Nisā' 4:95).

[423] At-Tawbah 9:41 and al-Mā'idah 5:35 add "with your wealth and life".

In al-Ḥajj 22:78, *jihād* describes a process happening *in regard to* Allah's will and not *with* Him. The focus is Allah and not some alleged enemies. The importance of this detail is that it confirms the spiritual component and allows a rendering like: "Remain in full tension with the devotion due to Him." Only found once in the Qur'ān as a noun (at-Tawbah 9:79), *juh'd* applies to *ṣadaqāt*, charities, a sacrifice that has nothing to do with war. Likewise, the verbal noun *jahda* (occurring five times: al-Mā'idah 5:53; al-An'ām 6:109; an-Naḥl 16:38; an-Nūr 24:53; al-Fāṭr 35:42) always refers to an oath made to Allah. Here, like with *ṣadaqāt*, the object of the effort excludes any interpretation referring to a bellicose intent.

A careful reading of al-'Ankabūt 29:8 (overtaken word-by-word in Luq'mān 31:15) reveals that "those who do their utmost" (*jāhadāka*) are not the believers but those who wish "to make you believe in Adoptionism." As such, it is a clear reference to a theological disputation in progress, just like in al-Fur'qān 25:52. This time, the believers are summoned not to obey the concealers (*al-kāfirīna*) and[424] to "do our utmost toward them" (*jāhid'hum*) by taking the Qur'ān in their hand. The holy book of Islam is undoubtedly not intended to be a weapon. Moreover, The terms of those *āyāt* exclude any incitation to adverse pressure, such as making war against unbelievers.

In at-Tawbah 9:73,[425] the imperative *jāhidi*, "do your utmost", is directed against *al-kuffār*, the concealers, and to *al-munāfiqīna*, the hypocrites. While reading this text, some may feel entitled to fight against those often labelled "infidels," but it seems problematic to interpret the text as a command to kill all "hypocrites". Finally, the only mention of *jihād* describing friends and foes is in Sūrat al-Mum'taḥanah 60:1,

> "O, you who believe, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, offering them love while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, driving out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord. If you come forth to do your utmost in My way and to seek My pleasure."

Again, the Arabic text does not allow a translation of *jihādan fī sabīlī* referring to hostile action.[426] First, we trace the same expression mentioned earlier in many other texts ("in my way"), which implies that this *āyāh* has to be understood in the same perspective as them. Second, Allah invites the reader to "Seek my (Allah's) pleasure."

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[424] "To do one's utmost is presented as the better option to deal with the concealers and not as a confrontative measure (that would be expressed by the preposition *bilā*, but, instead of *wa*, and)."

[425] The same thought is found in 66:9, in which the exhortation is directed to "the prophet".

[426] Like, for example, Layth Saleh aS-Shaiban: "Come out for jihad in My cause".

Only a few have developed a perception of Allah as a god who feels pleasure in killing humans.[427]

In summary, none of the 41 *āyāt* related to *jihād* conveys the idea of war. Instead, the exhortation to "believe, depart and do your utmost (imperative form *jāhidū* found in al-Mā'idah 5:35) in His way with your wealth and soul" reflects a spiritual concern. After all, the standard replay narrates[428] the first Islamic migration (the Hegira, "departure", from Mecca to Medina in 622) not as a warlike expedition but a peaceful resettlement, at most a kind of missionary journey. If we only figure out the demographic consequences of the waves of migrations, the creeping islamification of neighbouring territories did not even really need the blade of the sabre.

Evidently, the Arab conquests did not happen without spilling blood. Aside from listing the factors that facilitated the advance of Islam, it is time to review the āyāt generally quoted to justify the killing of the infidels. Indeed, the moderate definition of *jihād* seems to contradict texts such as at-Tawbah 9:5 – the most often cited in that regard:

> "But when the sacred months have passed, kill the Adoptionists wherever you find them. Seize and besiege them; sit and wait for them in every place of ambush. But if they repent, establish the prayers, and give alms, open the way for them. Indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful."

First, we discover that this dictate is placed in a specific context ("When the holy months are over"), which has never been conclusively clarified. Moreover, the object of the killing were the Adoptionists (*al-mush'rikūn*)[429] and not Christians or Jews in general – not even pagans – but those who preached Adoptionism. Other texts advocate aggression, but in a situation of safeguard during an attack, deterrence against "those who fight you" (al-Baqarah 2:190), and "wage war against Allah and His Messenger" (al-Mā'idah 5:33). Besides the right of self-defence, the Qur'ān appeals for understanding (al-Mā'idah 5:42-44) and condemns forced conversion.

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[427] Again, the diminished expressiveness of *ib'tighāa marḍātī* when translated with "Seek my approval", as it is often the case, implies that Allah may "approve" the action, which is more understandable than having "pleasure" in it.

[428] As it is reported by the S.I.N..

[429] See my study of the *mush'rikūn* in chapter three.

al-Baqarah 2:256[430]

"Let there be no compulsion in religion! Truth stands out clear from error."

al-Kāfirūn 109:1-3,6

"Say: O concealers!

I do not worship what you worship,

Nor do you worship what I worship.

Your religion is for you, and mine is for me."

Even though exegetes have recognized the moral dimension of *jihād* as being a fight against personal impulses, the term has unfortunately often been associated with offensive and defensive warfare. Muslims generally consider war as *jihād*, and *jihād* a real war. Warriors call themselves Mujahideens, and shout like "Allahu Akbar", God is the greater, awaken the nightmare of suicide bombers. Yet, the *takbir* is above all a "magnification of God called out in Islam with a pacific connotation, for example, to incite to prayer".[431] It is also proclaimed "when someone sees a beautiful sunset, when a baby is born or when a doctor's patient gets better from treatment, when a favorite sports team wins a game, at a wedding, and even at funerals"[432] (Max Dwight 2020: 22). Notice that Arabic-speaking Christians commonly build "Allahu Akbar" into their liturgical vocabulary.

For such reasons, we should beware of merging *takbir* and violence too quickly. Therefore, the question is, how did *jihād* become quasi-synonymous with it? The answer is simple. Its quranic definition does not give room to the notion of violence, but the Islamic Sunnah (*aḥādīth*) and the classical exegetes (*mufassirūn*) do.[433] Yet, a substantial part of Islamic jurisdiction[434] on *jihād* is devoted to policies concerning civilians, mainly issued to guarantee their protection and to define how to deal with non-Muslims. Besides the nuance between "greater" (inward) and "lesser" (external) *jihād* – the latter applying to persuasive efforts with the expectation that humankind

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[430] Translation by Yusuf Ali.

[431] Regular Islamic prayer, during which the sentence is rehearsed several times.

[432] [Online] https://www.colorado.edu/linguistics/2020/08/21/semantic-pejoration-arabic-phrase-allahu -akbar [retrieved 5 August 2021]. In such contexts, however, the use of this exclamation is quite rare.

[433] Contrary to the quranic view, the rules of *jihād* justified by later sources have been widely investigated. Therefore, I will not go into further details and refer to Bernard Lewis (2004) and, for a well-balanced study in an Islamic perspective, to Abdel Fadeel's Master's Thesis (2006).

[434] A task initiated by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ash-Shaybānī (Abu 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn al Ḥasan ibn Farqad ash-Shaybānī, 749-805).

should turn to Islam, the tools to conduct both types of *jihād*, especially the lesser, range from the pen to the sword.

Looking at the Sunnah (tradition), all 199 *aḥādīth* collected by Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī – the most authoritative source –[435] apply *jihād* to warfare.

Finally, the collection of the *aḥādīth* (Sunnah) only appeared in the late eighth century[436] and the *Tafsīr* (exegesis) at the beginning of the ninth. That was the time of the publication of the S.I.N., in which the eighty battles conducted in the time of Muḥammad are narrated. Is it a coincidence? Indeed, today's jihadists repeatedly invoke them as worthy of emulation. But I have stated that all these normative definitions came *after* the first legal setting of *jihād* so that we can discover an evolution of the word from "inner (spiritual) struggle" as found in the Qur'ān, to a mechanism to protect the citizens; and that later on, in the Sunnah and *Tafsīr*, the term switched to "warfare". in other words, the earliest definition of *jihād* represents a pacifistic quranic exegesis, which may explain why we have no pre-Tradition proof of any existing Islamic policy regarding military actions.[437] However, the early Islamic waves of expansionism took place *before* the Sunnah collection. It indicates that they cannot be the result of such jurisprudence. Instead, the Arab conquests must result from combined dynamics at play, economic, geopolitical, demographic, and climatic. We may conclude that, like in other situations where religion served as a call to arms, the notion of *jihād* was twisted to serve the purpose of propaganda and political aggression. Therefore, we can develop some understanding for the legitimacy to be extended to *jihād* in the line of the ongoing concept of the *bellum justum*, the just war, stemming from ancient times and often adopted by religious jurisdictions. After all, when Pope Gregory VII resorted to knightly warriors for the cause of the church during the Investiture Controversy, he paved the way for a more aggressive policy of the church. If we think of the crusades, the Inquisition, and the conquest of South America, his campaigns were no less ruthless than all Islamic wars.

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[435] Bukhari's *Aḥādīth* were compiled around 846.

[436] Under Ibn Hanbal (Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, 780–855). For an overview of the canonisation process of the *Aḥādīth*, see Jonathan A.C. Brown (2007).

[437] Except Abū Bakr's command mentioned earlier (not to harm nature, women, and a specific group of Christians) during the Egyptian conquest (640-642). But the wording has been first recorded in a ḥadīth attributed to Mālik ibn Anas who lived from 711 to 795. It implies that his requirement was written down at the earliest in 730, at least ninety years after the Egyptian conquest.

6.9   Forced conversions?

How soon did the conquered populations embrace Islam? For the most part, it did not happen overnight. From a quranic point of view, the People of the Book were treated with much respect. We remember that thanks to the financial advantages gained from them, the Muslim ruling class had no interest in such conversions. Granted, to pretend that there has never been pressure would be one-sided. If Islam denounces apostasy within Christianity, it also advocates the explicit protection of the authentic believers among her. This safeguard implies the respect of their religious conviction and excludes forced conversions.[438] In return, those "Apostolic" Christians were more open to acquiring new theological insights. Generally speaking, the striking similarities between biblical and quranic terminology, narratives prompted many to accept Islam as the ultimate revelation.

In that regard, the issue of Muḥammad's prophethood may have built a stumbling block for many Christians, but not an insurmountable obstacle. In reverse, those who rejected the doctrines of the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ could nonetheless welcome the alleged Messenger as a reformer sent from above to restore a proper view of Jesus. As long as Islam rebuffed dogmas like the supremacy of the priests and denied the role of saints and icons, it may have been welcomed as a reformatory movement within Christianity. It could also be an oriental version of Abrahamic ancestral traditions or another kind of Judaism. After all, the Qur'ān mentions biblical prophets and refers to several Old and New Testament stories.

Wherever and whenever Christians conducted heated debates on christological issues, Islam must have appeared as a simple and logical solution. On the other hand, the clarity of the Islamic creed with its one god and one prophet must have sounded to many ears more tangible than the complicated constructs of Christian theology. Hans Küng (2002:99) adds what he calls "the certain skepticism in view of the schism-induced division of the Christian church in contrast to the visible unity of the Islamic community of faith".

Moreover, I have demonstrated in chapter five that the perception of *islam* as an attitude of submission to God was familiar to Bible scholars and, consequently, to

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[438] A notable exception is the recruitment of young Christians into the Janissary corps.

those who read it. Hence, their integration into the community of the *muslimūn* was not a huge step.

To conclude with a factor of a more pragmatic than theological nature, the progressiveness of Muslims, in contrast with the general narrow-mindedness of the church at that time, must have exerted an attraction that went beyond cognitive arguments. The same applies to the concept of Muslim brotherhood in its true sense, an attractive notion that denied feudal and clerical hierarchy. "Islam made all its converts equal, whatever their racial origin" (Brown 1971:198).

> "It also offered an economic incentive to conversion. In what might be seen as a giant project of assimilation akin to what the United States has been in modern times, the emerging Muslim culture in the Near East became an energetic melting pot for diverse peoples throughout the empire" (Tonstad 2000:7).

6.10   Summary

The islamification of Christian territories happened in various manners and steps. It would be naïve to pretend that the sword has never been employed for that purpose. However, the cases of martyrdom seem to have been chiefly "limited to those who would openly denigrate Islam".[439] I have highlighted so far that Muslims consistently set up an unsurpassed tolerant policy wherever they imposed themselves. Therefore, a re-evaluation of Islam is necessary to recognise that its quasi-demonisation often promoted does not do justice to reality.

Coming back to our inquiry, if war as an expansionist policy is the product of a complex set of interactions, the Muslim advance was much more beneficial than harmful to the Old Continent. Let us reiterate the geopolitical by-product of the upheaval connected with the Islamic conquests, which was to impede the Catholic-dominated empires from expanding south. Less than one hundred years after Muḥammad's death, the Arabs had erected a crescent of containment on the southern flank of the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium. Therefore, it appears legitimate to describe the conquests as creating a providential bulwark for those – "heretics", "schismatics", and

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[439] Such as Perfectus, a priest who openly condemned Islam and His prophet in the streets of Córdoba, and triggered an avalanche of reprisals, whereas ʿAbdur-Raḥmān firmly repressed the operation (Guichard 2000:62).

other non-Catholic or non-Orthodox Christians – who toiled for their daily bread at the margins of Christendom.

Moreover, the triumph of Islam over parts of the "Holy" Roman Empire was directed against a corrupt religious-political "Christian" hegemony and not in opposition to Christianity itself. Instead, the Muslims were anxious to entertain good relationships with those Christians who, theologically speaking, were closer to them than to mainstream Christianity in at least some regards. The last two observations provide crucial elements to my main research question, as an indirect help provided by Islam, propitious to the apostolic faith.

> "Vast areas of North Africa and the Middle East under the benevolent, God-fearing Moslem rulers were shielded from the despotism of Rome and Byzantium" (Oster 1992:32).

That is how both those who lived next to and those inside the 'Umma enjoyed peace and tranquillity so that (Brown 1971:197), "the population of the Near East sat back to enjoy the sunshine."

The next chapter will expose several indicators that Islam has been a significant source of intellectual and social enrichment in Europe since its effects made a durable impact on western society and, ultimately, on the breakout of the German Reformation.

When light arises in the East and shines on the West

7.1   Introduction

After promoting a definition of Islam as a religious response theologically and philosophically closer to Christianity than commonly admitted, I will address the question of its repercussions on the non-Muslim world and, in particular, on the German Reformation. First, let us come back to the downfall of the Roman Empire, after which intellectual stagnation held sway over Europe. Catholicism had been the main factor in the suppression of learning and general scepticism against innovation. Under Pope Gregory I [590-604],[440] Latin became the universal language of religion. Consequently, only a few educated people could catch what the church taught. In 869, the bishop of Mérida in Spain noticed that "not anyone in his town was able to translate the Latin inscription on an antique monument" (Pierre Guichard 2000:60-61).

7.2   How "dark" were the "Dark Ages"?

Suppose the lack of education endangered progress in most areas of daily life. In that case, we should not ignore that the eleventh and twelfth centuries brought significant light into the world of literature, philosophy, spirituality, and education.[441] The climax of the High Middle Ages with its Romanesque art continuously refined since the tenth century. Gothic architecture flourished in Europe in the high medieval period. Catholic monks founded the Università di Bologna, the first university in Europe (1088); the universities of Padova and Paris were inaugurated shortly after that. The eleventh century is also the era of the Benedictine Hildegard von Bingen (1013-1054), a "writer, composer, philosopher, Christian mystic, visionary, and polymath" (MacKenzie & Hollister 2001: 317), and appraised by many as "the founder of scientific natural history in Germany" (Jöckle 2003:204). Monks went from village to village, acting like social counsellors and sometimes doctors. The *amor sciendi*, the love for science, is applied in momentous discoveries. The first windmills appeared in Normandy around 1180. Another monk, Guido of Arezzo (995-c.1050), triggered a revolution in the music world

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[440] Gregorius the Great. The Catholic Church canonised him.

[441] In a book recently published under the eloquent title *The Bright Ages: A New History of Medieval Europe*, Matthew Gabrielle and David Perry (2021) have tried to save the reputation of the Middle Ages.

by creating the notation system still in use today. I want to add the beauty of European polyphonic harmony that started a new quality in music with Guillaume de Machaut's *Ars nova* in the fourteenth century.

Yet, it seems that the magnificent architecture of cathedrals and castles literally overshadowed the Middle Ages as a symbol of the increasing control of the clergy over an illiterate populace. Exonerated from the feudal yoke and taxation, the prelates became richer and richer. Being increasingly disconnected from the hardships the ordinary people endured made it harder and harder to resist the temptation of leading a life of ease.

In the East, the early Byzantine Empire was not affected by the spirit of the Dark Ages, and "Unlike in the West, classical-style secular education didn't die out" (Mc Lachlan 2004:147).[442] AT its beginning, Byzantium had promoted the intellectual legacy of Greece as being the most precious treasure in its possession. Looking with condescension at the West as the realm of Barbarism, Byzantium had always considered herself the guardian of civilisation. Even more than that: Adepts of Byzantine Orthodoxy thought of themselves the heirs of the Hellenistic world at its most advanced stage. The scope reflects the concept of "Orthodoxy", a union of Greek *orthōs* ("correct") and *dóxa* with the double signification "glory" and "judgment." This perspective unconsciously promoted an attitude of fundamental superiority in worship and intellectual pursuit over the rest of the world.

Then, under Emperor Justinian, a systematic attempt was made to eradicate non-conform scholarship in Europe. While in the West, Ecclesiastical Latin as religious language became compulsory, the works of the philosophers were destroyed in the East. One of the initial acts that set the stage for this period was the destruction of the Academy of Athens, including its entire library of irreplaceable Hellenistic erudition in 529, "a year of a general purge" (Evans 1996:68).

> "Damaskios, the head of the Academy at Justinian's accession (…) made the Academy the intellectual base of late paganism (…) [and] the teachings of the Academy and Christian theology were on a collision course. The ideology that it epitomized was openly non-Christian at a time when to be non-Christian was to be anti-Christian" (Evans 1996:69).

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[442] The terms "Middle Ages" and "Dark Ages" are only used for the Latin Empire.

As another consequence, the biblical message became nearly accessible – because of linguistic considerations, but also on purpose. The Bible was banned,[443] and more than one codex was kept out of access to the public.

7.3   The Islamic command of searching for knowledge

Having gained a basic grasp of European Christianity over eleven centuries, we must call attention to the remarkable amalgamation of Islamic thought with Persian and Indian imports that creates a striking contrast between the Middle East and the West. At a time when Charlemagne, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, did not know how to sign his name by hand,[444] nomadic Arabs woke up to the words of their prophet who advocated to "seek for enlightenment, even unto China."[445] In a time when the ecclesiastical authorities banned Nicholaus Copernicus (1473-1543) for his revolutionary ideas about the sun being at the central point of the universe, the message of Islam was, "The ink of scholars is weighed on the Day of Judgment with the blood of martyrs, and the ink of scholars outweighs the blood of martyrs."[446]

> "The seeking of knowledge is an obligation to every Muslim" (at-Tirmidhī 1963-1968: Ḥadīth 74).

> "One who treads a path in search of knowledge finds his way to Paradise facilitated by Allah" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1982: Ḥadīth 245).

> "A servant of Allah will remain standing on the Day of Judgment until he is questioned about his time on earth and how he used it; about his knowledge and how he utilized it; about his wealth and from where he acquired it and in what activities he spent it; and about his body and how he used it" (at-Tirmidhī 1963-1968: Ḥadīth 148).

> "Knowledge from which no benefit is derived is like a treasure out of which nothing

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[443] The Council of Toulouse in 1229 and the Synod of Tarragona in 1234. See chapter three.

[444] However, he is known by French pupils as the founder of organised education in the form of schools since "he established a palace school at Aix-La-Chapelle and by so doing stimulated learning" (Estep 1992[2]:12).

[445] *'Utlub il 'ilma wa law fis-Sin*, narrated from Mālik b. Anas by al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Imān* and *al-Madkhal*, ibn 'Abd al-Barr in *Jami' Bayān al-'Ilm*, and al-Khatib through three chains at the opening of his *al-Riḥla fi Talab al-Ḥadīth* (p.71-76). Some of the classical ḥadīth scholars have declared this *ḥadīth ḍa'īf* "weak tradition", i.e., not necessarily genuine). Still, one must understand that a ḥadīth considered weak is not necessarily to be rejected. The question is whether or not an outright forgery would have reached such wide circulation within the Muslim world. At least, the spirit of openness advocated by such aḥādīth made waves among Muslims.

[446] Even if this ḥadīth is generally considered *ḍa'īf* (weak), it is mentioned in Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍayrī al-Suyūṭī's book *Al-Jāmi' as-Saghīr* and two other publications by ibn Abd al-Bar and ibn al-Jawzī.

is spent in the cause of Allah" (at-Tirmidhī 1963-1968: Ḥadīth 108).

"Allah, His angels and all those in Heavens and on Earth, even ants in their hills and fish in the water, call down blessings on those who instruct others in beneficial knowledge" (at-Tirmidhī 1963-1968: Ḥadīth 122).

"Acquire knowledge and impart it" (at-Tirmidhī 1963-1968: Ḥadīth 107).

"If anyone travels in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge. The inhabitants of Heaven and Earth, and even the fish in the deep waters, will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the prophets, and the prophets leave [no monetary inheritance], they leave only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion" (Abū Dāwūd 1973: Ḥadīth 1631).

7.4　"Dark Ages" versus "Golden Age"

Even though some of the Islamic Sunnah's validity has never been confirmed, the Messenger's words stimulated a keen sense of intellectual curiosity among the Children of the East. They led to an intense educational activity within Islam, up to its so-called "Golden Age". Confining the "right judgment" to the Byzantine world was no longer possible. Soon, the metropolis on the Bosporus stood in rivalry with the one along the Tigris, where Islam's political centre of gravity had shifted from Damascus to Baghdad. On 30 July 762, 150 years after Muḥammad's first sermon, Baghdad was inaugurated under *Madīnat-us-Salām* ("the city of peace"). Located 85 kilometres north of the Babylon of old, the capital of the newly inaugurated Abbasid era became the largest in the Middle East. Al-Manṣūr, the second caliph (754-775),[447] personally supervised the design of the core of Imperial Baghdad as an unprecedented masterpiece of elegance. The Tigris River penetrated the metropolis designed in the form of a circle about 2.615 metres in diameter, and four gates led into a constellation of notable amenities: parks, public palaces, mosques, but also schools, and libraries.

"Every new ruler builds a biggest, more luxurious, and more expensive palace than the former one. The visitor is dazzled by the omnipresent display of luxury and

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[447] Abū Jaʿfar ʿAbd Allah ibn Muḥammad al-Mansūr.

wealth" (Henri Bresc, Merces Trías Sánchez, Pierre Guichard & Robert Mantran 2001:249).

Around the year 800, Baghdad counted two million inhabitants.[448] It became "a fruitful meeting point of Hellenist philosophy and science, and Arab-Iranian and Indian cultures" (Clévenot 1999:5/ 235). The ruling family attracted scientists and poets and valued the most vital foreign elements. Thus, deriving from a mainly nomadic culture, the Arabs, who had not brought with them much literature, philosophy, or science, soon became the patrons of the more cultured peoples within their dominion.

As an eclectic link bridging the Greek and Semitic cultures, the Aramean and Assyrian worlds opened their treasures to their Arab cousins. Edessa[449] was the leading centre of Nestorian Christianity at that time. Less than fifty kilometres away is Harran, the birthplace of al-Battānī (c.858-929).[450] His breaking discovery was "the determination of the solar year as being 365 days, 5 hours, 46 minutes and 24 seconds – only differing by two minutes and twenty-two seconds from modern calculations".[451] All along the late eighth and ninth centuries, Harran was a hub for Assyrian translators. There, works on astronomy, medicine, natural sciences, and philosophy found their way from Greek to Syriac and soon into Arabic, thus boosting erudition. East of Harran, in Nisibis,[452] the Middle East's first theological, philosophical, and medical school opened its doors; and the countless monasteries of Mesopotamia and Syria became hives of scientific and philosophical studies. All served as starting points of an eclectic *bouquet* that radiated into the Muslim world and beyond.

In 751, at the Battle of Talas, two Chinese prisoners "were forced to reveal their secrets (to the Arabs) in exchange for freedom. The story may not be very accurate, but paper production began in Samarkand" shortly after Talas (James Ward 2015:66). Papery was soon produced in industrial quantities and huge libraries appeared. In their insatiable desire to retain the wisdom of the past, Arabs founded universities in Baghdad, Cairo, and Córdoba. The learning culture expanded under the patronage of caliphs who were more interested in *belles lettres* than politics.

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[448] According to Lombard (1971:137). Others, like Bresc, Sánchez, Guichard & Mantran (2001:255), estimate 500.000.

[449] Today Şanlıurfa in Turkey.

[450] Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad ibn Jābir ibn Sinān al-Raqqī al-Ḥarrānī aṣ-Ṣābiʾ al-Battānī; latinised as Albategnius, Albategni, or Albatenius

[451] Information taken from the Urfa City Museum in Şanlıurfa (Kent Müzesi).

[452] Today Nusaybin, in Turkey.

7.5   Caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd and his son Maʾmūn

An unparalleled intellectual prosperity marks the time of the Abbasid dynasty, during which unconventional thinking was of the highest order. Under its fifth caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd [14 September 786 – 24 March 809],[453] the centre of Islam was hailed as a time of open-mindedness. As a young man of 22 years, the new potentate became a promoter of art and science. Under him, the Arabs were admirably united to impress the nations at the Euphrates to the Guadalquivir. He developed a particular affinity with Emperor Charlemagne, since their hatred joined them against the Umayyad caliphate and Byzantium. Hārūn preferred to travel in person to Constantinople to sign a peace treaty with the Byzantines rather than warring against them. In the East, his alliances stretched beyond the Chinese Táng dynasty (Herbert Giles 1914:139).

Immediately after he became the seventh caliph,[454] Hārūn's second son al-Maʾmūn [27 September 813 – 7 August 833][455] founded the "House of Wisdom" (832). *Bayt al-Ḥikmah*, its Arabic name, was known as "the Grand Library of Baghdad." It was the first place worldwide where "ancient Greek manuscripts coming from Byzantium and other places were systematically translated into Arabic by Christian translators" (Helmut Müller 1994:123). There, scientists compiled all databases of the newly built hospitals, libraries, and observatories. Al-Maʾmūn is credited for the dispatch of emissaries to the Byzantine emperor Leo V [813–820][456] in a quest for more ancient documents. The caliph sent out a scholar named Abū Zayd Ḥunayn ibn ʾIsḥāq al-ʿIbādī to search for manuscripts and have them transferred to Baghdad for translation and further study. Abū Zayd, the man who was al-Maʾmūn's right hand, was a gifted man of letters and a Nestorian Christian. Being fluent in Arabic, Farsi, Greek, and Syriac, al-Maʾmūn coordinated a team of the best available translators of the time for the works of Aristotle and Plato in philosophy; Dioscorides, Hippocrates, and Galenius in medicine; Ptolemy in astronomy, and Archimedes in mathematics – not to forget Euclid with his *Elements of Geometry*. Within less than three-quarters of a century since the foundation of Baghdad, the scientific ferment went up with the possession of the leading Greek, Indian, and Persian pieces of literature.

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[453] Hārūn ar-Rašīd; in English, Aaron the Just.

[454] The sixth caliph having been Hārūn ar-Rašīd's elder son Muḥammad, generally called al-Amin.

[455] Abū Jaʿfar Abdullāh al-Maʾmūn ibn Hārūn ar-Rašīd.

[456] Leo the Armenian.

"All were soon published in Arabic and would only be known in the West four centuries later, thanks to the Muslim presence in Spain" (Clévenot 1999:5/236-237).

On the spiritual level, all believers enjoyed complete freedom to perform their spiritual duties. At the same time, they were welcomed into the caliph's court to hold religious debates with Muslim thinkers. Intellectual luminaries of disparate denominations had their say in the dialogues. In that regard, the help of non-Muslims able to translate Persian and Greek texts into Arabic was much appreciated.

"Themotheus (sic), the Nestorian patriarch, thus delivered a lecture on Christianity before Caliph al-Mahdī. Eager to compare Islam and Christianity, Caliph al-Ma'mūn invited theologians of both sides to his round table." (Abdel Fadeel 2006:101).[457]

A legacy from ancient Egypt flowing through Greece to Babylonia and Judea nurtured the Arab culture. In a few decades, easterners assimilated what had taken the world centuries to develop. The reading of Aristotle and Plato gave birth to *al-falsafa*, the origin of the English word "philosophy". Al-Kindī (c.801-873), the first Arabic *faylasuf*[458] ("philosopher"), is said to have written more than two hundred seventy volumes.

7.6   The contribution of Islamic scholars to the early modern period

Over time, the contributions of Islamic scholars like the Persian philosopher, physician, and scientist Ibn Sīnā (980-1037)[459] – known in the West as Avicenna – became the foundation of medical studies in Europe. This universal genius – author of more than two hundred fifty works – was proficient in areas as disparate as Astronomy, linguistics, music, and psychology. Avicenna's groundwork *Ash-Shifa* ("the remedy for the soul") remained an unchallenged authority for over 700 years. The work developed the four parts of science: logic, mathematics, metaphysics, and physics. In Europe, the philosopher and theologian Roger Bacon (1219/20-1292) studied Avicenna's thoughts carefully. They brought into the Catholic-dominated world one of his revolutionary ideas: Not faith, but rather mathematics should be the cornerstone of sciences and the point of reference for the validity of a hypothesis.

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[457] Abdel Fadeel adds that "not only Christians but also followers of other religions, such as the Zoroastrians, took part in these dialogues."

[458] Abū Yūsuf Yaʿqūb ibn ʾIsḥāq aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ al-Kindī.

[459] Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn Sīnā

The list should mention Ibn Chaldun (1332-1406). The Maghrebin historian enjoyed an excellent reputation in the West over several centuries, not to forget al-Khwārizmī (780-850).[460] He is the one who exposed the methods of Indian calculation and gave his name to the science of "algorithm." His decimal system and the introduction of the zero provoked the revolution of *al-jibra*, or "algebra".

In absorbing the main features of Hellenic and Persian heritages, the ninth century – often labelled the "al-Maʾmūn's century" – marks the end of a period in Islam claiming to be merely nomadic Arabic. *This* new area of Islam History played a decisive role in unifying Europe and the Near East. It was only a matter of time until Baghdad's cultural wealth would become an agent of change over the Occident.[461] But before the energy that had characterised the Abbasid era could become the "Enlightenment", the torch of science had to reach European's everyday life. Arabic writings were translated and scientific discoveries applied, and technical progress contributed to a positive image of the oriental world. Science did not stay confined to libraries for long. Soon, it revolutionised the quality of daily life in fields as diverse as architecture, art, astronomy, commerce, geography, law, literature, mathematics, medicine, music, natural sciences, painting, philosophy, and theology. This intellectual revolution first infiltrated eastern thinkers and flowed westwards and the rebirth of ancient Greek and Latin ideals, named in French the "Renaissance" (re-birth).

One of the best embodiments of such enrichment was the foundation of the Medical School of Salerno in Italy in the ninth century. It accumulated Arabic and Greek translations into Medieval, i.e., contemporary Latin of authorities like Galenius, Hippocrates, and many others. Open to both men and women, the *Scuola Medica Salernitana* had an unequalled prominence in southern Europe for several centuries. Spain admired the architectural gracefulness of the Alhambra in Granada with its world-famous gardens, mosques, and palaces.

Another element was the attraction created by oriental goods that came through the Silk Road. The affluent European class began to drink coffee (Arabic *qahwah*) with sugar (Arabic *sukar*), or to use the clepsydra, a water clock rediscovered by the engineer al-Jazarī (1136–1206). The highly legendary accounts of the Arabian Nights with

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[460] Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī.

[461] The transfer of scientific and technical innovations from the Abbasid caliphate to the West has been extensively analsed. See Matthew Falagas, Effie Zakadoulia & George Samonis 2006:1581-86; and History of Sciences in the Islamic World. [Online] https://web.archive.org/web/20001212015400/http://home.swipnet.se/islam/articles/HistoryofSciences.htm [retrieved 24 May 2020].

their fabulous tales of ʾalf layla wa-laylatun ("A Thousand and One Nights") captivated readers and listeners far beyond the native region of its writer.

7.7   The crusades: Religious duty or desperate way out of darkness?

If it is not our purpose to recount a comprehensive presentation of the crusades,[462] it would be unthinkable to deal with the medieval world without addressing them. Reviewed from a religious perspective, this shameful succession of pogroms, deportations, looting, and destruction is generally set in the ongoing war opposing Christianity and Islam. Indeed, in an exclusively Christian society, non-Christian religions were apprehended as a threat, and its warlike features were one more good excuse to discredit it by all means. That is what the crusades intended to do.

Everything started when the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos [1081-1118][463] realised that he was losing Asia Minor. In March 1095, he sent his ambassadors to Pope Urban II [1088-1099], appealing for help and reinforcements from the West to recover the lost region. He did not just receive a few battalions – which he had anticipated – but hundreds of thousands of men intent on war. This was the beginning of the First Crusade (1095-99). More was to come. The standard explanation for why so many joined the operation was the idea of a mission willed by God rather than that of waging war for war's own sake. Pilgrimages as an expression of mobility were typical of that time and as usual as the chronic roaming of the population. In that context, no wonder that sincere believers aspired to visit the sacred places. Jerusalem, being for devotees the holiest city of all, represented their *nec plus ultra*. Interestingly, the word "crusade" did not appear until the middle of the twelfth century. Before that, people spoke of "a journey to Jerusalem", "a road to the Holy Grave", or just of a "journey overseas."

Moreover, participating in a crusade was the ideal opportunity to atone for one's sins. Even criminals were invited to recruit. Jonathan Harris (2003:171) quotes the "notorious examples" of the Albigensian Crusade (1208) and the one preached in 1240 against the German emperor Frederick II. The pope offered (Sylvia Schein 2005:119) "full indulgence to those who took part and commutated the vows of whoever would take part in the war against Frederick instead of undertaking to go to the Holy Land.

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[462] Steven Runciman's *History of the Crusades* is the classic in this field. As my best choice, I recommend the books written by Henri Treece (1962) and Zoé Oldenbourg (1959).
[463] Latinised as Alexius I Comnenus.

The crusaders' journey to Jerusalem became a guarantee to their entry into the Heavenly Jerusalem". For the masses scared of divine punishment, the offer promoted by holy men must have provided a solid incentive for enlisting. Writing in the name of the church, Adhémar of Le Puy, the papal legate, claimed (Heinrich Hagenmeyer, ed., 1901:9/146-9), "those marching in it would receive a double compensation: life – that is, salvation – as well as the land of milk and honey".

Regarding the earthly part of the reward, "Many were attracted by a spirit of adventure, fantastic representations of the legendary Orient and its treasures and the wish to leave behind their difficult life" (Heussi 1960[12]:194). The taste for risk exerted an irresistible attraction. It gave a welcome perspective on life, due to the fact, for instance, that in Western Europe, only the first-born son could inherit the land,[464] so his siblings were often at a loss and did not know what to do with their lives.

> "Behind the walls of her castles, France was bored. A huge diversion opportunity was ahead, a riding party toward a mythical Orient full of ambushes, treasures, and dreams. Suddenly, the horizon got broader" (Clévenot 1999:5/ 278).

On the other hand, not every crusader was motivated by spiritual aspirations or an adventurous spirit. The primary occupation for most in the Middle Ages was a struggle to make a living within a society of small–scale commercial exchange. The typical labourer was busy with survival, barely producing three times the yield of what had been sown. To make matters even worse, the largest share of the meagre harvest had to be handed to the clergy and the landlords as rent payments. An ordinary crop failure could easily result in starvation. Most chroniclers of the eleventh century agree on the circumstances that prevailed in times of famine:[465]

> "People kill each other; many cut the throat of their people to survive by human meat, as wolves do" (Kaspar 2001:18).

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[464] Adam Smith (1976:312-313) describes the motives behind the law of primogeniture in Medieval Europe – which did not exist in the Roman Empire:

"[W]hen land was considered as the means, not of subsistence merely, but of power and protection, it was thought better that it should descend undivided to one. (…) The security of a landed estate, therefore, the protection which its owner could afford to those who dwelt on it, depended upon its greatness. To divide it was to ruin it, and to expose every part of it to be oppressed and swallowed up by the incursions of its neighbours. The law of primogeniture, therefore, came to take place, not immediately indeed, but in process of time, in the succession of landed estates, for the same reason that it has generally taken place in that of monarchies, though not always at their first institution."

[465] Particularly from 1099 to 1101, 1124 to 1126, 1145-47, 1150 to 1151, and later in Central Europe between 1195 and 1198.

In addition to the ceaseless toil, the average serf often suffered all kinds of excesses at the hands of his lords, to whom s/he was bound for life. Another consequence was the massive rural exodus to the cities throughout the twelfth century. It compelled masses of people to roam around. They were longing for some shreds of happiness regardless of where fate would bring them. Enormously impressed by the idea according to which the poor were elected to inherit the kingdom of God, the "paupers of God"[466] – as referred to by the chroniclers of the crusades – believed that the Apostle Peter would lead them to the land of milk and honey. That is how, during the campaigns, a unique ideology of poverty emerged. It portrayed the destitute as the true and accurate heroes of the Last Days drama (Schein 2005:150-51). One can deduce that this new identity granted those "poorly disciplined barbarians" (Philipps 2005:21) the permission to plunder in the name of God, like the Israelites in the time of Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land. Michel Clévenot (1999:5/78) reports that, even six months before the launching of the First Crusade,

> "Thousands of simple people began walking eastwards without equipment, money, or food. These crusaders were those who plundered, slaughtered Jews. Eventually the Hungarians killed them on the way, and the Turks did the same."

It is not without reason that the Middle Ages have sometimes been nicknamed the age of fleas. Garbage landed in the backyards of the "cottages" and on the muddy streets. Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb[467] became renowned for his diary (around 965),[468] in which he mentions (in André Miquel 1966:21, nº 5/1064) the dirt found along his travel in northwestern Europe:

> "You cannot imagine more dirty people – more dishonest and mean. They ignore everything about cleanliness. They wash only once a year – and with cold water. They never wash their clothes and wear them until they fall apart in rags."

Such statements help us imagine why "plagued at home by poverty, starvation, miseries, and vermin, those who joined the crusades had nothing to lose" (Margot Zappe 2001a: 54) and everything to win. Since death was part of the daily toil, killing belonged to the exigences of bare survival.

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[466] Latin, *pauperes*, or *plebs pauperum Die*.

[467] Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb al-Israilī at-Turtushī, a Jewish convert to Islam.

[468] Ibn Ya'qūb probably exaggerated on purpose to emphasize the disparity between the (well-cultured) Jews and Muslims. The comparison, however, must have matched the reality of that time.

Another calamity in this regard[469] is the appearance of «grandes compagnies» in the twelfth up to the fourteenth century. Coming from the poorest regions of France (Philippe Contamine 2013:398), or foreigners of all nationalities, the local elite hired those vagabonds in times of war. In quiet periods, the unemployed mercenaries joined in bands of adventurers and lived on plunder and ransom. Hence, sending them far away was unquestionably in the public interest.

> "When they find themselves without a task because rulers dismiss them, they spread through the countryside and indulge in pillage and a thousand atrocities. They become a real scourge against which the inhabitants must unite to fight" (Jacques Boussard 1946:193).

7.8   The clash of civilisations as an eye-opener

Despite military successes and whatever temporary satisfaction looting brought to the perpetrators, the first victims of the crusades were the crusaders themselves. Henri Treece (1962:179) wrote about the First Crusade:

> "Of a total of 300,000 crusaders who had started in such haste, only a third survived the first stage of the journey. Those who struggled on into Constantinople were like walking corpses, brutalized beyond all measure and no longer Christians of even the most primitive sort. Behind them a trail of bones reached back to the Rhineland and to France."

In addition to the human costs, it is commonly agreed that the expenditures for such expeditions were enormous (William Jordan 1998:307-318). Governments had to institute special taxation – "what college and university fundraisers would call 'dedicated money'" (Jordan 1998:308). At the same time, trade connections were launched. Several port cities along the Adriatic Sea became wealthy due to their readiness to convey the crusaders to their unfortunate destination. Many merchants who did not believe in the ultimate value of the crusades took full advantage of them. The construction of harbours such as Aigues-Mortes and the dredging of channels to the Mediterranean coasts produced benefits for the French economy. But on balance, the long-term outcome is hard to verify. In 1912, Percy Silburn (2019[7]:88) noticed:

> "Some seventy years ago, the Institute of France proposed a question, by which they invited discussion on all the advantages society had derived from the Crusa-

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[469] This phenomenon has been documented in Jacques Boussard (1946:106/189-224).

des; and if we may judge by the essays which obtained the prize in this learned contest, The Holy Wars brought more benefits for posterity in their train than they produced calamities for the generations contemporary with them."

William Jordan, though, concludes that (1998:318),

"That research, too, like so much else about the effects of the crusades on the society, economy and culture of Europe, remains to be done."

Although the crusades were a source of great pain in the East, it is necessary to develop one aspect seldom taken into account.[470] For the sake of our topic, I must call attention to the positive outcome of the clash between East and West in the time of the crusades. Its result was the import of oriental goods and socio-cultural values into the European mainland. Indeed, two contrasting worlds faced each other. On one side, the miserable conditions in which the average Middle Ages farmer lived, and on the other, the opulence of oriental societies that had not experienced any "dark" age for a very long time. Byzantium was enjoying her second height after Justinian's one.[471] In the twelfth century, in particular, Constantinople was one of the most prosperous cities of the Near East, whose elegance could only be compared to that of Baghdad (Joshuah Prawer 1972:141).

"The inhabitants took great pride in their city – they called it 'New Rome', or 'the Queen of Cities' – descriptions based on its powerful history and sustained by its continued splendour" (Philipps 2007:145).

"The town had gold, silver, diamonds and precious cloths of velvet and silk, pelts – everything one could desire on earth" (Rathjen 2001:130).

Given such inequality, one may wonder whether it was by coincidence that the crusades were launched at precisely the same time. Among others, Constantinople's handover into Ottoman hands (1451) was an act of retaliation. The crusaders had devastated the town two hundred-fifty years before them (1204). Humanity must remember that "In nine years of the (fourth) crusade, nine hundred years of Byzantine culture was destroyed" (Kühner 1964:93).

Most "barbarians", as we may label the invaders by the current use of the word, had little regard for the prized possessions they found on their way. Quoting the

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[470] The crusades indisputably remain a source of shame to Christianity and Western Europe. Therefore, if mentioning some possible "benefit" of these expeditions may sound inappropriate, may the reader forgive me for doing so.

[471] The Macedonian Dynasty, between 876 and 1081.

chronicler Geoffrey de Villehardouin (Anne van Arsdall & Helen Moody, eds. & transl. 2015), Henri Treece (1962:60) writes:

> "This was the third fire in Constantinople since our arrival, and more houses had been burned in the city than could be found in any of the greatest cities in France."

The passionate writer (1062:62) continues:

> "Perhaps the Orthodox Greek churches suffered the biggest loss, for the crusaders brought horses into them and loaded them with plate, vases, reading-desks and even doors. Careless of their beauty, the Frankish soldiers melted down priceless bronzes to use as coinage, and tore precious stones from chalices to sell by the handful to merchants in the taverns.
> (…)
> "It is probable that in this sack of 1204, the knowledgeable world lost more of its artistic treasures than at any other time (…). It is a moving thought that for many years after this grim April, shaggy-haired children in droughty Norman castles may have played with pretty toys, little knowing that these had once been holy relics; while russet-faced countrymen drank rough ale and cider from dented vessels that had once held Christ's holy blood."

Indeed, one remains speechless in front of such wanton destruction not only of human lives but also of masterpieces of art, most of them unique and priceless. Again, we should remember that the crusaders were generally uneducated. Having left their farms in anticipation of a better life, they had taken the blanket remission for their wrongdoings, an oath guaranteed by the church, as a pretext to act without scruples. Granted the miserable conditions of the crusaders away from home, the immediate benefit gained from the territorial conquests in the land of the "unbelievers" was the plunder of their properties. These hordes have been described (Harris 2003:54) as "a diverse, poorly equipped and apparently undisciplined army", and it is no wonder that, when they reached Constantinople (Summer 1096), they began to raid indiscriminately.

7.9   The crusaders' exposure to a new world

Apart from the massive shedding of blood, one of the unexpected results of those religiously motivated raids was the deepening of the fracture amid Eastern and Western Christianity, and between Muḥammad and Jesus Christ's followers. At this

point, the "clash of civilisations"[472] becomes relevant. The unfortunate collision that hit Orient and Occident confronted the latecomers with a world of unexpected technological and scientific achievements within the Byzantine Empire, and in particular among Jews and Muslims.

> "What contrast to the thousands of continuously sparkling water fountains, to the hamams, to the exact rules of hygiene, and to the daily ritual washings they saw in the Islamic and Jewish world!" (Clévenot 1999:5/271)

Having lived side-by-side with the Muslims, the returning crusaders had become fascinated by the oriental way of life and its luxuries. Many brought some artefacts and goods home as evidence for a better world. A positive effect of the crusades is that they made possible a fusion of cultures, which was certainly not Urban II's initial purpose. Those who came back home from the Holy Land brought descriptions of oriental habits and customs but also of beliefs. By doing so, they raised Europeans' level of attention about Muslims – no doubt exaggerating in one way or the other. But the accounts of eyewitnesses contrasted with the depictions of Islam prior to the crusades, which for the most part had been grossly distorted, if not wholly fictitious.[473] Thus, the stereotype could not hold the confrontation with another reality.

In conclusion, the benefits of the crusades were not merely of a material nature. The intercultural interaction soon weakened the conviction that the "enemies of faith" represented a potential threat. Contrary to common allegations, "infidels" rarely attacked pilgrims. In return, exposure to new ideas slowly opened the minds to an inner transformation of one's world perspective. First, by escaping landlords who were supposed to defend them but mistreated them in reality, the crusading mobs met Christians who were the opposite of what they had experienced as hardy workers. These Christian cousins preached "freedom in spiritual life, equality in juridical life and fraternity in economic life" (Roll 1979:62) in line with their knowledge of the Gospel. Since most "heretics" opposed every form of oppression and virulently condemned it, the crusaders discovered a new social structure. Soon, such an exposure would be "the

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[472] A concept first developed by the French writer Albert Camus (French « choc de civilisations ») in a debate on the "Algerian issue" on 1 July 1946. [Online] https://web.archive.org/web/20150924051854/ http://www.ina.fr/audio/PHD85011203# [retrieved on 7 October 2019].

[473] The most reliable account of the Muslim world outside of the annals of the crusades is probably the *Peregrinationes in terram sanctam* (Mainz 1486, digitalised, Latin) by the German politician Bernhard von Breydenbach (1440–1497), who travelled several times to the Holy Land. The author also worked on a new approach to the Qur'ān that I would call an *Entmythologisierung*, assuming that the holy book of Islam was a compilation of several writers.

beginning of a revolutionary movement against feudalism and the church" (Ekaterina Papazova 1971:48)[474] "a new system shaking consciences and upsetting the religious and political life of the medieval world" (Thomas Thomov 1973:1/80).

7.10   Saladin: The discovery of a different kind of Islam

Another agent adjusted the perspective of the crusader: their confrontation with an unexpected effect of Islam. During the First Crusade, for instance, Christians were surprised at how Muslims respected their holy places. All three Abrahamic religions recognised Jerusalem as the sacred city, and Muslims would always allow the "People of the Book" to come there as pilgrims. Later on, while the Third Crusade was raging, it is said: "Frankish barons were welcome guests among Muslims, with whom they used to talk about literature and religion" (Rudolf Hiestand 2003).[475] Moreover, "there is no evidence that Eastern Christians ever asked for help, especially not from Rome" (Clévenot 1999:5/277). If this is true, it implies that the Christian inhabitants, the crusaders, and the pilgrims to the Holy Land did not feel particularly aggressed by their Muslim fellow citizens. Second, the crusades were not a reaction to the Islamic presence around some of the Christian sacred places. Instead, they were the expression of another agenda. Consequently, restricting our comprehension of such religious wars to aggression against Islam would be far from rendering the whole picture. Let us remember that the truth is often more complicated than the narrative. The fact is that thousands of Europeans came to the eastern Mediterranean region, having in mind to settle down there as farmers, traders, clergypersons, and civil servants.

Another well-chronicled evidence is the close contact between western and eastern leaders. Its best illustration is the relationship King Richard Cœur de Lion[476] and Konrad von Montferrat had with al-'Adil (Hiestand 1993:73/58-70) and his brother Saladin. Let us briefly point up the disparity between the behaviour of the leading crusaders and this notorious Kurdish family from Tigrit.[477] Born in 1138, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb, better known under Saladin, had become sole sovereign over Egypt (1171).[478]

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[474] Ekaterina Papzova is among the numerous writers of the Communist time who praised the Bogomils as forerunners of Marxism-Leninism.

[475] Ein Zimmer mit Blick auf das Meer, einige wenig beachtete Aspekte der Pilgerreisen ins Heilige Land im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert, German). In Ciggaar, Davids & Teule, eds. (2003:157).

[476] Richard I, or Richard the Lionheart.

[477] In today's Iraq.

[478] Saladin's part in the Third Crusade is well documented in Volume I of *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi* (1864), William Stubbs de Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum, Rerum Brita-*

It is said of him that "he never broke his word once he gave it". The perfidy of the English monarch, who prided himself more on his "Lion hearted"–ness than on his rank as the leader of the Christian knights, went down for the record when he misused the confidence edge that Saladin had extended to him. Konrad's word could not bring himself to trust. He constantly broke off attempts of negotiations so that Saladin never came to terms with him. The result was that Saladin had to take the weapons. He defeated the armies of the Latin Kingdom (battle of Hattin on 4 July 1187). Most Christian knights and nobles, including the king, were either killed or captured. In the months after the battle, the defenceless cities surrendered one after another to Saladin. The fall of Jerusalem in October 1187 after a four weeks siege (20 September – 20 October 1187)[479] marks the end of the treacherous Third Crusade judged by historians as being a "disaster" (Andrew Jotischky).[480] Nevertheless,

> "In stark contrast to the earlier Crusader bloodbath, his occupiers [the citizens of Jerusalem] neither murdered nor looted. 'Christians everywhere will remember the kindness we have bestowed upon them', he [Saladin] said."[481]

The Latin occupiers had ousted the Greek patriarch and some of his bishops. Now, they could leave their exile in Constantinople and move back to Jerusalem. Therefore, Saladin's triumph over Jerusalem benefited mainly the Byzantine Greeks. In the same way,

> "Saladin permitted Jews and Muslims to return and settle in the city. Under the Ayyubid dynasty of Saladin, a period of huge investment began in the construction of houses, markets, public baths, and pilgrim hostels as well as the establishment of religious endowments" (Michael T. Dumper & Bruce Stanley eds., 2007:209).

Saladin's family administrated Jerusalem for nearly sixty years after the triumph of Hattin. His humane application of the notion of justice to both war and administration remained proverbial for centuries as a model for the Arab style of governance.

> "His [Saladin's] tolerance was exemplary. He allowed Christian pilgrims in Jerusalem after its fall. The great Jewish sage Maimonides was his physician" (Dumper & Stanley 2007:209).

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nicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, English translation (2001). *Richard of Holy Trinity, Itinerary of Richard I and others to the Holy Land*

[479] For a detailed presentation of these events, see Prawer (1969-1970:641-80).

[480] *Ethnographic Attitudes in the Crusaders States*. In Ciggaar, Davids & Teule, eds. (2009:17).

[481] *Time Magazine*, 31 December 1999, in a piece by David van Biema on Saladin as "the most influential person of the twelfth century".

Of this generous character, Leften Stavrianos writes (2008[4]:40):

"The sultan Saladin is generally regarded as being among the first men of his age for tolerance, chivalry, culture and military skill, but he was not alone among Saracens in possessing such virtues."

The Arab and Syriac sources, like the work of Abu Shama (1203-1267) and the biography of Saladin written by Bahā'ad-Dīn, (1145-1234) discuss Saladin's negotiations with the Byzantines over the fate of Constantine's city. The only bone of contention concerned the insistence that Friday prayer there should henceforth be said in a mosque in Constantinople (Abu Sama, Donald Richards, transl., 2001:121-122, 201-202). Obviously, this was by no means considered an insoluble issue.

Yet, despite Saladin's benevolence on many points, King Henry II of England (1133-1189)[482] insisted on extending the idea of the holy war to the fight against heresy, including Islam. Just after Jerusalem fell, Henry authored a treatise qualifying the desecration of sites at Jerusalem by Muslims as "a second crucifixion." He saw in Saladin "a manifestation of the Devil (and) the crusade a necessary step in the fight against evil" (Yves Congar 1958:56-60). This is probably why scenes like the entry of the crusaders into Jerusalem and the sack of Constantinople have left in the minds of Muslims – and Jews as well[483] – memories of indescribable atrocities. Nonetheless, the remarkable qualities of personalities such as that of Saladin gave Islam a good reputation within Europe.

"For one thing, Europeans, who had previously been far too arrogant and self-righteous to think they could learn anything from the infidels, did learn from their enemies – although how much the world of Islam influenced Europe and to what extent the new learning was due directly or indirectly to the Crusades is a matter of debate. The Crusades had essentially run their course when the Renaissance was just beginning. That Spain and other European countries appropriated knowledge and skills borrowed from the Moslem world is rather evident. As a result, life and learning in Medieval Europe would never again be quite the same. In addition, the contact with the world of Allah and His prophet brought Europe into a closer relationship with the Greeks and Greek classical heritage" (Estep 1992[8]:10).

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[482] Henry Curtmantle or Henri Plantagenet.
[483] "Of whom many were burnt alive in the synagogue" (Claude Cahen 1983:86).

To conclude my reflection on the crusades with the view to my main research question, even though the fusion of two separate realities happened at a terrible cost, it provoked radical transformations within Western civilisation.

7.11 Frederick II

Another spark that enlightened Europe was the broad-mindedness of the Holy Roman emperor Frederick II [1215-1250].[484] Immediately after the sudden death of Frederick's father Heinrich VI (1197), the German princes invited the eighteen-year-old to take on the mantle of the Holy Roman Empire, thus ending the fight for dominion. First, Frederick worked on the unification of his realm. He was aware of being the heir of the rugged Normans who took over Sicily in 1091 after it had been under Moslem domination for 130 years. In order to fulfil the dream of a global Roman Empire around the *Mare Nostrum*, he sealed the unification of Germany and southern Italy, although more through diplomacy than by military pressure. It appears that he had learned valuable lessons from the futility of the crusades. The result was that the geographic configuration of his realm was a thorn in the eyes of the Catholic rulers around him. The emperor's popularity posed a threat to his neighbours.

On the other hand, the one known as "the baptized Sultan of Sicily" (Oster 1972: 53) was a brilliant linguist[485] and an enthusiastic scientist. Frederick was versed in Aristotle's philosophy and the Arabic natural sciences. His contemporaries baptised him "Stupor Mundi".[486] His free spirit fostered a policy opposite to the inherited think-schemes. The emperor opened his court to Arabic persons of letters. Under his aegis, Sicily became a starting point for the transmission of science mainly initiated by the Abbasids in Baghdad. His court was wide open to Islamic architects and furnished with the luxury of Arabia, his palace became an unofficial academy. In 1224, Frederick inaugurated the University of Naples – the oldest public educational institution opened to everyone – that still carries his name: *Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II*.

Frederick II drew wise men to Palermo regardless of their mother tongue, origin, or religion. Among the cosmopolitan population, Arabic, Byzantine Greek, and Medieval Latin were in constant use as vernacular languages, and the learned

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[484] Also called Friedrich, Federico, Fridericus, or in English, "Frederick the Swabian."

[485] Frederick II is known to have spoken Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, French (langue d'oïl and langue d'oc), Middle High German, and Sicilian.

[486] "Stupefaction of the World."

members of his court knew to value the ancient sources of knowledge. Jews who immigrated to Sicily were invited to translate Greek and Arabic works. Albigense refugees (Brandon Thomas 1980:255) were as welcome as Saracen deserters.

One explanation for the emperor's attitude may have been his journey to Jerusalem. He, who had become "King of Jerusalem" from 1225, was amazed to meet Christians fluent in Arabic and masters in the human and natural sciences. No wonder Frederick originated an ongoing friendship with them. On 14 March 1229, on invitation by Sultan al-Kāmil, Frederick made a triumphal parade into Jerusalem. Without spilling a single drop of blood, he achieved what the papacy had not been able to do in two centuries. According to the Muslim chronicler ibn Waṣīl (1207-1298), when the emperor reached the Holy City, the Muslims decided to cancel the prayer call that night for their special guest's sake. Frederick insisted that the muezzin would sing, saying (in Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters & James Powell, eds., 2013:216), "You have done wrong, for my chief desire in spending the night in Jerusalem was to hear the muezzins and their praise to God". Long before Abraham Lincoln said, "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" Frederick made an agreement with the Muslims, guaranteeing twelve years of peace in return for the full access of the Christians to their holy places.

> "By using pacific means, he achieved more than all the wars since the First Crusade. However, the fanatic knights of the pope, who were obsessed with war, were not satisfied. In a letter addressed to Sultan al-Kamil,[487] they tried to denigrate the emperor. The sultan was outraged about such conspiracies and handed the letter to his friend Frederick" (Rathjen 2001:87).

Frederick is also known for having declined to confirm the privileges of the German clergy. It was the beginning of his tensions with Pope Gregory IX [1227-1241]. When sickness prevented the emperor from conducting a journey against Jerusalem, the pontiff pretended this illness was just an excuse for not complying with the divine decree. The conflict, however, was much more severe than a matter of sickness. That is what Gregory's letter sent to the archbishop of Canterbury reveals. In it, the pope castigated Frederick the Holy Roman Emperor as a "so-called emperor" and the "beast out of the sea" of Revelation 13:1-10 (in Matthew Paris 1852-54:1/214, cit. in Froom 1954:1/795). On top, Frederick was excommunicated. The answer came promptly but from an unexpected side. In 1241, at the Council of Regensberg, someone dared to

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[487] Al-Kāmil Naser ad-Dīn Abū al-Maʻāli Muḥammad (Saladin's brother; c.1177-1238).

insult Pope Gregory IX as "the Antichrist" for the first time in the annals of humanity. He was no less than the prince-archbishop of Salzburg Eberhard II of Regensberg [1196–1246], a strong supporter of Frederick.

> "These Babylonian priests wish to reign alone. They cannot bear to have equals. They will not rest until they have brought everything under their feet and sat down in God's temple. (…) The one who is servant of all wants to be the lord of the lords. (…) He pronounces words as if he was God. (…) He changes the laws, he proclaims his own laws, he falsifies, steals, cheats, kills, he, that man of perdition whom they call Antichrist, who in his extravagant boasting says, 'I am God, I cannot err'."[488]

Gregory's successor, Pope Celestine IV, sat on the throne of the Holy See for only sixteen days. The next pope, Innocent IV [1243-1254], excommunicated Eberhard II (1245) and ordered Frederick's deposition. It is said he even conspired how to kill him (Kühner 1964:45). No one knows what caused Eberhard's sudden death the year after (1246). He is the only archbishop not buried in the Salzburger Dom. One day, living 60 kilometres from Salzburg, I asked the priest in duty at the Dom to show me Eberhard's grave. He evasively said, his ashes had been scattered into the Salzach River.

But the more efforts the clergy made to stop the dynamic emperor, the more people understood how much the Catholic oppression was in opposition to the new horizons that they were discovering. This is how Frederick' open-mindedness paved the road to the open fight against mainstream Christianity. Notice this was when Joachim de Fiori began to denounce Islam as the fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies.[489] It explains why Eberhard's statement appeared all the more shocking – especially coming from a high-profile Catholic. Eberhard's thematising of apostasy within Christianity is an essential element for my research question because by taking up the subject, he – and he as an archbishop – laid the groundwork for one of the pillars of reformatory thinking, i.e., the qualification of the Roman Catholic Church as being "antichristian."

Referring to the pope, Frederick stated:

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[488] Speech to the Bavarian bishops in Regensburg, 1241. Reported by Joannes Aventinus 1580:5/484-485.

[489] See chapter ten.

"These fools [the Frank] take a man out of the manure without any kinship with the Messiah. (…) They make them their caliph, the vicar of the Messiah among them, while he deserves nothing of such dignity" (in Bird, Peters & Powell 2013:216).

Some German princes slowly began to follow Frederick's example by building their own high schools and giving great impetus to independent thought. It could partially elucidate why Germany became the focal point of the Reformation. The case of Sicily is a remarkable symbol of receptiveness among various cultures and religions for the benefit of all. Frederick's subjects enjoyed a period of high civilisation, similar to most places under Islamic control. In a time when scholarship was locked down, eclectic thinking made its way into the purview of Europeans.

7.12   Andalusia during Muslim governance

In the previous chapter, I presented the conquest of what soon became al-Andalus. At that stage, we must explore the "invaders"' contribution to Spain's cultural enrichment. The following quote compares the conditions in the Iberian Peninsula under Islamic sovereignty with those of the rest of Europe under the "Holy Roman Empire." Of particular interest is Samuel Scott's (1977:241)'s portrayal of the contrast between Europe and Muslim Spain at its peak:

> "Yet there was knowledge and learning everywhere, except in Catholic Europe. At a time when even kings could not read or write, a Moorish king had a private library of six hundred thousand books. At the time when ninety-nine percent of the Christian people were wholly illiterate, the Moorish city of Cordova had eight hundred public schools. (...) It was difficult to encounter even a Moorish peasant who could not read and write" (Scott 1904:1/144).

The openness demonstrated at the beginning of the Islamic era was renewed under the second Umayyad caliph of Córdoba, al-Ḥakam II [961-976]. No matter whether Arabs, Christians, or Jews, his subjects displayed such a high cultural level that Córdoba quickly became the "New Athens". Indeed, the metropolis was probably the most sophisticated in the Occident, maybe the richest. Al-Ḥakam was "a fine intellectual who gathered there over 400.000 volumes, acted as a sponsor to every thinker who would come to al-Andalus to help her quit her provincialism" (Guichard 2000:89). A impressive number of poets, lawyers, and scientists responded to the offer. Mikel de Epalza adds (1992:151),

"Foreigners were attracted to al-Andalus both by the permeability of its society and by its wealth, and Christians, among others, established themselves more or less easily in society there."

The renowned philologist Abū ʿAlī al-Qālī had already left Baghdad for Córdoba in 941. Later on, Ibn Ḥazm (994-1064),[490] one of the leading figures of Muslim scholarship, was born in the Andalusian city and became widely acknowledged as the initiator of comparative religious studies.

The fascination created by paper, silk, or precious wood also improved the quality of life, even in the most remote regions of al-Andalus. Think of the area of medical sciences under al-Zahrāwī (936-1013)[491] and the physician of al-Ḥakam. The latter left behind him a thirty tome encyclopaedia of medical practices, including amputations, eye surgery, and treatment of fractures. It was a matter of time until the tangible results of the Arabic world would surpass the exclusive circle of the aristocratic world.

Two hundred years later, in 1172, the beginning of the Berber Almohad caliphate marks the heyday of architecture, music, and philosophy in the Peninsula. One particular name remains associated with this time: Ibn Rushd 1128-1198).[492] Born in Córdoba in 1126, he was renowned for his juridical, medical, and philosophical erudition – and for his exceptional memory. Under the name of Averroes, Ibn Rushd became famous in Western universities like Oxford and Paris. When Caliph Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf [1163–1184][493] ordered to make Aristotle accessible to all, Ibn Rushd went to work without delay. It took him twenty years to produce a comprehensive commentary on the Greek philosopher's work. The disclosure of his translation created a mindset opposed to the Augustinian one – the only one accepted thus far.

Around 1202, the *liber abbaci* of the mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci introduced the Arabic numerals, symbolically opening a new era of respect toward Islamic scholarship.

"Ex oriente lux", light rises in the East. The saying applies to the shining of the Abbasid "Golden Age" upon the Holy Roman Empire. But all along its almost eight hundred years of more or less constant progress in the fields of science, literature, and culture, the Andalusian quality of life reached other parts of Europe, to the point

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[490] Abū Muḥammad ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥazim.
[491] Abū al-Qāsim Khalaf ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Zahrāwī, latinised as "Abulcasis."
[492] Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn ʾAḥmad ibn Rushd, latinised as "Averroes."
[493] Yusuf I.

where Miguel Barcelò (1997) titled his publication on the topic, "the sun was rising in the West".[494] The birth of modern science could not be stopped anymore.

The reaction was not long in coming: Very soon, the Council of Paris (1210) forbade the reading of Aristotle and censured Averroes.

7.13   Back into the darkness

Seemingly ignorant that Hispania had become a centre of enlightenment, the Christian kings exerted constant attempts at her "re-conquest".[495] King Ferdinand II of Aragon[496] married his second cousin Queen Isabella I of Castile. This incestuous union needed a special blessing from the Holy See, which was granted as "an attempt to pull the country together around its monarchy" (Paul Coles:129). The fact is that the couple made it their aim to complete Spain's Reconquista, an endeavour in which they eventually prevailed. On 2 January 1492, Muḥammad XII of Granada, the last ameer on the Iberian Peninsula, surrendered complete control of his emirate to these "most Catholic majesties", who immediately hoisted the banner with the Cross. Isabella remains in the hall of fame as one of the worst promoters of brutality. "Machiavelli himself commented on the 'pious cruelty' practiced in her kingdoms" (Giles Tremlett 2017:27), a remark that speaks volumes about the way her potential enemies were treated.

Granada's capitulation was hailed all over Western Christianity. The triumph offset the loss of Constantinople forty years earlier. The work of systematic destruction began very soon. The intention was to erase the Moorish legacy and, beyond it, every science. In 1499, Cardinal Gonzalo Jimenez de Cisneros, also called "inquisitor-general", assaulted the Madrasah of Granada. He emptied its library from all 80.000 opuscules.[497] The collection consisted not only of religious writings but of knowledge of general interest. The order of the cardinal was that every manuscript to be found should be destroyed in the bonfires in the public square of Granada – "an act inconceivable 200 years earlier" (Guichard 2000:236). The storming of the last bastion of Islam terminates the Muslim presence on the Iberian Peninsula, but also marks the

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[494] *El Sol que salió por Occidente. Estudios sobre el Estado omeya en al-Andalus.*

[495] The *Reconquista* designates the constant attempt to regain the territories occupied by the Muslims in today's Spain. It was launched around seven years after the landing of the Moorish ships there (the Battle of Covadonga).

[496] Also carrying the name Ferdinand V of Castile.

[497] "5,000 is the lowest figure the contemporary sources give – except those dealing with medicine" (Daniel Eisenberg 1992:107-124).

end of "a culturally speaking extremely fruitful soil on which Muslims, Jews, and Christians met together" (Müller 1994:135).

One argument to justify the attempts to eradicate intellectual life was that the population of Hispania allegedly privileged Arabic literature too much over Classical Latin sources. Richard Bulliet (1979:143-149) adds that the decline of Roman education versus the progress of Arabisation in the ninth century reflected the same curve in Europe as in Iraq and Egypt a hundred years earlier.

In religious matters, the king and his wife promulgated the Treaty of Granada in 1502 to abolish the freedom that Islamic sovereigns had guaranteed. Muslims were forced to leave the country or convert to Catholicism.

> "The great majority converted only in name. Though Muslims were highly productive and skilful they became troublesome because of their unwillingness to assimilate completely and soon were expelled from Spain. Some 275.000 Moors quit Spain, carrying their property, scientific knowledge, and arts with them to the detriment of Spain" (Bulliet 1979:149).

7.14   How quranic theology fostered the rediscovery of the Bible

In contrast with such brutal actions, the quest for learning prevailing in Islam indirectly motivated those Christians who had developed a creative spirit. Their search caused the Children of the East to play a crucial role in preserving the biblical corpus. Progress made in studying Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew masterpieces, characteristic of the Abbasid "Golden Age", stimulated Christian theologians to re-discover the divine precepts. As such, it was a preparation for formulating the *Sola Scriptura* principle so central to the Reformation. In addition, the riches of Greek philosophy and science laid hidden in various monasteries. Without Arabic patronage, most of them, including several biblical manuscripts, might have been lost to human heritage.

Christian travellers were amazed to get acquainted with easterners who had preserved copies of their religious writings. In return, Muslims interpreted the enthusiasm of Christian scholars to be a confirmation of the Articles of Faith, including the belief in *al-Kitāb*, as the Bible is named – a "book" sent down as "the word of God".

> an-Nisā' 4:136
> "O, you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book He has previously revealed. Whoever hides

something about Allah, His angels, His books, His Messengers, and the Last Day has truly lost (his way) and drifted far away."

Muslims generally claim that the biblical text has been corrupted and therefore is inaccurate. However, most early exegetes[498] of the Qur'ān upheld its validity, such as ar-Rāzi,[499] al-Bāqillānī,[500] and al-Ġazālī.[501] Emperor Constantine is the one mentioned by Muslim critics as having altered God's Word. Since the emperor lived more than 300 years *before* the compilation of the quranic text supporting the reliability of the biblical corpus, it is clear that the corruption claim cannot do not apply to him.

Consequently, the fundamental beliefs of Islam, including the former revelations, must have generated high respect for the biblical manuscripts. In practice, the Qur'ān has taken the place of *auctoritas normanda*, the normative authority, and the Bible is being downgraded to the status of *auctoritas normata*, the subordinate source of revelation. On the other hand, the invitation to "believe in the Books" next to believing in "Allah, His angels, His messengers, and the Last Day " implies that the biblical text must have kept its normative authority. The Qur'ān reiterates her role as "confirmer" of the Book,[502] whereas the Arabic word *muṣaddiqan*, "to confirm," is still in use by clerks to legalise (to notarise) a document. The term *muṣaddiqan* removes all possible doubt about the validity of the Judeo-Christian canon. On the contrary, the self-definition of the Qur'ān is to certify the Torah and the Gospel's validity.

> 'Āli 'Imrān 3:3-4
> "And He has revealed to you the Book with truth, confirming what was before it,
> "And He previously revealed the Torah and the Gospel as a Guidance for the mankind and the Criterion. Indeed, those who disbelieve in the Signs of Allah will suffer severe punishment, and Allah is All-Mighty, Lord of Retribution."

Let us notice the positioning of the Gospel as "a guidance to mankind" and, in the following āyah, its attributes "light" and "admonition to the God-conscious":

> al-Mā'idah 5:46
> "And We sent on their footsteps Jesus son of Mary, confirming what was in his hands from the Torah, and We gave him the Gospel, which is Guidance and Light, confirm-

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[498] The *mufassirūn*. For the complete quotations, see one of my books (Romain 2019[5]:58-59).

[499] Faḫr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn Zakarīyā.

[500] Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn aṭ-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī.

[501] Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī.

[502] Al-Baqarah 2:41,89,91,101; an-Nisā' 4:47; al-Mā'idah 5:48; al-An'ām 6:92; al-Fāṭr 35:31; al-Aḥqāf 46:12,30.

ing what was in his hands from the Torah, – a Guidance and an Admonition to the God-conscious."

The expression "God-conscious" refers to the Muslim world. In Sūrat-il-Aḥqāf 46:30, the companions of the Messenger mention a book "revealed after Moses", which is understood as the New Testament, "confirming and guiding to a straight path":

"They said, 'O our people! We have heard a book revealed after Moses, confirming what came before it: it guides to the truth and a straight path'."

The role attributed to the Qur'ān of a "certifier" presupposes a duty to "notarise" the former revelations. Words like "guidance, truth, and light" must have also contributed to the preservation of the biblical manuscripts.

al-Mā'idah 5:48a
"We revealed to you the Book Scripture in truth, confirming what was in his hands of the Book and a guardian over it."

While priests would keep them secret in the Middle Ages or even destroy them, the priceless manuscripts could be found in North Africa and the Middle East, where Muslims had prevented their destruction. Without such protective measures, one can only speculate on the number of codices Christianity would have lost. Speaking about the closure of the Academy of Athens and the obliteration of all ist collection in the time of Justinian, Sigve Tonstad (2000:9) remarks that such a destruction

"represents an incalculable loss to civilization. What remains of this heritage was chiefly preserved by the more inquisitive and tolerant Muslim rulers."

The oldest part of the Arabic Bible discovered so far[503] dates from the eighth century, and the oldest complete Arabic canon has been dated around 860.[504]

7.15   How Arabic enriched Bible exegesis

Another source of enrichment began to flow when linguists re-discovered the semantic proximity of Arabic to Hebrew. Arabic and Aramaic speakers were able to build semantic parallels with the text of the Tanakh. That, in return, allowed the beginning of more profound grammatical studies based on etymological analyses of the three languages

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[503] In the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. It is a part of Psalm 77.

[504] It was found in the nineteenth century at Saint Catherine's Monastery ("Mt. Sinai Arabic Codex 151"). Information taken from Geoffrey Bromiley (2012²:982).

Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Among these researchers were several Jewish scholars working on rediscovering the Old Testament's deepness. The *Grammar*[505] and the *Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*[506] by Rabbi David Kimhi (1160–1235) boosted the subsequent study of Jewish literature among Christians. The two works are witnesses of the genius of a writer who knew how to juggle amidst related languages (Frank Talmage, in Michael Berenbaum & Fred Skolnik, eds., 2007[2]:12/155-156). The work of analogical research resulted in a recovery of an almost dead language in its strength that gave a solid impetus to *Ivrit* scholarship. I can assert that, without the unfolding of many ancient texts of the Bible, the preservation of manuscripts and their translations, and without the exegetical principles applied by the Arab world, the *Sola Scriptura* principle of the Protestant Reformation would not have reached the impact it had.

Let us close our reflection with the contrast between Christian and Islamic sovereignty for Jewish thinkers. While the Jews mainly suffered persecution under the former, the latter protected them and encouraged them to study Islamic thought. It created a prolific Muslim-Jewish fusion that has led the contemporary thinkers Shelomo Dov Goitein (1974[2]) and Mark R. Cohen (1994) to speak of a "Jewish-Arab symbiosis", at least in arts and humanities.

7.16 Summary

When the apostate church constantly obliterated the message of Jesus Christ, the Abbasid dynasty took up the Muslim quest for wisdom as a sacred duty and expanded its horizon to unknown dimensions. In return, by exporting science and technology, Islam brought a significant enrichment beyond its outermost edge. The synergy happened by invitation, or in the case of the crusades, generated a collateral benefit beside a huge human tragedy.

In the Iberian Peninsula, al-Ḥakam's invitation addressed to the rich and learned from every nation motivated innovative thinkers of various guilds to join the al-Andalus spring. Even though no one can pretend that there were no occasional tensions, the harmony in which adepts of the three monotheistic religions lived there was the catalyser leading Spain to the climax of its history.

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[505] „*Michlol.*"

[506] „*Sefer Hashorashim.*"

Such intellectual cross-fertilisation – as it happened under Caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd and Emperor Friedrich II – brought a golden age to their realm. Those who refused to do so or tried to undo progress – for instance, King Ferdinand II and his wife – are recorded as mere footnotes of an infamous nature.

Attempts to stop the spreading of enlightenment proved to be temporary, while no human power could hold up the transmission of knowledge indefinitely. On the contrary, the new ideas and the preservation of biblical truths coupled with an innovative approach to the Semitic languages greatly enriched the Renaissance and, ultimately, triggered the breakout of the German Reformation.

That will be the next chapter's concern.

CHAPTER EIGHT

When rescue comes from Above

8.1   Introduction

The relations of Western Christianity with Islam until the sixteenth century have been exposed in the previous chapter. They furnish the background enabling us to evaluate better the frame within which the Reformation took place. As I have demonstrated, the Islamic world enriched the West wherever it interfered with it, bringing to it an intellectual opening that paved the way to the Renaissance and the Reformation.

Unlike the chapters dealing with the subject proper, this section is not intended to be heavily documented. It only aims to draw a general picture of the pre-Reformation. Due to the abundance of existing literature on the topic, my presentation will be as concise as possible. However, before I introduce Martin Luther and the Reformation, I need to review some facts of a more general nature.

8.2   The cultural Silk Road and the widening of the European horizon

We remember that "Apostolic" Christians had kept the flame burning throughout the Dark Ages by lifting the biblical message. Europe had been hushed into a new dimension. During the High Middle Ages, scholars almost entirely focused on studying Greek and Arabic compendiums of natural science and mathematics. Those were preserved thanks to Muslim patrons of new intellectual pursuits. Anyone who lived at the end of the fifteenth century could have claimed – with similar justification as today – that s/he lived in the most exciting time ever. Was s/he not witnessing innovative in the fields of science and art like the world had never seen before? While ground breaking discoveries opened up entirely new perspectives on life, had not a new way of thinking brought the world out of centuries of ignorance, superstition, and religious domination? Was not the acceptance of logical reasoning the guarantor of an age of openness?

Some lovers of knowledge had set the goal of rediscovering the writings of the Greeks. In doing so, the ancient world reopened itself to the inquiring mind. An immediate consequence of these studies was that man, in his individuality, became the focus of interest. At the same time, the Bible gradually lost its pre-eminence as the ultimate source of divine revelation. Moreover, by switching attention from a strictly

theocentric model of thinking to an anthropocentric approach, the humanists hoped to reach the ultimate truth by studying ancient wisdom. Under Cosimo de Medici, the Platonic Academy of Florence was founded, and soon, the study of Arabic writers became an integral part of the curriculum. Many of the shining lights in the scholarly circles helped to forge the intellectual weapons of the early modern period. Weighing the need for scrutiny before reaching any conclusions, they laid the foundation of upcoming discoveries. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that the connections with the East helped the numerous academic rarities work their way into Sicily and Spain. The general move forward was similar to what we call today a "globalisation" process.

Another explanation for the wind of change is the rapid urbanisation in the late Middle Ages. Until the middle of the fifteenth century, there was only one concept of jurisdiction in the West. All actors agreed on the necessity of a concerted governance, leaving only one preoccupation open: Who should have the last word, The temporal sword or the spiritual one? Over the centuries, every encounter revolved around that question. However, towns became wealthy and their citizens grew more independent. At the most important trading places on the coasts and on trade routes along the rivers, thousands enjoyed the imperial freedom of the Hanseatic cities without being beholden to any local player. They could practically do whatever they wished. The growth of these cities counterbalanced the power of the feudal lords and contributed much to their ultimate downfall. Since bishops were often related to the ruling houses, the circle of politico-religious control was broken.

The dominance of the papacy and its misuse, which had held sway over kings for almost one thousand years, came into increasing crossfire. Its misconduct triggered strong reactions at popular levels, which would undermine its foundations in due time. By the end of the fifteenth century, Europe witnessed the rise of national entities such as England, France, and Spain. Even though many remained Catholic, the regents would not allow themselves to be dictated by the pontiff. Instead, they chartered their course to the extent of their peculiar needs and interests. Therefore, in order to survive in the storm-tossed political sea, the church had to steer her ship in accordance with Machiavellian principles.

There is no doubt that the widening of Europe's horizons happened thanks to first-hand exposure to Islam. It started with the returning crusaders who had gained another vision of the East. They were convoyed by brave men who launched a process remembered as the Great Discoveries. Indeed, not only Muslims wanted to extend their sphere.

Christians were also looking for a way to reach markets further afar. Yet, we can imagine the frustration of the Europeans who, whichever way they turned, were blocked by Islam: North Africa and Egypt, the Southeast, the Holy Land, and even Spain – each one under the control of Muḥammad's heirs. Constantinople was in the hands of the Ottomans. In the Russian Taiga, the remnants of the Golden Horde had also become Muslims. Church bells rang there to remind people to pray that God would save them from the Black Death and the Turks. Islam weighed on whole Old Continent like a heavy cloak.

Then, in 1271, Niccolò Polo took his seventeen-year-old son Marco (1254-1324). With Marco's uncle Maffeo, the trio set off for the fabled lands of Hind and Cathay at the other end of the "Silk Road". The Polos were probably the first Europeans to see the Far East with their own eyes. Others set out on the uncharted seas to open new routes, like Christopher Columbus, who inaugurated the gateway to the Americas. Vasco da Gama showed how to circumvent the Muslim-controlled lands that posed a barrier hemming in the territories of Western Christianity. Therefore, discovering an open way eastward would be a great relief. This geopolitical aspect should help us admit that Islam acted as a restrictive factor that provided the drive to become an agent for territorial extension beyond the then-known world.

We shall see later (in chapter ten) that the fear of Islam occupied a broader place in the thinking of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than commonly assumed. No wonder it also filled the minds of the reformers. During her medieval period, Europe only received second-hand representations of the world beyond her confines. Then, Marco Polo returned to Venice and reported his first-hand impressions (1294). He was first mocked for it. But soon, the West was under the spell of the exotic fragrance of coffee and the elegance of silk. In addition, the Greek legacy penetrated the Old Continent step by step as one of the greatest transmissions of ideas. The result was the dawning of the Modern Age.

The new era was marked by outstanding personalities like the universal genius of Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci i (1452-1519) and Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni Michelangelo (1475-1564) – to name two of the greatest artists of all times. It gives an idea of how the emancipation from the control of the church made itself felt significantly in the artistic world.

In France, King François I [1515-1547] [507] is remembered as the patron of the arts. We owe him the progress accomplished during the French Renaissance. François invited several Italian artists to his château in Chambord and brought masterpieces like the *Mona Lisa* in his suitcase. Furthermore, the French king was an enthusiastic *homme de lettres*, passionately looking for rare manuscripts. Refusing to count Classical Latin as the unique language of education, he opened the *Collège des trois langues*, the School of the Three Languages. There, the students could study Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew, and later, Arabic.

However, The cultural tapestry left reaches far beyond the French *châteaux* and the *palazzi* of the Italian Renaissance, both of which bear witness to the opulent impress of the tales of Thousand and One Nights. We admire the rich colours of the artworks and ornate furnishings bearing the hallmarks of the oriental dream south of the Alps; but it becomes evident that the prestige goes beyond exotic nostalgia. It is far richer than what passes for oriental culture in the gastronomy and landscape of German cities today. Europe, in this instance, Germany, has a historic debt toward modern-day Turkey, whose ancestors graciously protected those Christians such as the great champions of Protestantism.

In that case, Turkey's legacy becomes more important to Germany than just a popular tourist destination and the millions of *Gastarbeitern*[508] who substantially contributed in rebuilding Central Europe after World War II. Let us ascertain if that is so.

8.3   John Wycliffe and Jan Hus

Starting with the Paulicians in the apostolic times, an uninterrupted line of steadfast disciples of Jesus had built a luminescent garland[509] shining in a winter night.[510] The spiritual heirs of the first Christians were eager to preserve the apostolic message in its purity. Consequently, their creed stood on common denominators:

- Redemption by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ,
- The insistence on Christ's priestly ministry and the denial of other mediators,

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[507] François Premier, English Francis.

[508] Immigrants who settled in Germany since the beginning of the Sixties.

[509] The Paulicians, Wulfila, Cyril and Methodius, the Bogomils, the Albigenses and the Waldenses.

[510] The purpose of this section is only to draw a general picture of the pre-Reformation. It is not as heavily documented as the chapters which deal with the subject proper.

- The claim of the universal priesthood of Christians and the refusal of any ecclesiastical structure,
- The validity of the Ten Commandments, including the observance of the Saturday Sabbath,
- The separation of church and state,
- The exclusion of human opinions as the source of divine authority,
- A sanctified lifestyle according to biblical principles.

To round out the picture, I need to add the leading actors of pre-Protestantism:[511] John Wycliff and Jan Hus. John Wycliffe's (c.1328-1384) genius is to have popularised the belief in the reliability of the Bible corpus. As such, he became the advocate of the reformatory principle of *Sola Scriptura*.[512] "The Scriptures alone are the *norma fidei*; the church doctrine is only the *norma doctrinae*" (Schaff 1997[5]:3/par. 118). Wycliffe set the Brits on fire with the translation of the entire Bible into their vernacular language and was praised as "the morning star of the Reformation" set.[513] The Goth bishop Wulfila had translated the Bible in the fourth century, and Cyril and Methodius in the ninth. Later, just before Wycliffe, the Holy Book was translated into Old French and Czech (c.1360). Then, an edition was published in the Hungarian language (mid-fifteenth century) and in Catalan (1478). These masterpieces were eye-openers that incited European thinkers to challenge mainstream theology. At the same time, they allowed more people to decide for themselves what the Bible really teaches. Wycliffe's translation into Middle English deserves special mention for his claim that the sacred text could interpret itself by itself. With this prerogative, the Oxford seminary professor implicitly reprobated the authority of all documents emanating from human maxims. One day, he began to attack Pope Gregory XI [1370-1378] openly on this and other issues, although his intention was *not* to exercise destructive criticism but to uphold biblical truths:

> "Like after-reformers, Wycliffe did not, at the opening of his work, foresee whither it would lead him. He did not set himself deliberately in opposition to Rome. But devotion to truth could not but bring him in conflict with falsehood. The more clearly

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[511] Or proto-Protestants.

[512] Whereas I have mentioned in chapter four the ongoing presence of the *Sola Scriptura* principle among the early church fathers, taken over by the "Apostolic" Christians.

[513] I should also mention Mesrop Mashtots' translation into Armenian in the fifth century, using the Armenian alphabet he developed. The first Coptic, Ethiopic, Georgian and Syriac translations were published around the same period.

he discerned the errors of the papacy, the more earnestly he presented the teaching of the Bible" (White 2012:81).

Fortunately for Wycliffe, the sudden death of Pope Gregory XI led to a conflict involving two pretenders to the Papal See. In Rome, Urban VI claimed infallibility. Clement VII, the "antipope", did the same in Avignon. The two expected obedience and excited their supporters against the others, a strategy executed by a combination of anathemas aiming at their rivals. Both kept on uttering empty words of rewards in Heaven for the loyal believers, i.e., for their supporters. This period known as the "Western Schism" continued after the pope's and the first antipope's deaths (1389). Again, two rival popes were enthroned: Boniface IX and Benedict XIII. No need to say that such occurrences weakened the Vatican's reputation. At the same time, they granted John Wycliffe respite and freedom of action.

Indeed, the English defender of the biblical cause died in peace at 64, shielded from all aggression. Not one of his opponents had been able to stop him. His adepts received the derogatory nickname of Lollards ("mutterers"). Challenging many rules of the established church, the pre-reformatory wind of changes crossed the Channel and found acceptance in Germany and other parts of Europe. Eventually, their ideas refined the theology of another agent of change to come, Jan Hus[514] (1372-1415).

Hus was a devoted Catholic priest who became dean of the department of philosophy of the Pražská Univerzita at 26. He was soon promoted to the position of rector. In his lessons, Hus defended Wycliffe's ideas more or less publicly. In the year 1406, two Bohemian students carried a statement bearing the seal of the University of Oxford. Hus disclosed the content to his fellow students. The text was "eulogising" Wycliffe (Wilhelm Joseph 1910:7/44), and Hus seized the opportunity of having an official document in his hands, blaming the Church of England. He knew he could apply it to his country by denouncing the immorality of its clergy. He spoke out against indulgences and other misuses of religion. By acting so, he paved the way for the German Reformation. Yet, unlike his master Wycliffe, the Bohemian theologian was arrested and imprisoned. His trial ended up with his condemnation. He was burned at the stake in Constance (6 July 1415). Later, Hus' ashes were scattered into the Rhine River; but instead of destroying Hus' memory, his martyrdom unleashed a wave of anger. His fellow-citizens responded to his execution by turning away from papal

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[514] Or John Hus, sometimes John Huss.

doctrines, first dissociating themselves in secret, and, with time, more and more openly. The result was that Rome's loss of notoriety incited her to pronounce a war against the dissidents (March 1420). Again, such a move proved to be counter-productive. Less than one century later, ninety percent of Bohemians and Moravians were Hussites, and Hus' popularity reached Austria, Croatia, Hungary, and Poland.

8.4 Humanism

Some have defined the new spirit as an artistic and scientific revolution. The weightiest achievement of the Renaissance, however, was the revival of the ideas of Greek and Roman philosophers. It allowed political thinkers like Niccolò Machiavelli[515] (1469-1527) and Thomas More[516] (1478-1535) to question given forms of leadership. We may not necessarily ratify every idea of such unconventional figureheads. Still, there is no doubt that the revolutionary perspective – to be known as "Humanism" – boosted the self-awareness of the progressive elite. Not only did he reshape the intellectual landscape, but he also widened the door to allow an open critique against the outsized (and despotic) pressure of the religious hierarchy to be discussed in the public square. That explains why the pre-reformers did not have to struggle much to awaken the consciousness of those who had already experienced a broad resentment against ecclesiastical governance by the end of the fourteenth century.

The rebuke levied against the worldliness of the Vatican became louder and louder, even among Catholics. The name that stands out is Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), an Italian Dominican friar who became notorious for his call for Christian revival. He vehemently denounced despotism and the exploitation of the poor. More than that, he accused the pope of libertinism and nepotism. This has been described by Hans Küng (2002:99) as "the pronounced tendency toward intricate family intrigues in the Renaissance era". The Tübinger Catholic theologian adds:

> "The College of Cardinal was increasingly occupied by the largest Italian families
> of the Piccolomini, Colonna, and Borgia so the institution 'church' lost more and
> more of its independence."

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[515] Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli.

[516] Sir Thomas More. He is venerated in Catholicism as "Saint Thomas More" because he supported the pope's supremacy over that of King Henry VIII of England when the conflict between both reached its apogee.

Pope Alexander VI [1492-1503] is considered to be one of the most controversial of all pontiffs, partly because he recognised fathering several children by his mistresses and banned Savonarola from speaking in public. Behind the curtains, the entire continent was gossiping about the scandals at the Borgese court. Savonarola was the first to break the taboo by speaking out. As to be expected, he was excommunicated. The Florentines arrested him, convicted him of heresy, and burned him at the stake.

In Germany, a dominant trigger was the debate around Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522). Respected as the founder of Hebrew linguistics, the Tübinger professor of the law came into conflict with the Inquisition after his public disapproval of the destruction of Jewish pieces of literature by the Catholics. Reuchlin published a satirical pamphlet about the "simple-minded, hypocritical and immoral monks and priests" (Müller 1994:89). Such humanistic statements against the clergy added another piece facilitating the success of the Reformation.

In this regard, the time has come to introduce Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam[517] (1466-1536). A personal friend of Thomas Moore, the Dutch Catholic priest is remembered as "the crowning glory of the Christian humanists" (Kenneth Latourette 1953:661). Erasmus was one of those rebels who called attention to the excesses within the state church. But more than a plea for reform, his decisive enhancement was theological. Enjoying the nickname "Prince of the Humanists", the prolific thinker was eager to improve Jerome's Vulgate, the standard version of the Bible in Colloquial Latin (published 382-420). This desire brought him to study Greek in order to read the Bible in its original language. For years, he worked on harmonising the manuscripts. The result of his search was the publication of the most reliable version of the Greek New Testament to date, the *Textus Receptus* ("the received text"). Its edition (1516) was to play a decisive role in the course of the Reformation.

8.5 The printing press as the trigger of the Reformation

Islam's "Golden Age" had blown a new wind on European thinking. The early modern period, with its humanistic and language studies, paved the way for a new interest in the Holy Writ. In parallel, the predominant church had reached such an egregious

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[517] Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, also known as Erasmus of Rotterdam.

degree of corruption that "she herself had prepared the soil on which the seed of Reformation would soon germinate" (Zappe 2001b:131).

Yet, even though the times were ripe for the theological earthquake that would cause the schism from the Roman Church had come to the point of no return, the breaking event was still a few years away. While the acknowledgment of rationalism was vouching for an age of open-mindedness, humankind needed something to emerge from centuries of ignorance, superstition, and religious domination. The question was, how could the wind of change blow over large segments of a mostly illiterate European population?

Unexpectedly, a technical revolution capable of reaping the harvest sown in the previous century made the wide circulation of new ideas possible. It was the invention of the printing press, which almost overnight answered our question. Over six long years (1450-1456), Johannes Gutenberg (1398-1468) dedicated his full attention to the invention of the letterpress. What the world was like without his creativeness is hard to imagine. Although many works got published before Gutenberg, all were hand-produced in a scriptorium. Each copy was unique in its fine points and its flaws. The illegibility of most manuscripts and their price made reading a luxury that only an elite with leisure and traditional education could afford.

> "The art of printing being still unknown, it was only by slow and wearisome labor that copies of the Bible could be multiplied. So great was the interest to obtain the book, that many willingly engaged in the work of transcribing it, but it was with difficulty that the copyists could supply the demand. Some of the wealthier purchasers desired the whole Bible. Others bought only a portion. In many cases, several families united to purchase a copy" (White 2012:88).

The invention of the movable type began to reverse the situation. It inaugurated a new era. Myron Gilmore (in Elizabeth Eisenstein 1979:20) puts it as follows:

> "The invention and development of printing with movable type brought about the most radical transformation in the conditions of intellectual life in the history of western civilization. It opened new horizons in education and in the communication of ideas. Its effects were sooner or later felt in every department of human activity."

Gutenberg's vision was to make the Word of God accessible to the commoner. his achievements culminated in the edition of the 42-line *Biblia Sacra*[518] that bears his name. It was appraised as one of "the most beautiful books ever printed".[519]

> "Gutenberg was obsessed by his goal to print the Bible. He took out a loan, worked day and night. The task was harder than he thought. But he finally succeeded" (Zappe 2001b:62).

The high standards he achieved have been praised abundantly. In addition to its quality, the printed page fundamentally transformed almost every aspect of people's lives. It was the end of what Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979:28) calls the "scribal culture" and the beginning of the "book culture". Similar to the telephone a hundred years ago or the Internet more recently, it revolutionised communication. It made the quick transmission of information possible and significantly encouraged literacy. This, in turn, boosted the demand. Introduced in Italy in 1465, it is said that, by 1480, one hundred printers were operating in Germany alone. Seventy-three Italian towns had printing presses by the year 1500 (Arthur Tilley 1911-1936:8/775-776).[520]

> "From 1517 onward, religious books and pamphlets flooded Germany and much of Europe (…) By 1530, over 10.000 publications are on record, with a printing of ten million copies" (Arthur and Rosalind Eedle 2016:252).

Such enthusiasm galvanised writers to be more prolific, making their thoughts available on a larger scale. The proliferation of print shops in the major cities enabled the revival of learning to endure. It also disseminated new ideas in ways never thought possible before. The Gutenberg Bible was the key to exposing Catholic theology as having little to do with original Christianity. Thanks to his invention, another pillar of the reformatory, *Sola Scriptura*, could soon be planted deep into the ground. The principle of "The Scripture only" elevates the Book of books to the sole authority in spiritual matters. It reiterates another principle promoted by all forerunners of the Reformation: God's Word is to be interpreted by itself. It does not need the core of the church fathers, theologians, conciliar decisions, or oral requirements such as the Magisterium and the *ex-cathedra* instructions of papal authority.

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[518] The Mazarin Bible was already completed by 1456 in Mainz, Germany.
[519] See Martin Davies' book *The Gutenberg Bible* (1966).
[520] "The Renaissance in Europe", in John B. Bury, ed. (1911-1936).

8.6   Huldrych Zwingli and Jean Calvin

The revolution launched by Guttenberg brought the Reformation process to its next level. Trained in Erasmus' footsteps, the young Swiss priest Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) was called the "Third Man of the Reformation". He entered the stage by vehemently opposing the veneration of the saint and placing the authority of the inspired text as the cornerstone of theology above other sources. On 1 January 1519, shortly after being assigned to minister in Zurich, the young pastor began his first sermon by reading Chapter 1 of the Gospel according to Matthew. He went on Sunday after Sunday, going verse by verse and adding his exegetical remarks. By leading his parishioners on a journey through the whole New Testament and parts of the Old, he created *de facto* the custom of basing a homily on the Scriptures alone and interpreting it without referring to external sources.

Another prominent figure is Jean Calvin[521] (1509-1564). Trained as a humanist, the French broke with the state church around 1530 and became the second great reformer after Luther. His theology, later called Calvinism, was nothing but the continuation of the re-discovery process of what had been hidden by the official religion but secretly kept by "heretics" in the Middle Ages.

I could mention several other names, but now, it is time to focus on Martin Luther, the Augustinian monk whose sharp insights and straightforwardness made the progress of the German Reformation possible.

8.7   Martin Luther's *Turmerlebnis*

Born on 10 November 1483 in Eisleben, the elder of seven children, Martin Luther (1483-1546) received a rigorous education in the Latin school of Mansfeld, then in Magdeburg and Eisenach. The student compared his time in these three schools with "Purgatory and Hell" (Martin Marty 2004:2–3). In 1501, his ambitious father, a miner whose life status had improved, could afford his son's university studies. Luther later described the educational institution in Erfurt as "a beer house and whorehouse" (Marty 2004:4). But there, the young prodigy quickly learned Greek and Hebrew and read the predominant Latin authors.

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[521] Jehan Cauvin.

In 1505, Luther started to study law. Yet, after only two months, the brillant twenty-two years old student abruptly gave up his career to enter the monastery of the Augustine eremites as a fervent Catholic monk. He was in search of peace for his mind. The earnestness of his inner struggle brought him to the threefold vow of absolute obedience to God, to the Virgin Mary, and the rules of the order. However, this did not set him free from his fears. The monk fasted, underwent the regular six hours of prayers and confessions, and escaped into fanatical excesses so far he could.

Brother Luther's written words reflect the agony of his soul. His concern was not primarily whether his penitence was sufficient to escape hell or not. He sensed that even if his superior had the authority to forgive his guilt in the name of God, the punishment for them would still be carried out in the form of sickness, hunger, or other hardships in this life. The verdict could also be executed in purgatory. There he would have to stand the torments of fire for an undetermined period. He trembled at the idea that he would still need to spend time there. Fortunately, God had granted a way to lessen the punishment – the only possible way out – by paying money as a spiritual bail to the church. Like most fervent Catholics, he did not seem to realise that the enormous amounts collected in the form of indulgences were utilised to fund the clergy's extravagant lifestyle.

Aware of his insufficiency and steadily longing for the *gnädigen Gott*, the "compassionate God", the monk's battle with his fear of facing God's justice on Judgment Day vanished suddenly. Then, Luther discovered the epistles of the Apostle Paul and stumbled upon the following declarations:

Romans 1:17
"The just shall live by faith."

Other discoveries blew his mind:

Romans 5:1
"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 3:23-24
[23] "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,
[24] Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus."

Galatians 2:16

"A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that the faith in Christ might justify us, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Ephesians 2:8-9

[8] "You are saved by grace and through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift from God,

[9] Not by works, lest any man should boast."

The message struck him like lightning in the darkness. Its discovery was related to as the "*Turmerlebnis*" (the Tower Experience), which was the Evangelical *raison d'être* (1515). At last, the anguish vanished and gave birth to two other pillars of the Reformation apart from *Sola Scriptura*: *Sola gratia*, "by grace alone", and *Sola fide*, "by faith alone". Luther understood the premise of his acceptance by God: the message of His mercy and readiness to forgive. Sin is so heinous that it creates a separation between man and God. Nothing that man can offer would ever be sufficient to heal the breach. God's grace alone could restore the Father-son relationship between God and man. A god of benevolence is also a god of impartial justice. But in Christ's substitutional sacrifice, God took the initiative to grant the sinner "redemption", the term used for the ransom from slavery or debt.[522] The outcome is our justification, which is the ability to subsist before God today, at the Judgement day, and forever in Paradise.

Because grace is an unmerited gesture, justification must be received by faith, defined as trust in God's goodwill, without adding any good deed. It excludes the merit offered by a person as a necessary sacrifice. Because God's love is unconditional, no one can buy divine mercy – neither with money nor human good-will. In short, salvation is an unmerited and unearned gift. It is the product of God's compassion for a fallen race.

The three *Solas*: *Sola Scriptura* (reading the Scripture without Church Traditions), *Sola fide* (salvation by faith without works of penitence), and *Sola gratia* (grace without merits gained by indulgences, pilgrimages, and the weight of relics) are the distinctive elements of the reformatory credo. Later, *Solus Christus* was added; Christ the sole mediator – in opposition to the needs for priests and sacraments. Last, *Soli*

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[522] The concept of redemption is not typically Christian, as found in other religions like quranic Islam. See one of my books (Romain 2010:44-50).

Deo gloria was directed against the veneration of Mary, whereas there is no standard list of *Solas* formulated *verbatim* by the reformers.[523]

8.8   The Ninety-five Theses

Luther immediately understood the futility of artificial devices to escape from damnation. At that point, the apostolic message was in diametrical opposition to the remission of sins in purgatory, something that, in line with Catholic theology, was still required despite receiving the absolution. Rome had started the sale of indulgences in 1190, and the trading of temporal punishment for cash, even on behalf of a deceased loved one, had led to the blossoming of professional "pardoners" going around and committing numerous cases of abuse. The most notorious figure is the enterprising Dominican Johannes Tetzel. In 1517, he came to Magdeburg – not far from Wittenberg – where Luther had become a newly minted university professor for moral theology. Tetzel's act was to sell letters with the authority to grant pardon for any break of vows and even adultery. Luther was still a fervent Catholic. But he grew weary of watching believers coming to Tetzel and others, bargaining for remission for wrongdoings, albeit without manifesting the slightest remorse. Such proceeding troubled him deeply.

Like Frederick III[524] (1463-1525), the elector of Saxony took the renegade under his auspices, many were concerned about the far-reaching dynamism of the professional pardoners. Yet, Bruder Martin limited himself to questioning the theological dimension of the sale of indulgences, notwithstanding their practical implications.

The 1st of November is All Saints' Day. On that day in 1517, the clergy had scheduled a relics display. It should take place in the central church in Wittenberg named All Saints Church after this religious holiday.[525] That became the trigger that constrained Luther to publish a list of points under the name *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences* known as The Ninety-five Theses.[526] Luther's theological presentation on the evening of the last day of October 1517 was an invitation and a

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[523] "Jacob Corzine notes that there is often a hidden agenda when someone favors one list of solas over another". Some add *Solo verbo*, *Solus Deus*, *Solus Christus*, and even *Sola experientia* (Mattes 2013. [Online] https://web.archive.org/web/20130531081519/http://logia.org/blogia/?p=464 [retrieved 27 December 2021].

[524] German Friedrich der Weise ("Frederick the Wise").

[525] Commonly called die Schlosskirche, the Wittenberg Castle Church.

[526] As recorded in the narrative, Martin Luther nailed the Ninety-five Theses on the doors of the Schlosskirche. But this is very unlikely. In fact, Luther (still) obeyed the church's rules in all aspects. Nor were the theses put up on the notice board of the university. Such a break would have cost Luther his position, which did not happen.

challenge for a public debate that ultimately launched the German Reformation. Very soon, Martin Luther's Ninety-five Theses bore fruit – first in the form of a declaration of war against indulgences, so Thesis Number 66:

"The treasures of the indulgences are the nets used to catch the wealth of the men."

In his thesis, Luther presented the notion of repentance as an ongoing process involving the entire life and not, as the Vulgate commends with the term *paenitentiam agere*, the accomplishment of specific acts of penance. Instead, the Greek *metanoeó* refers to a radical life transformation.

While the confrontation with Catholic theologians did not happen to the extent Luther expected, the invention of the printing press inflamed the spread of his thoughts far and wide. He quickly grasped it, telling his students that (cit. in Bainton 1995: 295) the art of printing is "God's latest and best work to spread the true religion throughout the world". His eloquent rhetoric denounced the pope's authority, church institutionalism, the vow of celibacy, the cult of relics, the saints, and the sacraments. Yet, we should bear in mind that the rebellious monk did not intend to introduce a new religious entity. Instead, his wish was to trigger a process to reform the church by refocusing its theology on the original message of the Bible.

All Catholic believers had painted various scenarios in their minds of the way they would suffer in purgatory. Fear had burnt a substantial amount of their emotional energy. To avoid eternal damnation, Catholics, in their religious zeal and fears, had built cathedrals, given their children to the service of the church, accepted every form of exploitation without the slightest hesitation, and bought indulgences in even larger quantities than they could afford. Many people revolted inwardly against the practice of indulgences that was conducted in an all too shameless way. After all, finances always have a strange appeal, and as long as good works were imposed as a requirement for justification, denying the sacredness of money donated for this purpose was out of the question.

That situation gives us an idea of what a relief the sermons and writings of the Augustinian monk brought. For the earnest believers searching for inner peace, the message of *Solus Christus*, *Sola gratia*, and *Sola fide* was more than good news. It was a new definition of God's mercy on behalf of man and a revolutionary perspective of man's wickedness versus His grace. It was a weapon powerful enough to end the degrading practice of indulgences supposed to bring relief. Jesus Christ had taken upon

himself the judgment human beings deserve and gave them peace instead, and hungering souls feasted upon the grace of a merciful Saviour. No wonder the re-discovery of the biblical concept of justification spread like a bushfire. Within a few weeks, the Reformation could denounce deviations such as indulgences because it argued from a scriptural point of view. Luther's name was in every mouth. Students, intellectuals, clerics, and the commoner thronged to Wittenberg to hear the one heralding the news of a God of love who paid the price for our transgressions.

Luther's popularity began to attain unexpected proportions. The overwhelming echo rang out the Electorate of Saxony and its surrounding region. Luther's writings circulated within all German lands and hit England, France, and Italy in less than two years. Some prints sold out within a few days. People quickly understood that the Church had promoted precepts and conducts incompatible with the biblical *Weltbild*.

8.9   The reaction of the established church

Luther's message created consternation among the clergy, the pope, the emperor, and the princes. It was only a matter of time before it would come to a clash opposing Luther and the promoters of indulgences. The exposure of paying money to get to Heaven as an abusive trick immediately affected the income of the Vatican. Incidentally, indulgences were closely linked to the funding of the crusades. In that regard, they helped fight against the Turks. A testimony to this is found nine years before the Schlosskirche event. The German nations and the Free Cities had addressed ten demands to the Roman See. Number 9 concerned the tithe, which the church required under the pretext of fighting the Turks "while not a single campaign had been undertaken at all" ("Gravamina Germanicae Nationis", in LSS vol. 15, cols. 452-454). The papal legate Thomas de Vio retorted with a speech in which he reassured the Germans that the pontiff did not intend to carry the German treasury to Italy. Instead, he said, it was in the German interest to support a war against the Turks. Cardinal Cajetan appealed to donate generously, so the pope could equip one hundred galleys for an offensive against Constantinople ("Des Raynaldus Auszug aus einer von dem Cardinal – Legaten Thomas de Vio gehaltenen Rede, darin er die Deutschen um Geld zum Türkenzug angeht", in LSS vol. 15, cols. 473-476). It conveys an idea of the financial repercussions Luther's message would have if generally accepted.

The princes responded by arguing that the Roman court should first add up the money already spent in war taxes, although it did conduct anything against the Turks.

That brought the Germans to refuse to make the tax for the Turkish war a permanent institution (LSS vol. 15, cols. 476-482).[527] Here is where I could identify the first direct evidence of a link bridging the Reformation and the Turks. Karl Hagenbach (1878:59/ 62) observed:

> "It was the pretext of the Turkish war that Rome proclaimed those indulgences, the resistance of which begins the history of the German Reformation."[528]

> In the preceding line (1/28), Hagenbach wrote:

> "Thus, the Turkish war is curiously woven into the history of the Reformation."

Beyond the massive financial loss, the foundations of the Roman structure got a blow. On the other hand, the readiness to think and act in conformity with one's conscience was a radical transition not easy to implement. For more than one thousand years, the *una sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia* was the spiritual and political home of the Holy Roman Empire. Day after day, her members had to believe as dictated; they had to behave as imposed, knowing that any deviation would inevitably throw them into the unquenchable flames of Hell. Nevertheless, inasmuch as the vivid imagination of hellfire vanished, "The Catholic Church lost her monopoly on the minds and hearts of the Occidental Christians" (Michael Schaper 2017:3).

Soon, Rome and her representatives decided to take up arms. She first menaced the former monk of *anáthema*, and increased little by little the pressure on him and his growing number of supporters. The shock wave covered the continent on which thousand years of an unprecedented concentration of dominance had been accumulated. Now, freedom of thought replaced blind obedience to the ecclesiastical authority. Two distinct camps quickly arose. On the one hand, the champions of religious liberty, and on the other, the supporters of inherited beliefs and established customs. The more key personalities joined the ranks of the former, the more the church's notoriety waned.

The spark was already igniting the landscape, and the fire progressed so quickly that the war against "heretics" incited Maximilian I, King of the Romans, to intervene. Also known as the king of the Germans and Holy Roman emperor (1459-1519) Maximilian turned to the kings for a unified crusade against Luther and his admirers. By then, they were stamped "enemies of the faith" (Fischer-Galați 1959:9). In October 1518, the

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[527] Antworten, welche die Fürsten des Deutschen Reiches dem Kardinal Cajetan zu Augsburg im Jahr 1518 erteilt haben.

[528] [Online] https://archive.org/details/historyofreforma01hage [retrieved May 2019].

rebellious theologian was summoned by Cajetan to appear in Augsburg. There, he was constrained to withdraw – something he would not consider an option. Every adverse reaction broadened the gap dissociating the former monk from the clerical authority.

Pope Leo X (1513-1521) responded slowly and carefully; but his deterrence efforts only achieved that the Augustinian professor hardened his anticlerical theology.

In 1516, the Spanish king Ferdinand, so famous for his ongoing attempts to eradicate Muslim and Jewish presence, died. His grandson Charles was proclaimed regent over Castile and Aragon, which included the Kingdoms of Naples, Sardinia, and Sicily beside the Castilian realm. At the age of six, Charles V[529] [1519–1556] had become heir to one of Europe's leading dynasties: the House of Valois Burgundy in the Franche-Comté. Charles extended his realm with the annexation of the provinces of Flanders up to West Friesland.[530] Charles was sixteen years old when he inherited the crowns of Hispania. In 1519, Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg – Charles' grandfather – passed away, leaving the key over a vast part of Central Europe vacant. Charles defeated the other candidates and was elected to the Imperial throne. On 28 June, he added to his realm the domination over an empire that covered Austria, the Flanders, Spain, and, by extension, the New World of the Americas.

Becoming emperor brought with it the inheritance of all the wealth of the crown of Castile. It included the riches recently plundered on the other shores of the Atlantic by *conquistadores* like Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro. As the successor of the Middle Ages emperors, the nineteen-year-old Charles had to assume the mantle of guarantor of the Catholic faith and, therefore, to do everything in his power to halt the Reformation.

On the other shores of the Mediterranean, Sultan Selim had just based his fleet along the coasts of Algeria and Morocco. Doing so, he was in the position to attack Europe at any moment, either through his sea forces or via Hungary by his land armies. At the same time, Charles held the western and the eastern bastion of Christianity alike against the Turks. The financial stake behind the papal crown is not recorded. It is said that Pope Leo X had never belonged to a priestly order. He was a member of the bankers' family of the Medici. The power-hungry pope had paid an enormous sum to occupy the Papal See – eight times more than what Charles had

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[529] Also named Carlos I of Spain.

[530] The united "Low Countries" became today's Netherlands.

spent in bribes to be crowned *Kaiser*.[531] Whatever the exact amount may have been, the fact that he had to spend so much to obtain spiritual and secular competence expresses how much was vested for Leo X and Charles V, financially and in terms of prestige as well. At least, it makes understandable how great the incentive was to cooperate in order to safeguard mutual interests.

The Holy Roman emperor's clear stand against Luther encouraged the pope to take action. In the papal bull *Exsurge Domine*,[532] the pontiff threatened Luther with excommunication after sixty days should he fail to recant his written and spoken words. For every fervent Catholic, this equated to a one-way ticket to Hell and its unquenchable flames; but not for the courageous theologian. This is why, to manifest his contempt for this threat, he demonstratively set fire to the papal bull in the same year (10 December 1520).

8.10   Luther's view on the Antichrist

Luther was strong enough to resist the Catholic pressure. One explanation lays in his definition of the Antichrist. The Wittenberger theologian knew very well from the New Testament that Jesus foretold the appearance of "false messiahs" as a sign of the end-time.

> Matthew 24:4-5,11,24
>
> [4] "Watch out that no one deceives you.
>
> [5] For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.
>
> [11] Then, many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.
>
> [24] For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."

> Luke 21:8
>
> [8] "Watch out not to be deceived. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the one,' and, 'The time has drawn near.' Therefore, do not go after them."

The Apostle Paul had warned against a wrong gospel rising out of Christianity. He predicted the coming of "the man of sin" – or, in a more accurate translation of *ho ánthrōpos tēs anomías*, "the man of lawlessness."

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[531] "4.5 million ducats – the equivalent of 15 tons of pure gold" (Frank Otto 2017:25).

[532] 'Arise, O Lord!', 15 June 1520. A less-known fact is that the bull also attacked Luther on his position on the Turkish question. I will deepen this topic in chapter ten.

2 Thessalonians 2:1,3-4:

[1] "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

[3] Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition.

John, the disciple of Jesus who penned the Revelation, is the one who used the word *antíchristos*.

1 John 2:18

[18] "It is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour."

Like many precursors of the Reformation,[533] Luther had no thought of separating himself from the established church; but he viewed the fulfilment of all the qualification for the Antichrist in the papal system. Himself an hellenist, he knew that the Greek *ho antíchristos* designates "the one who places himself *instead* of Christ" and not, as one would suppose, "the one who is *against* him".[534] The view of the Roman Catholic Church as a counterfeit of true Christianity gave Luther a metaphysical legitimacy for his mission.

8.11   The Diet of Worms

As an outcome, Luther was excommunicated (3 January 1521). Shortly after, he was summoned to appear before the Imperial Diet of Worms. The formal assembly had been meeting regularly for twenty-five years to reform the administrative entities of the Holy Roman Empire (the Imperial Circles Estates) that were on their way to disintegration. This time, chaired by Charles in person, the meeting became "the culmination of an ongoing struggle between Martin Luther and the Catholic Church" (Estep 1992[2]: 131). Clothed with his black cowl, Luther standing in front of the Reichstag gathered in the Heylshofpark of the Free Imperial City of Worms, became one of the most eloquent symbols of the sixteenth century.

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[533] This will be developed in chapter ten.

[534] The prefix *antì* is commonly translated as "against". Yet, the Greek *antì* was used in ancient times – and still in Modern Greek – for "instead of". For instance, the *antistráthegos* (sub-commander) is the "representative" of the *hypostráthegos*, the higher commander. Several Indo-European languages employ the same prefix for "against" and for "instead of". See English "counterchange" as an exchange, "counterpart" as a duplicate instead of the original part; French *contre-valeur*, German *Gegenwert*.

Charles, himself a teenager, carried the heavy burden of getting the Holy Roman Empire out of the state of chaos since 1510. No need to say that the Lutheran revolt was aggravating the tension. Moreover, Charles had heard that nine-tenths of the German people were on Luther's side. Indeed, the news of Luther's coming had attracted more of his supporters than the citizens of the Imperial Free City and his enemies put together. The emperor, who overruled half of Europe and a large part of Latin America, was unfamiliar with Germanic culture. He spoke little of the language and depended on his translators. Worms was his first proving ground in front of the most illustrious group of potentates of the time. Charles feared religious unrest and was keen on remaining on good terms with the church. He probably sensed that any sign of weakness in favour of Luther's position would bring the staunch Catholic parts of his empire, such as Spain and Sicily, to a revolt against him. On the contrary, playing the defender of the Catholic Faith would secure his authority in his realm and beyond.

Hoping to hear that the one who had challenged long-cherished thinking would disavow his conviction, the emperor asked him whether the writings on a table were his works. Luther was granted some time to answer if he was willing to recant part of them. The next day, Luther appeared again but refused to take anything back of what he had written. He could and would only abjure his faith "on the foundation of the Holy Scriptures and logical reasons" (Müller 1994:91). Even though the exact wording is not sure,[535] Luther's reply to the Diet leaves no doubt about his categorical standpoint:

> "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything since it is neither right nor safe to go against my conscience. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. May God help me! Amen."

The Diet of Worms was finalised in an edict by the same name that declared the renegade monk an obstinate heretic. It banned all publications and distribution of his writings. The decision was pronounced to outlaw Martin Luther, and went even far beyond that. It ordered the criminalisation of anyone having Luther's writings in his possession and the reward of his open rebukers (in Dennis Bratcher, ed., 2021)[536]:

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[535] One of Luther's most quoted sentences is probably, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me! Amen!". However, there is no written statement on it.

[536] [Online] http://www.crivoice.org/creededictworms.html [retrieved 12 September 2020].

"Against each and every one of the books and writings under the name of the said Luther already published or to be published, and also against those who henceforth will print, buy, or sell those books and writings. (...) For the crime of *lèse majesté* and for very serious offense and indignation against the prince. (…) Confiscation and loss of body and belongings and all goods, fixed and movable, half of which will go to the Lord, and the other half to the accusers and denouncers. With other punishments as given more fully in the present edict and mandate."

8.12   The creative pause on the Wartburg

Charles V feared too much for his kingdom's safety to give Luther any chance. He ended the Diet with the wish that he (Luther) be apprehended and punished. This is precisely what the papacy wanted, provided the decision taken in Worms was going to be enforced, i.e., Luther's end and its dissuasive effect on potential adherents. From then on, Luther was *vogelfrei*, an outlaw who could be murdered on sight anytime. Yet, every attempt was blocked by the opposition of the nobles belonging to the *Reichsstände*. As imperial estates, they had a say over the Germanic part of the Holy Roman Empire and enjoyed remarkable privileges. That allowed most of them to stand fearlessly for what they judged the best: to support Bruder Martin's ideas.

While Luther was riding out of Worms on his way home, his coach was intercepted by masked horsemen in a forest near Wittenberg. The strangers escorted him to the Wartburg Castle, where the outlawed found refuge (May 1521 to March 1522). This audacious plot was executed under the auspices of Frederick the Wise, the elector of Saxony, who stood behind Martin Luther. He schemed to let the rebel come to Wartburg to enjoy peace and security. There, Luther's first accomplishment was the complete translation of the New Testament, which took him only ten weeks to achieve. Luther had sufficient time to work on his publication of the Book of books in German.

"Before Luther's *September Bibel* of 1522, fourteen versions of the Bible in High German and four in Low German had appeared. Luther's New Testament was an immediate success. It was soon amplified by the Froschauer Edition printed in Zurich (in 1529). Shortly after Luther and Melanchthon completed their translation of the Old Testament and began a revision of Luther's New Testament. In Zurich alone, ninety editions came off the presses before the close of the sixteenth century. Simultaneously, paperback versions of the New Testament, sermons, and tracts in the language of the people poured forth in a steady stream from well-known and little-known presses from Wittenberg to Geneva and from Antwerp to

Nikolsburg, Moravia. Never before had printer's ink spread ideas with such contagious enthusiasm or with such signal success" (Estep 1992[2]:96).

Even though the publication cost one and a half gulden – equivalent to one year's salary of an apprentice (Martyn Lyons 2011:69) –, all 3.000 copies of the first printed New Testament were sold within eleven weeks. Martin Luther's famous principle, "*Man muss dem Volke aufs Maul schauen, wie es redet, und danach dolmetschen*" (You have to watch people's mouths to see how they speak; and afterward, you have to interpret for them) formed part of the success. Indeed, his poetic style unified the Germanic dialects and still shapes German literature today. That is how Martin Luther's ideas were scattered like leaves in autumn. Millions of copies of Luther's writings came into circulation, and reversing that trend became more difficult. Consequently, the terms of Worms had to be softened. It happened in 1526 when the First Imperial Diet of Speyer temporarily suspended Worms' outcome. The moratorium of Speyer to tolerate Lutheranism counts as the first tangible political success of the German Reformation. Lutherans seized the decision on their behalf as a basis for consolidating their religious and political status.

8.13 Summary

In addition to the widening of the horizon due to the discovery of new continents and the printing press revolution, Islamic philosophers like Avicenna oriented the old continent into the humanistic perspective. Now, the spirit of suspicion against the ecclesiastical sovereignty could be openly expressed. This is where the intellectual shift from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age owes a lot to the indirect imprint of Islam. As we may wonder why a non-Christian religion was a crucial factor in preparing the ground for the Reformation, the fact is that its propagation acted like garden work at the end of a dark winter. It waited for some warm sunbeams to make blooming happen.

But what sort of *direct* repercussions were there, if any? To answer this question, let us turn our attention to the other side of the divide: the Ottoman Empire. The next chapter will overview the Ottoman emergence beginning with a tribal displacement and rising to a hegemon spanning three continents. I hope to discern some indicators of the Ottoman help to the cause of the Reformation. In contrast, another chapter will be dedicated to this central part of my main research question.

CHAPTER NINE

The Ottoman rise and its outcome for Christianity

9.1 Introduction

The overview of the pre-Reformation and the Reformation drawn in the previous chapter leads to the question: Was the Ottoman rise a possible help in the course of the reformatory process? If so, did the quranic contrast between two groups of Christians shape the Ottoman attitude in favour of Lutheranism? Or was it a combination of circumstances? The Edict of Worms would have sealed Luther's fate if another turn had not occurred less than two months after its promulgation. While the Holy Roman Emperor held the mandate to arrest Martin Luther, Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent stood at the crossroads of the Pannonian Plain[537] and the Balkan Peninsula. The siege of the capital of the Serbian Empire had started, and with it, the cornerstone of the protection of Western Christianity fell. History wrote 25 July 1521. With that step done, nothing seemed to stand in the way of the Turks on their march inside Europe.

During these turbulent months, Charles V and Pope Leo X had to fight on two separate fronts simultaneously. The two shared the same concern: to choose either to crush the Reformation forever or to defeat the Ottoman invaders. Leo launched a crusade against the Turks, but died on the 1st of December of the same year. His death was so unexpected that the last sacraments could not even be administered. More importantly, replacing him proved to be a difficult demand. In addition, the continuous moves and countermoves of the Turkish army made it impossible for Charles to intensify his endeavour to exterminate the Lutherans.

This chapter introduces the Ottoman Empire from its beginnings to the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent in the light of the āyāt expressing a deep sympathy for those Christians exposed in chapter four. Here is a brief repetition of the most relevant ones:

'Āli ʿImrān 3:113-114

[113] "They are not [all] alike: Among the People of the Book, there is a community that stands for the right [or: a righteous community]. They rehearse the verses of Allah during the hours of the night in an attitude of adoration.

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[537] Latin name of the province located today in the plains around the Drava and the Sava river, parts of today's Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia.

[114] They believe in Allah and the Last Day, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and hasten in good works. They are among the righteous."

al-Mā'idah 5:82
"You will truly find the enemies of the believers among the Jews and the Adoptionists; and you will find the nearest in love to the believers among those who say, 'We are Christians!'. Indeed, among these are men devoted to learning, who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant."

I demonstrated in chapter five that the Arab threat prevented the Catholic-dominated empires from expanding. At the same time, the Muslim elite took the promoters of the apostolic faith under its protection, be it direct or indirect. The question is, would the same phenomenon be reiterated by the Ottomans as Oster (1972:43) proposes?

"One of the military exploits of the Mongolian (sic) Moslems in cooperation with and under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Moslems was the containment of apostasy within Europe."

My purpose is to determine to which extent the Ottomans applied such statements in their relationships with "Apostolic" Christians. That is a decisive step in my quest to answer my main research question. But making a distinction implies the understanding of the uniqueness of each, i.e., an interest in them. Did something appeal to the Muslims, and if so, what was it? Was it that, perhaps, they regarded non-compliant Christians as potential allies against Catholic regents? Was it the admiration for their lifestyle, moral values, or maybe some theological common ground? What about endorsing reformatory principles? Answers to these questions will help us establish a possible basis for the Ottoman contacts with "Apostolic" Christianity, leading to its support of the Lutheran cause.

9.2   The role of Turkic refugees as consolidators of ruling powers

At that stage, an overview of the Ottoman emergence in Rumelia – as the Ottomans called Europe and Anatolia ("the land occupied by the Romans") – will help those unfamiliar with the Ottoman chronicles. In contrast, my focus will be on the elements that made possible its remarkable progress. The first wave of what would become "one of the largest and most powerful empires the world had ever seen" (Kia 2008:1) started

in the eighth century[538] in Outer Mongolia. There, a confederation of nomadic Göktür-kic[539] tribes succeeded in seeking their independence from the Chinese Táng dynasty (679) and laid the foundation for the Second Turkic[540] Khaganate. The nomads slowly gained ground over the steppes along the Great Wall and stretched so far south as Samarkand in today's Uzbekistan (705). In the run for expansion, the Göktürks clash-ed with the Umayyad caliphate in a series of battles (712 and 713), seriously endan-gering the Arab control over Transoxiana.[541] The Abbasid fighters emerged as winners (Battle of Talas in July 751), and this motivated many Turks to embrace Islam.

Being now fellow believers, the Turkic tribes who had swept over Central Asia became allies to the caliphs in Baghdad. They reached *anatolēs* (Greek for "east"), still known as Anatolia. Here at the eastern border of Byzantium, the immigrants settled down, and their geographic location made them the ideal partners of the Arabs in coveting the Asian part of Byzantium.

During the process that lasted almost one century, the "Golden Age" degenerat-ed into dissensions opposing al-Amin[542] and al-Maʾmūn after the death of their father Hārūn ar-Rašīd in 809, which resulted in internal warfare. The conflict ended with al-Ma'mūn's triumph over his brother (siege of Baghdad in 813). Yet, another sibling, Abū Isḥāq[543] used the rivalry to form his private corp. The efficiency of his mercenaries, probably of Turkic origin, did not escape his brother al-Ma'mūn's attention. Instead of hushing Abū Isḥāq into the position of a competitor, he sought assistance for himself

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> "The problem of Ottoman origins has preoccupied students of history, but because of both the absence of contemporary source materials and conflicting accounts written subsequent to the events there seems to be no basis for a definitive statement. The traditional narrative relates that the ancestor of the dynasty was one Gündüz Beg, leader of the Kayı tribe of Turcomans" (Standford Shaw 1976:13).

Therefore, the indications about the Ottoman beginning may vary enormously from one writer to the other. Reşat Kasaba remarks that,

> "Superimposition of the long-distance migrations onto local structures and movements created a highly fluid social environment throughout this territory. Especially in Anatolia, between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, it became difficult to distinguish between the arriving, stay-ing, or departing tribes, let alone between sedentary and nomadic communities" (in Christine Woodhead 2014:11).

On the other hand, the many bloody convulsions outside the Roman realm did not affect the Christian world of Europe. The two lived their separate lives – until the Turks appeared on the stage.

I have based my overview on the most reliable information available.

[539] *Gök* means "blue" or "Heaven" in Turkic languages.

[540] Or "Turkish". In the historical context, "Turkic" is more appropriate than "Turkish".

[541] The ancient name for the region corresponds approximately with the southern part of present-day Kazakhstan and the territories of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

[542] The regnal name of Abū Mūsā Muḥammad ibn Hārūn ar-Rashīd.

[543] Abū Isḥāq Muḥammad ibn Hārūn ar-Rashīd.

and his combatants, hoping to consolidate his authority against other interest groups, possible rebels, and in the end, the Byzantine Empire.

Al-Ma'mūn died unexpectedly (833), and Abū Isḥāq, who had fostered the integration of his mercenaries into the local populations, replaced him. Several made their way up to the top by overtaking administrative responsibilities. The two proponents are often confused because of their similar names – Ashinas[544] and al-Afshīn.[545] Both commanders of Abū Isḥāq's regiments have a common central Asian origin and remain notorious for their military achievements. Let us mention how they took Amorium[546] and Ancyra[547] (838) by surprise, the two largest Byzantine cities in Asia Minor at the time. Emperor Theophilos barely managed to escape. Ashinas became head of Egypt, Syria, and Upper Mesopotamia, but al-Afshīn did not enjoy a glorious end. Then, Abū Isḥāq – also named al-Muʿtaṣim bi'llah ("he who seeks refuge in Allah") – admitted that he should have sought a hiding place in God rather than relying on Turkic *ghilmān* (pageboys)[548] who had first helped him to supremacy and now brought about his fall. Subsequently, the Turks emerged as the *de facto* masters over the Middle East, Khorasan[549], and Iran, and the trend became irreversible.

The second influx started 200 years after the first one when the Persians invaded the Turkic lands of the Karakhanids, who were ruling over Central Asia. Persia was defeated (999) and won helpers against the winners. Consequently, the Oğuz Turks[550] left their homeland near the Aral Sea and came to the rescue of the Persians against the Karakhanids. Under Selçuk, a warlord who converted to Islam in 970, the Oğuz Turks gradually gained control over Transoxania and Khorasan, renamed Seljuk Turks[551] after their leader Selçuk.

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[544] Abu Ja'far Ashinas

[545] Ḥaydar ibn Kāwūs al-Afshīn.

[546] Close to today's Emirdağ, Amorium was defeated and destroyed twice by the Seljuks (1071 and 1116), and it never recovered.

[547] Today's Ankara.

[548] This common designation indicates that the *ghilmān* were not just "slave soldiers", as they are often described. Matthew Gordon (2001:26) points out that at the beginning, al-Ma'mun himself had possibly recruited them "as part of the latter's general policy of recruiting Central Asian princes – and their own military retinues – to his court".

[549] The eastern region of the Iranian plateau and a large part of today's Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

[550] Or Oghuz.

[551] Or Seljuq.

9.3   The Turks and the Byzantines

The fight for control over the region was far from ending. By 1054, the Seljuk armies were contending with the Byzantines. In 1055, Tuğril, Selçuk's grandson [1037–1063], was commissioned as their new leader by the Abbasid caliph al-Qa'im[552] [1031-1075] to recapture Baghdad. The Seljuk entered the city in a well-staged ceremony (1055). There, Tuğril[553] secured the future of his realm by marrying the caliph's daughter and receiving from his father-in-law the honorary title "Padishah[554] of the Great Seljuk Dynasty". That can be remembered to be the climax of the Turkic infiltration of "a once-obscure Muslim tribe (that) turned the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad into a vassal state and took over Mesopotamia and Persia" (McLachlan 2004:106-108).

The next crucial step happened on 19 August 1071 in the Battle of Manzikert. There, after "an eruption of dynastic wars between the contenders to the Seljuk throne",[555] Alp Arslan [1063-1072] defeated the Byzantine.[556] He was Tuğril's nephew, chosen by his uncle to lead the Seljuk armies. In the eastern part of Anatolia, they captured Emperor Romanus Diogenes. Thay swarmed into Armenia and Georgia, and domiciled the principality of Rūm-Seljuk.[557] The Turks were already controlling an area stretching from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf via the Hindu Kush Ranges in today's Afghanistan. Now they found a new home in Arḍ ar-Rūm, meaning in Arabic / Osmanic "the land of Rome."[558] The Turkish win of Manzikert opened the way for the "Great Sultan" – as Alp Arslan was renamed – to the Aegean Coast.[559] Decades of fighting the Byzantine state and their crusaders were over. The limits of his realm would touch

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[552] Al-Qa'im bi-amri 'llah.

[553] Tughril Bey or Tuğrul Beg.

[554] The word *padişah* is generally translated with "sultan". This is how I will render it further on.

[555] Kia 2008:17.

[556] Today's Malazgirt (close to the Lake of Van in Turkey).

[557] "Eastern Roman Seljuk Empire".

[558] The province and its capital city still bear the modern equivalent of this name (Erzurum). The whole Asian part of the Byzantine Empire were called Rūmili, the principality of Rūm. Later, the word was extended to the entire Catholic Europe (Dimitrie Cantemir 1736:36).

[559] "In Constantinople, the news of the defeat threw the panic-stricken Byzantine court into disarray, and internal quarrels ensued. Neither the humiliated Byzantine army nor the demoralized Byzantine bureaucracy mustered the discipline or the organization to prevent the flood of Turcoman nomads from entering Anatolia, plundering urban and rural communities and seizing pastureland for their flocks. Such was the level of anxiety gripping Constantinople that the Byzantine court appealed to its principal religious rival, the pope, for urgent assistance to counter the Turkish onslaught. The invasion of Anatolia by the Seljuks, the collapse of Byzantine defenses, and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem to the Turks provided sufficient justification for Pope Urban II to call on Christian Europe in 1096 to join an expedition to liberate the Christian holy lands from the Muslim Turkish occupiers" (Kia 2008:18).

the gates of Christian Europe very soon. No wonder Manzikert remains one of the most decisive blows against Byzantine sovereignty.

The spectre of the Muslim nomads' potential success in this regard threw Byzantium into a panic. It must be commented that Diogenes kept his grip over the Aegean coastal areas and, generally speaking, enjoyed a peaceful relationship with Alp Arslan and his troops. In the same period, the rise of Muslim dynasties undoubtedly encouraged the immigration of more Turks, which in return consolidated their influence in the region.

However, less than fifty years later, the winners suddenly had to face writing on the wall of another dimension. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Genghis Khan [1206–1227],[560] the founder of the Mongol Empire[561] and first great khan, had already overthrown the Xià[562] kingdom at his border and the Jīn dynasty in China, submitting the shores of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia in his path. Genghis Khan's third son and successor, Ögedei [1229–1241], built-up Mongol supremacy over Iran, Anatolia, and Iraq. Then, he led his hordes to the Adriatic shores of Croatia. Every attempt made to stop him tragically failed. When "the second great khan", as Ögedei was named, passed away, the Mongol Empire had become the largest contiguous territory ever. The entire eastern frontier of European states happened to have a common border with the "Golden Horde."[563] The Byzantines fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the Seljuk against the common threat. Yet, on 26 June 1243, the Mongols crushed a significant part of the joint army. The unexpected defeat of Köse Dağ resulted in the slow disintegration of the principality of Rūm (Osmanic / Arabic for "Rome"). At that moment, History was to repeat itself for the third and fourth time in the same geographical area: Seeking refuge from another Mongol onslaught, tens of thousands Kayı Turks pressed into Rūm. There, after the death of the tribe leader Suleyman Shah[564] [c.1215–c.1235], his son Ertuğrul (died c.1280)[565] entered the service of the Seljuks. As a reward for his achievements, Ertuğrul received dominion over one of the Seljuk territories.

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[560] Or Chinggis Khaan.

[561] Two centuries later, the Mongols were identified as "Tatars" due to Timur-i Lenk's coalition of Tatars, Mongols, and Turks.

[562] Today's autonomous Chinese province of Xin Jiàng (or Oriental Turkestan).

[563] So named because Jochi, the Mongol ruler who had inherited Asia Minor from Genghis Khan is said to have covered his tent with cloth of gold.

[564] Süleyman Şah.

[565] Ertuğrul Gâzi.

9.4   Osman, Orhan, and the pacific settlement in Europe

Within the next 200 years, the tiny piece of land in the north of Anatolia granted to Ertuğrul evolved into a growing empire, while his heirs took over one Seljuk principality after another. The name of Ertuğrul's son Osman I [c.1280–c.1299][566] is at the origin of the appellation "Ottoman". At first, it did not apply to a specific group of people but to an empire that would last as such for the next 550 years.[567] Indeed, Osman's dynasty superseded all others, whereas the *gâzi*, Turkish for "veteran",[568] did not first and foremost try to annex more Seljuk territories but rather prioritised fighting the Byzantines. Osman's first success against them (Battle of Bapheus, 17 July 1299) gripped the Christian world with fear, and the news of his supremacy made him a hero among the Seljuks. In return, more and more of them joined him. The conquest of Bapheus marks the beginning of the Ottoman Principality. Osman and his clan, however, were more interested in roaming around and launching sporadic raids into the Byzantine borderlands than fighting with the military skills necessary for a formal siege. He easily won over small towns afflicted by the lack of support from Constantinople. That is why İnalcık (2009:1) places the founding date of the Ottoman hegemony later (1302).[569]

Osman's son Orhan [1323/4–1362] took up residence at Yenişehir, "The new city", which became the first capital of the new empire. The first Byzantine town to succumb was Níkaia (1331), the former Nicaea known for its meaningful past.[570] Nicomedia, another town of Asia Minor[571] located 65 kilometres northeast of Níkaia at the end of the gulf of the same name, succumbed to a similar fate. Standing there, Orhan could spot the European coast on the other shore of the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara). He took over Nicomedia (1337) and envisioned building a bridgehead to that point. This time, though, Orhan achieved less by weapons than by benefiting from two conflicts among Christians. The first was the warfare between two emperors of Byzantium, John V Palaiologos [15 June 1341–12 August 1376] and John VI Kanta-

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[566] Osman Gâzi.

[567] It was under Osman's son Orhan that the "Ottoman Empire" was named after him. The name "Ottoman Turkish" (*Osmanlıca*, or *Osmanlı Türkçesi*) employed for the *lingua franca* of the Turks was introduced much later.

[568] Turkish word for "veteran."

[569] [Online] https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/inalcik-fatihi-hiristiyan-yapmak-istedi,bYvo7OTi7E6JUjD0M-cWdw [retrieved 26 December 2021].

[570] Modern-day İznik.

[571] Modern-day İzmit.

kouzenos [21 May 1347–10 December 1354]. Those dates imply that John VI Kanta-kouzenos claimed the throne in the middle of John V Palaiologos' time. Keen of eliminating his rival, he (John VI) went looking for allies among the Turks. Then, something decisive for the fate of Europe happened. John VI went as far as to make a pact with the young Ottoman emperor, and on top, gave him his daughter in marriage (Peter Sugar 1996:5-6). Theodora Kantakouzene became not only Orhan's fifth wife but also the key to the takeover of Ottoman jurisdiction over Eastern Rome. Indeed, it was not long until the father-in-law invited his new son's fellow citizens to settle in Europe. From that moment, the Ottoman had a say within the Byzantine court and kept on growing in influence. In other words, Orhan's unexpected achievement to set foot on the Old Continent was due to an explicit invitation by the *Imperium Byzantinum*.

The second threat was the concerted effort of the Bulgarian and the Serb kingdoms to eliminate and replace the Greek Byzantine state. Again, John VI Kantakouzenos turned to Orhan for military support.

> "The anti-Serbian alliance allowed the sultan's eldest son, Süleyman, to confront and neutralize the Serbian army as it advanced against Thrace in 1352, bringing Ottoman troops to the European side of the Straits, who were soon followed by Turkish settlers. Thus, in confronting the Serbian threat, Cantacuzenus unwittingly enhanced the power and influence of the Ottoman state, providing it with a bridge-head to Europe. Cantacuzenus tried unsuccessfully to bribe the Ottomans to abandon their new territory but Süleyman was determined to hold on" (Kia 2008:23).

To maintain that the almost 400 years of Turkic-Byzantine relations[572] have only been a series of confrontanional encounters does not do justice to the reality. The above examples demonstrate that Europe got delivered to the Ottomans on a silver platter. "It was also a period of compromise, accommodation, and mutual learning" (Goffman 2002:30) – let us add it was wise diplomacy respecting the interests of all players.

9.5 Murad I and the weakness of his European counterparts

In addition, two terrible earthquakes rocked the city of Constantine (October 1344 and May 1346). The following year (1347), the black death swept over Asia across the Bosporus. It disseminated half of Constantinople's population and sprawled into the rest of Europe up to Scandinavia and Moscow. The farther people fled, the quicker

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[572] Between the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 and the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

they carried the disease with them. From December 1347 to December 1350, more than one-third of the continent's population perished. Whole towns were emptied, and chronic malnutrition weakened the survivors. The countryside was ruined, Byzantium was on its knees, and when Orhan died in 1362, his legacy comprised huge territories in Asia and open access to Europe.

More and more Turkish settlements were implanted on the Old Continent, and Byzantium perceived this as a consequence of John VI Kantakouzenos's failures. It allowed his rival John V Palaiologos to regain popularity. Immediately after John V eliminated John VI, he sensed the danger of letting the Ottomans where they were, and he appealed to Pope Urban V [1362–1370] for assistance. Realising the imminent threat at the very gates of the old continent, Rome and Byzantium became friends for a moment. In reality, the pontiff's ultimate desire was to overtake the Byzantine lands. However, when he aroused a crusade on Easter Saturday (1363), only very few responded. Such joint efforts failed due to the internal fragmentation of European states pursuing individual agendas and suspicious of others, regarding them as competitors.

Commonly nicknamed Jean le Bon (John the Good), King John II of France was the only monarch supporting the papal appeal. He did it probably to get rid of the « grandes companies », those bands of mercenaries who acted independently from any government. Whenever they were not employed, which was often the case, they made a living by plunder. Indeed, they behaved like a human plague devastating France at that time (Boussard 1946:193). The numerous Germanic recruits among them were a particular scourge. King Edward III of England dismissed them after the Peace Treaty of Brétigny in 1360 (Eugène Cosneau 1889:33-66).[573] It marked the beginning of the first solid truce in The Hundred Years' War between England and France (1337–1453). The French king was drained by a war that had started twenty-seven years earlier. Under such conditions, assembling a contingent that would head to Constantinople turned out to be an imaginary endeavour. Eventually (Anselme de Sainte-Marie, 1725:1/106), the British invaders captured Jean le Bon and threw him in prison, where he died a few months later (8 April 1364). His dream of helping Constantinople had just been wishful thinking.

Turning to the island of Cyprus, King Peter I was eager to obtain potential benefits thanks to his participation in the crusade. Due to the geostrategic position of his

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[573] [Online] https://archive.org/details/lesgrandstraits01cosngoog [retrieved 12 September 2021].

island, he tried his best to gain whomever he could to achieve his cause. Except for some brief campaigns along the Syrian and Egyptian coasts, he had yet to win against an opponent that vastly outnumbered him.

Hungary and Savoy made some relatively modest attempts too, but t was too late to put the genie back into the bottle. The Turks had gained a foothold they would never relinquish again. Marking a new dimension of authority, Orhan was the first Ottoman to assume the title of sultan[574] (Kia 2008:3). His son and successor Murad I [1362–1389][575] is the one who significantly increased the Ottoman realm by leading his fighters two hundred kilometres on European ground.

The invaders chose Hadrianopolis, "the city (founded by) the Roman emperor Hadrian",[576] strategically located at the confluence of the Maritsa and the Tunca. It offered the ideal entrance gate to the West through which the Ottomans could quickly progress. In 1362, Murad stormed the town at the very place where the Visigoths had slaughtered the East Roman battalions nearly a thousand years earlier (378). As a new decisive moment of European destiny, Murad proclaimed Hadrianopolis the centre of his kingdom. The message was clear: Once Constantinople encircled, an extension of his empire unto the Old Continent would be next.

Europe faced the new reality of a durable Islamic presence on its soil. Immediately, the Bosnian, Bulgar, Hungarian, Macedonian, and Serbian kings felt the need to unite their forces. All bitterly at odds with each other, they were driven by the sole purpose of resisting the common threat.

Then, Jovan Uglješa Mrnjavčević, brother of the Serbian king Vukašin Mrnjavčević, heard that Murad was traveling in Asia Minor, far away from his European headquarters. He seized this opportunity to cross the Maritsa river, the natural frontier between the empires,[577] and to assail the Ottomans. There, at Chernomen, – at the northernmost place of Byzantium – a Christian soldiery more substantial than what the Ottomans were able to gather[578] did not succeed (26 September 1371[579]). A short

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[574] From Arabic *sulṭān*, full authority.

[575] Türkish Murat.

[576] Today's Edirne.

[577] The Maritsa River is the natural border between today's Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. Recently, the river has taken another symbolic significance since it demarcates the border between Turkey and Greece, i.e., the boundary of the Schengen Space on a major route for migrants heading for Europe.

[578] Sources vary between 50.000 and 70.000 Serbian soldiers on one side and 800 to 4.000 Ottomans on the other. See Nicol (1993[2]:286).

[579] The Battle of Chernomen is often called The Battle of Maritsa.

Greek chronicle describes the result in a way that does not need any further comment: "From then on, Muslims began to overrun the empire of the Christians" (in Imber 2004: 11). Both Macedonian and Serbian lords lost their lives.

Murad and the Ottoman invaders reached the Danube just before its delta into the Black Sea. Sofia fell in 1382. Murad moved the capital of his sultanate to Adrianople and began to progress north-westwards. The united armies of the Bosnian and Serbian regents attempted to block the crossroad of the main routes that Murad would have to take. This strategic control point stood in Kosovo Polje (the Kosovo Plain), and the battle known under the same name (1389) remains the biggest fiasco of the European regiments against the Ottomans. Sultan Murad and the Serbian prince Lazar Hrebeljanović lost their lives in Kosovo Polje, but the defeat signified the death blow of the Christian alliance. The Tsardom of Bulgaria ceased to exist, the Ottoman suzerainty over Serbia was secured, and Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, and Wallachia[580] would soon fall into Muslim hands.

9.6   Bayezid I, Murad II, and the growing unpopularity of the Byzantine rulers

Surprisingly, Murad's son Bayezid I [1389–1402] took Lazar Hrebeljanović's daughter Olivera as his wife immediately after he became the new sultan. This alliance gave her brother Stjepan Lazarević appreciable autonomy over Serbia. By consenting to this alliance, Bayezid ensured ongoing peace with his vassal state and, consequently, could devote himself to other areas.

> "It is said that Bayezid I let Stjepan Lazarević exercise power (…) and gave him the right to apply the law of the land, as long as he secured the payment of the jizyah" (Kamal al Saʿīd Ḥabīb 2002:258).

First, Bayezid wanted to unify Anatolia; then, he sent his armies to Bulgaria to defeat the crusaders on their way there. He did the same in northern Greece. In 1394, Bayezid, nicknamed *Yıldırım* ("thunderbolt") after his death,[581] envisioned crossing the Danube and entering Wallachia; but he gave in. Again, his infantry, one of the largest at the time, failed in its repeated attempts to besiege Constantinople (1394-1402).

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[580] A part of today's Romania.

[581] Most Ottoman sultans were given nicknames after their death, probably to immortalise them in a favourable light: "Yıldırım" (thunderbolt) to Bayezid I, "Fātiḥ" (conqueror) to Mehmed II, "Yavuz" (wicked) to Selim I, and "Ḳānūnī" (lawgiver) to Süleyman I.

Meanwhile, another calamity began to sweep Central Asia. The Uzbek Timur-i Lenk [1370-1405][582] had formed a coalition of Mongol, Tatar, and Turkic nomads and began a series of raids. He came up to the valley of the Indus in the East and the Ural ranges in the West, finally hitting the territories under Ottoman control. Bayezid's units were defeated in Ancyra, today's Ankara (20 July 1402). There, the sultan was captured and taken into captivity, during which tales of his humiliation by Timur-i Lenk delighted European storytellers. Timur-i Lenk reached the Aegean coast and seized Smyrna[583] but unexpectedly turned back in the direction of Samarkand, giving the Turks a chance to recover and resume their offensives in the Balkan Peninsula later. It took the Turks nearly twenty years to recover from Timur-i Lenk.

Bayezid's death in captivity created a contest for dominion called "the Ottoman Interregnum", a factual division of the Ottoman sultanate. When his eldest son Süleyman Çelebi governed in Rumelia, his youngest, Mehmed I [1413–1421],[584] claimed Anatolia for himself. The western part fell into the hands of his brother Isa. Musa, Bayezid's fourth son, also demanded his share of the spoil. The Byzantines seized the internal crisis as a godsend opportunity to bundle their forces with the Catholic parts of the Balkans. At least they gave it a try.

Indeed, the coalition was able to repel the Turks with greater or lesser success, but only until Mehmed's son Murad II [1404–1444 and 1446 to 1451][585] invaded the Byzantine territory (1422). Murad II's assault upon Constantinople with a swarm of 50.000 attackers and his sudden withdrawal was interpreted as an act of retaliation, or at least a warning against the Byzantine emperors Manuel II Palaiologos [1391–1425] for his union with the Latin states.

This context could justify why, unexpectedly, "the Sultan withdrew, not so much in despair at Byzantine resistance, but as a consequence of renewed dynastic strife."[586] But then, he targeted Macedonia, Morea,[587] and Wallachia. The loss of strategic cities

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[582] Tamerlane, or Tamburlaine (the Great), was known in his homeland Uzbekistan as Amir Timur.

[583] İzmir.

[584] Turkish Mehmet. "Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this period was the sultan himself, a man of science and learning who despised wars and bloodshed and preferred poetry and mysticism" (Kia 2008:30).

[585] In 1444, Murad II abdicated the crown to his son Mehmed II who had a brief governing time until 1446. Then, Murad ascended the throne for a second time and remained sultan until he died (3 February 1451).

[586] Imber 2004:22.

[587] The Peloponnese peninsula.

like Corinth and Thessaloniki after two long sieges forced John VIII Palaiologos [1425-1448] to accept to merge his dominance with West Rome. It was the explicit requirement to receive military aid. The pope demanded that the alliance would be concluded, but under the condition of placing his religious primacy under his wings. The price was high for the Byzantines, who speculated for military solid support in return. The union, though, did not have another outcome than to increase the resentment of Byzantium's populace against their local dignitaries.

The imperial government's last straw was placed in Eugenius IV, the pope in West Rome [1431–1447]. Eugenius launched a crusade (Crusade of Varna). At last, Władysław III, king of Croatia, Hungary, and Poland[588] reacted. The Serbian despot Đurađ Branković[589] and the Albanian feudal lord Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu[590] joined the Catholic armies. Under the Hungarian regent-governor János Hunyadi – a prominent opponent of the Ottomans reputed for his achievements. I should mention the crushing Ottoman defeat at the Ialomița River in the south of today's Romania (September 1442). The joint forces moved to Sofia. On the way, they were supposed to protect Belgrade and other cities and push the Ottoman invaders back in their path. Yet, the crusade ended in a decisive Ottoman victory and another debacle for the united states (Battle of Varna, 10 November 1444).

This – or was it the bitter winter? – brought Sultan Murad II[591] to sign a truce with the Hungarians (1444). At worst, the Ottoman suffered heavy losses; and the proof had been provided that concerted efforts among the European partners were likely to rout the enemy. Suddenly, the papal navy of the Venetians appeared in the Black Sea. Murad broke his peace treaty and beat the Hungarians at the battle of Varna, chasing the fleet and sealing the end of Catholic supremacy in the region forever.

9.7   Mehmed II and the siege of Constantinople

By 1449, Murad II had taken over a large part of the Balkan Peninsula. The capture of Hadrianopolis under his grand-grandfather Murat I had been the first Ottoman foothold in Rumelia. For the Byzantines, worse than the defeat was the immediate switch from

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[588] Ladislas.

[589] George Brankovitch.

[590] John Castriota Scanderberg.

[591] At that time, Murad was not ruling. We have noticed that he had just placed his son Mehmed II on the throne a few weeks before Varna.

Bursa to today's Edirne as the Ottoman headquarter. It sent a message the European regencies could not fail to take seriously. However, if Hadrian's city had collapsed, Constantine's had not. Murad II surrounded it but did not touch it. He preferred to let the administration in Byzantine hands and profit far from his superiority. Constantinople lied like a trump card in the sleeve, ready to be played at any time. Catholics and Byzantines accepted the status quo and, in their naïveté, judged their capital an unconquerable bastion of Christianity. They thought that by the power of God, the pearl in the crown of Eastern Rome would stand in the way of the Muslim hordes forever. The onslaught of the Turks on the mighty city blew away that glimmer of hope.

The ultimate stage for the 1100-year supremacy of the Orthodox Empire was to end with the second accreditation of Mehmed II [1451–1481].[592] Perceiving the over-throw of the Byzantine Empire as a holy duty, the new sultan's obsessive vision was to transform the bastion of Eastern Christianity into the centre of Muslim prestige: Istanbul. At the age of 21, Mehmed, renamed Ebū'l-Fatḥ, "the Father of Conquest", or simply "Fatih Sultan Mehmed" (Turkish), Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, declared war against Constantine XI Palaiologos [1449–1453]. It was no secret that Byzantium had reached one of her weakest moments. Donald Nicol (1993[2]:372) writes:

> "For the last two years of his independent existence, the See of Constantinople was widowed. There was a church but no patriarch. There was an emperor but no empire."

When Constantine XI Palaiologos looked for help, the European kingdoms chose not to intervene, and their refusal "let the Osman rulers take their position" (Zappe 2201b:69). West Rome stood under the aegis of Pope Nicholas V [1447–1455], a man of peace and conciliation. Despite the general consternation the Ottoman approach in the East provoked, the pope did not accord much attention to what happened on the other side of Europe. As the founder of the Vatican library and the designer of St. Peter's Basilica, Nichola was mainly preoccupied with surrounding himself with lovers of art.[593] Yet, Nicholas proclaimed the bull *Dum Diversas* on 18 June 1452, i.e., one year

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[592] Mehmed II had a brief governing time when he was 12 years old (from August 1444 to September 1446).

[593] As a young man, "He made the acquaintance of the leading Humanist scholars of the day" (Catholic Encyclopedia>N>Pope Nicholas V. [Online] https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11058a.htm, retrieved 14 September 2021). The text continues,

> "He [Nicholas] set up a vast establishment in the Vatican for translating the Greek classics so that all might become familiar with at least the matter of these masterpieces. No department of literature owes so much to him as history. By him were introduced to the knowledge of western Europe two great and unrivalled models of historical composition, the work of Herodotus and

before the fall of Constantinople. The document authorized the Portuguese king to "attack, conquer, and subjugate Saracens, pagans and other enemies of Christ wherever they may be found." The outcome had been quite lucrative for the Portuguese and the church. After his *Schadenfreude* about the defeat of the Byzantines, the pope awakened: The loss of Constantinople to the Muslims was more a reason to grieve than to rejoice. That is why, on 29 September 1453, he prompted a sermon to motivate another holy war to recover the metropolis on the Bosporus. Like always, the homily was accompanied by *mult* indulgence and, on top of it, the outlook of universal peace. Nevertheless, it was too late, and everybody knew it.

It means that a large part of the responsibility for the coming disaster rested on the chronic absence of unity among the European potentates.[594] We cannot overemphasise the blatant lack of solidarity within Christendom. Paul Coles writes (1968:28):

> "The inability of the Greek Orthodox Church to come to terms with the papacy was an imposant cause of the failure".

On the other side stood the Ottomans with their well-structured and highly-motivated armies. Coles (1968:47) estimates that in 1453, the population of Constantinople did not amount to more than 100.000, while the extent of Mehmed's co-assailants is estimated at 70.000 to 120.000 – undoubtedly the most formidable land forces of that time. In contrast, whoever has seen the miniatures of the provincial Balkan towns[595] can easily conclude that, due to their nominal size, cities that were nothing more than large villages did not have the slightest chance to resist the superiority of the invaders.

Yet, the assault upon a place of the size of Constantinople could not be compared with the previous ones, and its successful siege would take an effort unsurpassed so far.

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the work of Thucydides and Nicholas's agents ransacked the monasteries and palaces of every country in Europe. Precious manuscripts, which would have been eaten by the moths or would have found their way to the furnace, were rescued from their ignorant owners and sumptuously housed in the Vatican. In this way, he accumulated five thousand volumes at the cost of more than forty thousand scudi" (idem).

Pope Nicholas' open-mindedness deserves mention. It reminds us of the caliphs of the Abbasid "Golden Age", Emperor Friedrich II, and several forerunners of the Reformation.

[594] According to Miller (1994:40), "Military losses were often blamed by contemporaries on numerical inferiority, although modern scholars argue that Ottoman victories were won not by greater numbers, but by better tactics, stricter discipline, better leadership, and greater loyalty and devotion".

[595] Cf. the collection in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland, named after the American collector Sir Alfred Beatty. Klára Hegy and Vera Zimányi published hundreds of miniatures in *Az oszmán birodalom Európában* (1986). [Online] http://mek.oszk.hu/08900/08980/pdf/08980ocr.pdf [retrieved 14 September 2021]. Their publication contains reproductions of pictures and maps of that time, on which significant cities like Algiers (pp.108-109), Athens (124), Buda (28,29,111), Bursa (10), Cairo (110), Hadrianopolis (11) and even Constantinople (16,32,33,38,76,77) appear like insignificant towns compared with today's standards.

Armstrong Starkey (1998:179) mentions an additional key to success: the light cavalry of the Ottoman[596] that offered to their warriors sufficient rest, logistics, and abundant food.[597]

> "(Logistic), never a strong point in the Russian and Habsburg armies, became a nightmare in the East, where armies marched long distances through lands with scant resources. Many more of their soldiers died from hunger and disease than from Turkish weapons."

Furthermore, there is no doubt that (Imber 2004:28-29), "What at the end determined its outcome was the power of the Ottoman artillery against the land walls." A Hungarian engineer named Orbán[598] had been working for the Turks for several years. He would have offered his services to whoever offered him the most. Rome was bankrupt, and the Turks seized the opportunity. Orbán constructed fo them the longest cannons the world had ever seen.

> And he did it.

> "More than twenty-six feet long, it could shoot a stone ball weighing twelve hundred pounds more than a mile. Dragging it into position took thirty oxen" (McLachlan 2004: 158).

In 1451, Mehmed II commissioned a fortress a few kilometres east of Constantinople. On a hill overlooking the Bosporus on its narrowest point, "the Rumelian Castle" (Rumeli Hisarı) was soon renamed Boğazkesen Hisarı, "the Throat-Cutter Castle". It gave the Ottomans complete control of the vessels passing the strait within reach of Orbán's cannons. Ships that sneaked in without paying the toll were sunk, and their crew were beheaded (Percy Silburn 2019[7]:7).[599] From that moment, the Byzantines had no way to secure access to the Bosporus. The harbour was utterly in Ottoman hands. The Turks could move on the sea without hindrance and focus their persistence on bombarding the land walls. For weeks, the "superguns" pounded Constantinople's fortifications, and after 53 days of constant bombardment, the defenders gave up. On 29

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[596] "A field commander (general) marching into such a region confronted the prospect of starvation if he could not secure his communications with a strong cavalry force of his own" (Starkey 1998:179).

[597] I should add the system of *devşirme*, another key for success. As previously mentioned, it resulted in the creation of the *yeni çeri* or Janissary corps, the sultan's elite infantry. "The *devşirme* was the system of acquiring young Christian children who were educated and trained to assume positions of power in the imperial palace, the administration, or the *kapi kulu* (slaves of the sultan)" (Kia 2008:2). Kia should have mentioned the conversion to Islam by force.

[598] Probably of German ancestry (Rogers 2010:490).

[599] [Online] https://archive.org/details/evolutionseapow00silbgoog [retrieved 14 September 2021].

May 1453, the Turks stormed the Theodosian battlements and broke through the Gate of St. Romanus, soon renamed *Ṭopḳapu*[600] ("the cannon gate"). Constantinopolis was no more the city of Constantine and his heirs. Constantine XI would be the last Byzantine emperor. He perished in street fighting (Möhlmann 2003:6), but worse than that: With the downfall of *Néa Rōmē* – the emblem of Eastern Christianity, the empire crumbled to pieces and ceased to be. Athens (1456–1458) and Morea (1460) soon fell into Ottoman hands. Eleven hundred years of Byzantine supremacy had come to an end.[601]

> "As the Ottoman troops swept through the city, the sultan walked into the Hagia Sophia (Aya Sofya or St. Sophia), the church built by the emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD, and declared it a mosque for Islam, proclaiming 'Hereafter my capital is Istanbul.'" (Inalcık 2001[2]:26).

Pope Nicholas V was the first to exploit the presence of a weak religious leadership in the East following the downfall of Constantinople. He hoped to impose himself as the head of East Rome. After all, the Holy See had often provided material support to the Byzantines. Now, the time had come to make amends for the past. The degree of hatred between the Latin pope and the Byzantines found its climax in Nicholas' reaction to the fall of Constantinople. The Enyclopædia Britannica (Carlton Hayes, in Chishom, ed. [1768],1911[11]:19/424) adds that the pope's only comment was: "I had more happiness in a day than in a whole year". In case this remark is reliable, the pope probably did not anticipate the scope of what he was saying.

9.8   From *stēn póli* to Istanbul

From the very days of its foundation, *Kōnstantinoúpolis* had symbolised the rivalry opposing Byzantines and Latins. Going *eís tēn pólin*, "into the city", accurately describes the unofficial motive behind the crusades. The city *par excellence* fuelled the interests of the competitors, and that is why East and West never grew a friendship. Their jurisdictional claims did not allow any decent relationship between them, and the whole became almost strictly a power play. For instance, the Eastern emperor was

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[600] *Topkapı* in Modern Turkish, todays' Edirne kapısı.

[601] The Silk Road was now blocked so that, as a by-product for the European seafaring nations, "It [the fall of Constantinople] became the stimulus that led to further exploration along the African coast and increased trade in ivory, gold, and slaves. Bartholomew Diaz, with two Portuguese ships, sailed round the Cape of Good Hope – so named by the Portuguese monarch – in 1487. It was the young Vasco da Gama who succeeded in sailing around the Cape and on to India, a trip from which he returned with a wealth of spices" (Estep 1992[2]:96). It is therefore reasonably safe to say that the Europeans owe, at least indirectly, the discovery of the sea routes to the Muslims.

keen of complicating the crusaders' passage through its territory. Yet, the crusaders' attempt benefited the Eastern flank of Byzantium by weakening the Muslim front. At the end, the acrimony fuelled by both sides cost the loss of Constantinople and much more.

The notion of two Christian rivals joining together against a common adversary has often been considered an attractive option. But the opposite happened instead. The gap between the wishful thinking of achieving peace and the reality of contending with human greed is best illustrated by the Fourth Crusade. Its stated purpose was to help protect the Eastern Empire and the Greek Catholics against the Islamic threat provoking a possible reunification of Christendom. Rome consistently contracted alliances with others, but under the condition that she would have her say. In other words, her ultimate goal in sending Christian combatants was to create a Latin state on Byzantine ground.

> "The siege and subsequent rape of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade was one of the most incredible events in the entire history of the Crusades. The desecration of St. Sophia's Basilica and the wanton plunder of the world's most beautiful city, with its unparalleled treasures of art and culture, defy description. Thus, the Crusades, instead of becoming an instrument of reconciliation between the two historic Catholic Churches, became a source of further alienation" (Estep 1992[2]:10).

The sack of Constantinople by the Latins appears particularly tragic if one tries to imagine the splendour that met the crusaders at their arrival:

> "The Marshall de Champagne could not get over his surprise. He and his companions could not believe their eyes. When they saw the high towers, the palaces, and the churches, they could not think that there would be in this world a city so rich and large" (Clévenot, 1986:6/22).

When the crusaders reached the Gate of St. Romanus, they found the entries in land walls locked and barred against them. The western chroniclers felt particularly aggrieved by this treatment because, on occasion, the emperor seemed to take a friendlier attitude in behalf of Muslims than he had toward the Latin invaders.[602] As the result of three days of looting, the wealthiest of all Christian cities was captured by the Romans (13 April 1204). Note that the slaughter of millions of souls during this second

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[602] "A friendlier attitude to the enemies of faith than to the soldiers of Christ" (Raymond of Aguilers, in John and Laurita Hill 1968:18-21).

siege was not the work of the Turkish "enemies of faith". Instead, it happened at the instigation of the pope of Rome against fellow Christians.

The Fourth Crusade had achieved its goal, so there was no need to reach Jerusalem anymore. West Rome secured a dependent state in and around the metropolis and placed a Catholic emperor on the throne. Yet, the new government had to wrestle to get the support of the local residents. Again, as so often during medieval times, religion was part of the stratagem. In November 1204, Pope Innocent III declared that any act of protection preventing possible Byzantine attempts to retake control would earn the same remission of penance as fighting the Muslims in Egypt or Palestine (Othmar Hageneder & Anton Haidacher, eds., 1964-1999:7/263). The warning implies that the crusade was directed against Christians, at least partly.

As late as 1237, a call by Pope Gregory IX [1227–1241] for an expedition to secure the western interests in Byzantium received an overwhelming response (Robert d'Auxerre, in Holder-Egger, ed., 1882:26/269). On their way to the Holy Land, many western knights settled in Constantinople.

> "As the thirteenth century progressed, however, it became clear that not everyone in Europe was convinced that defending the Latin Empire would really attract the same spiritual reward as fighting for Jerusalem. The change was largely the result of the propensity of Innocent III and his successors to call for crusades not against Muslims, for the defense of Jerusalem, but against Christians in Western Europe" (Harris 2003:171).

Despite a short initial period of military successes, the *Imperium Romanae* of Constantinople had weakened by constant warfare and did not last very long. In the aftermath, the Byzantines recaptured it (24/25 July 1261). Its emperor, Michael VIII Palaiologos [15 August 1261–11 December 1282|, was prompt to proclaim the re-birth of the Byzantine Empire. "This event restored the confidence (of the Byzantines) and gave them hope for the future" (Nicol 1993[2]:18). The essential outcome of the short-lived Latin government was the general resentment reflected by the Greeks at that time. This helps us conceive why, when the Turks were about to conquer the metropolis two centuries later (Stavrianos 2008[4]:43),

> "The first minister of the empire was only expressing popular sentiment when he declared that he would rather behold in Constantinople the turban of Mahomet than the pope's tiara or a cardinal's hat."

Without giving a reliable source, Phyllis Authy (1965:25) pretends that "Bogomils preferred to be conquered by the sultan than converted by the pope"; and the writer Rebecca West (1941:832) adds succinctly:

> "Had it not been for the intolerance of the papacy, we would not have had Turkey in Europe for 500 years."

Regardless of the extent to which relations between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches may have been disrupted, the physical and symbolic significance of the loss of Constantinople cannot be overstated. Byzantium felt the pain of losing a city that, according to the metropolitan bishop Kallistos Ware (1980:50), incarnated the divine mission entrusted to the Orthodox Church. His comment reflects the degree of quasi-holiness conferred to *stēn pólin*, as if its *raison d'être* was part of a metaphysical plan, namely, "To establish here on earth a living icon of God's government in heaven."

Constantine the Great founded his capital on the seven hills around the Golden Horn, a headland that served as an isthmus separating two continents and two seas. Its geostrategic dominance added to its strength, and Mehmed undertook everything possible to raise its potential.[603] Despite the new level of splendour given to it, the defeat sealed an unparalleled humiliation of the Christian world. For almost a millennium, two spiritual sons of Abraham had faced each other. Now it was Mehmed who entered the Hagia Sophia, kneeling as the call to *ṣalāh* was chanted on the first Friday of the new era crowned by a new imperial mosque.[604] Still, the consternation signified a horrifying and decisive point to many Europeans for whom "Turks" would now be a sword at their doors. With the capture of the Constantinople,[605] the isthmus separating the two monotheistic blocks worlds was breached. No more gigantic wall would be able to preserve the Christian *hinterlands* from future times of great dangers.[606] The preachers associat-

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[603] "The long-standing urban professional experiences of Armenians, Greeks and Jews provided Ottoman cities with fine craftsmen, such as goldsmiths, excellent professionals, such as architects and medical doctors, and major international intermediaries, such as multilingual merchants. The role that many representatives of these communities played in public finance as tax collectors and creditors is also very well known. It is not surprising that one of the first acts of Mehmed II after the victory over Constantinople was to order the deportation of Christian and Jewish, as well as Muslim, families from various parts of Anatolia and the Balkans to be resettled in his new capital" (İnalcık, ed., 1969–70:236–7, 247. cit. in Baki Tezcan 2014:160).

[604] Yet, the sultan created a foundation for restoring Constantine's masterpiece that the Latins had plundered during the Fourth Crusade.

[605] "Situated on a triangular piece of territory which was bordered on the West by Thrace, on the South by the Propontis (the Sea of Marmara) and on the North by an inlet, later known as the Golden Horn, which provided a natural deep-water port" (Pohlsander 2004[2]:64).

[606] Miller (1994:40) examines several theories ranging from "complete indifference" (supported by Runciman) to "hysteria" (Aziz Atiya). He adds that "One primary reason why the Ottoman advance was not

ing Islam with the end-time Evil presaged by Daniel's prophecies and St. John's Revelation appeared to be correct, which took the wind in their sails. Just after the fall of Constantine's city, the Franciscan Johann von Eisenach prophesied that "by 1600, the Turks would rule over all of Italy and Germany" (Grafton 2009:31).

Byzantium had fired the passion of politicians for centuries. It had defied the onslaught of the "pagan" Goths and the Muslim Arabs. It had stood as a bastion against the Mongols and waves of Turkic nomads; but now, it had become the prized jewel of the sultans. Mehmed the Conqueror had, at last, achieved the ultimate Islamic aspiration where the Sassanids and the Avars failed (626), where Caliph Mu'awiyah could not score (670),[607] and where even the yearlong siege of the Umayyad armies in 716-718 had ended up in a defeat. The Ottomans spoke of Constantinople as *kızıl elma* (the red apple) (Sina Akşin 2000:162), "the most important prize in their drive to create a world empire" (Caroline Finkel 2012:48). Indeed, after the take-over of *the* town, Mehmed II took for granted that he was the legitimate heir of the *Imperium Romanum*.

9.9   The positives

Immediately, *Kostantiniyye* became *şehir-i ʿaẓīma*, "the amazing town". The ultimate switch gave the expanded empire "a capital city at the juncture of its European and Asian territories, on the straight linking the Black Sea to the Mediterranean" (Imber 2004:102). But as a positive effect, the Ottoman bridging of the continents could invigorate the economic ties and reshape the religious map of eastern Europe. Had two civilisations gotten a unique chance to move closer together?

Having gained a stronghold over new areas, the Ottoman administration showed itself from its best profile. It gladly used its bonus expressed in numerous accounts of their emirs "being welcomed by the Christian inhabitants in preference to the corrupt Byzantine system" (Profeta Philips 2003:4). In that manner, *Néa Rōmē's* new regents reached the oppressed Christian minorities' brightest anticipations by giving them a chance to live up to their faith in peace.

Possible shouts like "Better Islam than the pope", or at least any sign of positive attitude, must have been music in Mehmed's ears, who appraised himself as the heir

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taken so seriously was because of Latin hatred of the Greeks. Why shed blood to save those recalcitrant?"

[607] Benjamin Fortna (2002:194) mentions that "in the military school context, the map of the Ottoman Empire could have hung alongside a picture of Mehmet the Conqueror or Napoleon."

of the Roman Empire. The sultan pursued his conquests with the aim of reviving the *Imperium*. "Fatih's strategy was to revive the Roman Empire" (Halil İbrahim İnalcık 2009:1). İnalcık (idem) adds that Mehmed chose his following targets according to their degree of loyalty to Byzantium. The growing depravity in the East seemed to be the perfect time for the Conqueror to claim the title of *qayser-i Rūm*. In light of the capture of Constantinople as the formal end of the Byzantine Empire, the symbolism of "Caesar of Rome" is highly relevant. Indeed, technically speaking, the sultan did not bring an end to the Byzantine Empire. After all, one of his ancestors, Orhan I, had married a Byzantine princess. This is why Mehmed could legally claim a blood lineage. That is why seizing the opportunity at that moment makes clear why the capitulation of Constantinople came as a shock for Europe. We will see in the next pages that Süleyman the Magnificent's wars were motivated by the termination of the Holy Roman Empire toward a new European era under his governance. The newly elected Byzantine patriarch Gennadius II [ca.1440–1473] would not have much to say about this turn of events. Moreover, his choice as head of the Eastern Church immediately after the conquest of Constantinople has a symbolic signification that should not be underestimated: As his nickname Scholarius indicates, Gennadius could have been "the most important theologian of this time" (Möhlmann 2003:6).

As soon as he took office in April 1455, Nicolas V's successor Pope Calixtus III [1455–1458] placed the Ottoman threat in the focus of his action. He is known for having sold numerous works of art to support the Albanians and Hungarians, which brought him much criticism among the German princes. They condescended his forced generosity as "Turkish tithe" (Roman Möhlmann 2003:13), thus undermining Calixtus' efforts. A few years later, Pius II [1458–1464] made some tries to convert Sultan Mehmed to Christianity (1461). The pope addressed a long and eloquent letter to the sultan. In it, he first gathered arguments to refute the doctrines of the Qur'ān, then presented the Christian faith. Finally, he urged Mehmed to become a Christian. In the case of his conversion and baptism, the pope would offer him control over all the territories of the former Eastern Roman Empire (Möhlmann, 2003:13).

Most historians believe that the letter never reached the sultan. İnalcık pretends the contrary (2009:1) and argues that, indeed, "Fatih [Mehmed] was a very broadminded person. There were millions of Greeks on his land, and he wanted to learn about their religion". Yet, Pius had written in Medieval Latin, which was not very inviting. Mehmed was in a strong position, and Pius knew that any army he could unify

had no chance of defeating the sultan. They were all aware that the population of Istanbul supported the Ottomans, not the church. That may resolve why none of Pius' successors on the Papal See manifest the slightest interest in overwhelming the Muslims. Moreover, the next pope Paul II [1464–1471] seemed too busy with nepotism to take the Turkish question seriously.

In the meantime, Mehmed pursued his initiative by seeking to reach his ultimate goal – overtaking Italy. However, his death in 1481 put an end to his purposes.

> "The sultan died at forty-nine years of age in May 1481, before his dream of conquering Italy could become a reality" (Shaw 1976:70).

Thanks to his triumph over Byzantium, Mehmed the Conqueror remains one of the most popular sovereigns in Islamic history. By the end of his reign, the "Opener" (*fatih*)[608], as he was renamed after his triumph,[609] had consolidated the Ottoman territories. He extended them to a size comprising most of Pannonia in the North, Morea in the South – to mention the European part. He brought Constantine's city to a new height of architecture, art, science, and religion. The sultan led the Ottoman glory to its zenith of grandeur – which would last until Süleyman the Magnificent. We owe him the Topkapı Palace and many other masterpieces. The most important to us is that he inaugurated a new spring for those Christian groups that the established church had relentlessly oppressed. Take notice of Leften Stavrianos' conclusion (2008[4]:60) regarding the policy pursued by Mehmed II:

> "Many citizens who had fled before and after the siege returned on the promise of protection to their property and religion. Thousands were deported en masse from Serbia, Albania and Greece to re-people Constantinople (…) Thus, the ancient city experienced not extinction but rejuvenation.

> "Mehmet II was equally farsighted in matters of religion. The attitude expressed in the cry 'Better Islam than the pope' had been his powerful ally in the taking of the city, and he wisely resolved to nourish it further. He selected an eminent Greek clergyman, Gennadius, to be the patriarch of the Orthodox Church and he assured him 'all the privileges of his predecessors'. He exempted the clergy from taxes, allowed the church full autonomy in its administration, and permitted religious services to be freely celebrated. He even paid repeated visits to the new patriarch,

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[608] From Arabic *fataḥa*, to open, to unlock. *Mehmet Fatih* is often translated as "Mehmed the Conqueror."

[609] Later on, the old part of Istanbul was "rebaptized" – if I may say so – Fatih, after the name of Mehmed the Conqueror.

discussed theology with him, and requested him to write a tract on Christianity. This toleration, so far ahead of current practice in Western Christendom, was not youthful romanticism but enlightened statesmanship. By satisfying the religious aspirations of his non-Moslem subjects he had perpetuated the schism between Western and Eastern Christianity and assured himself the stable rear for the further conquests he planned."

9.10 Bayezid II and Selim: pacifism and aggressiveness

The capture of Constantinople opened the locks to Europe. Mehmed's son Sultan Bayezid II [1481–1512] could quickly overrun the old continent. Instead, he was himself too preoccupied with internal political unrest to contemplate further incursions. He was a man of contemplative nature and his general policy was to seek peace. Likewise, Pope Sixtus IV [1471–1484] had no agenda concerning the Turks. He consecrated his life to ambitious projects like the construction of the Sistine Chapel and the creation of the Vatican Archives. The same applies to his successor, the notorious Borgia pope Innocent VII [1484–1492].

The new sultan reversed several of his father's harsh policies, reducing taxes and every form of oppression. Bayezid II's posthumous nickname "Sultân Bayezid-î Velî" reflects a new concept among the Ottomans: the spiritual legitimisation of sovereignty. *Veli* ("friend of God") is "a descriptive title normally used in reference to sacred personalities who played key roles in the foundation myths of Sufi mystical orders" (Nabil al-Tikriti & Ibn-I Kemal 2011:4).

A striking contrast is the reign of Bayezid's son Selim I [1512–1520]. In the fight for be the succession as undisputed head of the empire, Selim went so far as fighting against his father (in Çorlu, August 1511). He and his 40.000 soldiers were defeated, and his brother Ahmed was chosen as heir to the throne (İnalcık 2012:176). Finally, when Bayezid saw that most recruits and even some statesmen were on Selim's side, he left the sultanate to him.[610] Selim had his brother Ahmet executed in 1513 and, with him, whoever supported him. The Grand Vizier Koca Mustafa Paşaa and one of Selim's bro-

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[610] Bayezid died suddenly on a journey to the northeast of Greece. His records mention that he got sick on the way or died of natural causes due to old age. Yet, the Encyclopedia Ottomanicum affirms that he died by poisoning. In the letter to the Mamluk sultan, Selim's brother Şehzade Ahmed witnessed that, after it was announced that his father Bayezid died of sickness, everyone knew that his death was done by his son Selim (Efendi & ibn Ḥasan, ed., 1863:22/40).

thers were strangled with a bowstring.[611] Even though Selim's posthumous nickname of *Yavuz*, "the wicked", does not indicate a very positive remembrance among the Ottomans. In the process of heroizing Ottoman sultans, *yavuz* lost its negative connotation no matter how much he had been despised. After all, he had achieved great conquests; and in that regard, Selim is one of the greatest sultans the Ottoman Empire has had.

Indeed, Selim proved to be a warrior. He resumed the policies cherished by his grandfather Mehmed II. By doubling the size of the empire to Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria, the supreme commander brought the Ottoman prestige to a new apogee.[612] He did not only inherit the mainly Arabic territories but also "their strong sense of self, their long history, and their pride as the direct descendants of Abraham's elder son Ismael and Muhammed" (Goffman 2002:99).

> "The acquisition … of the three Holy Cities of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem gave the Ottoman Sultan primacy among Islamic monarchs and bolstered his claim to be the sole defender of Islamic orthodoxy" (Imber: 2004:48).

The new sultan's offensives had stretched his realm to the peripheries of potential competitors like the aggressive Shi'ite Safavid in Mesopotamia and eastern Anatolia, the Catholic Portuguese along the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and the Holy Roman Empire north of the Mediterranean and in Pannonia. Selim managed to defeat the Mamluk army near Aleppo (1516). In 1517, he forced the Abbasid caliph Mutawakkil III (1508-1517) to confer the caliphate on him. Selim prevented them from further pretensions by exerting ongoing pressure upon neighbouring dominions. This is how the Ottoman Empire became the first power to unify the Middle East.

Selim's hegemonic moves united Islam into a front against the West. No wonder that when the news of his death reached the European courts, a sigh of relief went up to heaven. Rumours quickly spread that his successor would prove to be much less a problem to Europe. The contemporary Italian historian Pablo Giovio (1483-1552) and early modern ottomanist wrote of him (Miller 1994:55):

> "He (Selim's successor) has neither the talent nor the will to continue down the road of the conquerors as his father; he is a child without experience and high ability, a

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[611] Richard Chambers, n.d. [Online] http://www.turizm.net/turkey/ history/ottoman2.html [retrieved 13 September 2021].

[612] Marj Dabiq, Aleppo, and Damascus in 1516, Jeddah in 1517, and Cairo in 1517.

soft, peace-loving personality that thinks little about war and the glory of arms, a lamb that follows the lion."

Pablo Giovo was wrong. The new sultan's name is Süleyman the Magnificent.

9.11   Süleyman the Magnificent: The apogee of Ottoman domination

During the first half of the sixteenth century, it is as if western and eastern Europe had conspired together to produce great regents, whereas the destiny of the world laid in the hands of inexperienced men. Charles V was only 19 when he became the emperor of the German Reich (28 June 1519). In France, François I was about the same age when he climbed the throne (1 January 1515). Henry VIII of England had just turned 29 as he began to rule (22 April 1509) – still relatively young. Louis of Hungary died on the battlefield of Mohács in 1526 – at the age of twenty. Even Pope Leo X was only in his forties, relatively young for an occupant of the papal chair.

In the same year, Charles took over the destiny of Europe (1520), Selim's son, Prince Süleyman, himself only 26 years of age, began to "determine the fate of the entire continent" (Bernard Lewis 1993:74). An Italian Emissary to the new sultan's court describe him (Jason Goodwin, cit. in Grafton 2009:40):

> "Tall, but wiry, and of a delicate complexion (…) He is said to be a wise Lord, fond of study, and all men hope for good from his rule."

Yet, those who had believed that it would be easier to deal with him than with the stern Selim did not know what the future had in store. Immediately after inheriting the sultanate, Süleyman turned his main attention toward the West. He also resumed the policy of extension in the direction East,[613] South,[614] and North Africa,[615] pursuing the paths on which the Arab armies had been moving eight centuries earlier. Süleyman did not have much choice except to expand or shrink, and he was well placed to keep up expanding its territories toward the heart of Europe.

This favourable circumstance came to him on a silver plate in Hungary just after he acceded to the throne. In 1520, Süleyman sent an ambassador to Vladislaus' son

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[613] Tabriz and Çaldıran (1514), Hormuz (1552), Nakhchevan (1554), Tiflis and Derbent (1578), Baku (1583), and Ganja (1588).
[614] Baghdad (1534), Basra (1534), Aden (1538), Sana'a (1546), Muscat (1552), and Bahrain (1559).
[615] Algiers (1529), Tunis (1534), Tripoli (1551), and Jerba (1560).

and successor, King Louis II of Bohemia, Croatia, and Hungary [1516-1526].[616] The attaché should renew the treaty concluded by Süleyman's grandfather Bayezid with the new king's (Louis II) father. When the Ottoman ambassador went to collect the annual tribute that the vassal state was still supposed to hand over, Louis II treated the envoy with poor manners. The Turkish pride was offended. As diplomatic relations linking both kingdoms kept deteriorating, the sultan did not hesitate. He responded by moving his army up to Hungary. The country was almost anarchy, and the Magnificent was well aware of the kingdom's weakness. This motivated Süleyman to conduct his first campaign against the Magyar (1521). His major triumph on the way was the sack of Belgrade in August,[617] the very capital that had so bravely resisted the assaults of Murad II (1440) and Mehmed the Conqueror (1456). If the attackers were the winners, they also suffered great losses (Dimitrie Cantemir 1736:37).

Another strategic place to capitulate was Šabac along the Save River. Not more than six weeks later, Süleyman entered Buda,[618] the capital of the Magyar kingdom on the western bank of the Danube. It looked as if nothing could stop further incursions into the Austrian-Hapsburg possessions.

Yet, the first Hungarian campaign targeting Europe's geographic heart was supposed to be only a warning. Süleyman postponed his action there and went down to Rhodes, the prominent Christian stronghold in the Eastern Mediterranean (1522). In December, after six months of siege, the island fell under attackers estimated at 100.000 to 200.000 men, carried by 400 vessels (Papachristodoúlou 1948:251-252).

9.12   Mohács and the disillusionment of Europe

The second Hungarian raid was an act of retaliation against Charles V for his victory over his archenemy François I (the Battle of Pavia, 1525). The triumph of Mohács in 1526 reversed the whole destiny of Europe. "The dawn of this day saw him (Francis) the first warrior of his age; its evening found him in the abject condition of a captive" (Wylie 2002[3]:3/520). The Muslims continued to fight up the Danube and stood in front of Mohács (29 August 1526). The town on the banks of the longest river of western Europe was the

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[616] Croatian, Ludovik II, Czech, Ludvik II, and Hungarian, Lajos II.
[617] See the next chapter.
[618] Today's western part of Budapest.

last natural buffer northwestwards. Everyone sensed that if the Danube river could be crossed and Hungary gone. Austria would come next, and then Germany.

> "Mohacs made the Habsburgs *realize* what they ought long to have known – that Suleiman had better material and a better military machine and recruitment, morale and method than anything they could oppose to him. The Turk of that day was the superior of Europe – yes, even that Europe of the Renaissance – in men, guns and missiles, siegwork (sic) and attack. He had larger, better and more numerous artillery. He invented the shell. He may almost be said to have invented the thought-of scheme of siege by trenchwork, which dominated all our history for more than three hundred years" (Colin McEvedy, cit. in Fr. Francisco & Fr. Dominic Radecki, 2004:208).

> "Soliman the Magnificent, setting out from Constantinople on 23 April 1526, at the head of a mighty army, which (…) was swollen at last to 300,000 Turks, was coming nearer and nearer to Hungary. The land now shook with terror. King Louis was without money and without soldiers" (Wylie 2002[3] 3/380).

If the pathos of the quotation sounds impressive, the figure seems exaggerated. Western historians evaluate the number of Ottoman troops of 50.000 (Stavrianos 2008[4]:26), possibly 100.000 (Christian Potholm 2010:117). Hungarian historians put it between 50.000 and 60.000 (János Szabó 2010:84), at least twice in number than the Hungarian royal army of only 25-26.000. Obviously, no coalition could withstand the disciplined armies of the Turks with their sophisticated weaponry and well-trained janissaries – an elite of Christian boys enlisted by force. No wonder that the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand I [1521–1564][619] cried out his consternation (Merle Severy 1987: 172/n°5/582),[620]

> "Against us stands Solyman, that foe whom his own and his ancestors' exploits have made so terrible; he tramples the soil of Hungary with 200,000 horses, he is at the very gates of Austria, threatens the rest of Germany, and brings in his train all the nations that extend from our borders to those of Persia. The army he leads is equipped with the wealth of many kingdoms. Of the three regions, into which the world is divided, there is not one that does not contribute its share to our destruction. Like a thunderbolt he strikes, shivers, and destroys everything in his way. The troops he leads are trained veterans, accustomed to his command;

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[619] I will develop in the next chapter how Ferdinand I, Charles V's brother, became a key actor against the Reformation.

[620] Citation provided by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial ambassador to Constantinople between 1554 AD and 1562 AD.

he fills the world with the terror of his name. like a raging lion he is always roaring around our borders, trying to break in, now in this place now in that".

Ferdinand knew that the chances of defeating such an attack were nil. King Louis, too, should have known that the fate of Hungary would be sealed on the swampy ground of Mohács. But even though the Turks gave him a chance by insisting that he should perform his sole obligation to pay tribute to them, the Hungarian king persisted in refusing. Very soon, he had to pay a much higher tribute for his stubbornness, in that Mohács was his kingdom's end and his own's.

> "On the morning of the battle he [Louis] was observed to be deadly pale. All foresaw the issue. 'Here go twenty-seven thousand Hungarians,' exclaimed Bishop Perenyi, as the host defiled past him, 'into the kingdom of heaven, as martyrs for the faith.' He consoled himself with the hope that the chancellor would survive to see to their canonization by the pope. The issue was even more terrible than the worst anticipations of it. By evening the plain of Mohacz (sic) was covered with the Hungarian dead, piled up in gory heaps. Twenty-eight princes, five hundred nobles, seven bishops, and twenty thousand warriors lay cold in death. Escaping from the scene of carnage, the king and the Papal legate sought safety in flight. Louis had to cross a black pool which lay in his course; his horse bore him through it, but in climbing the opposite bank the steed fell backward, crushing the monarch, and giving him burial in the marsh."

The news washed over Europe with a wave of dismay. The destiny of the next 192 years[621] had been decided within an hour and a half. This is the time it took for the Ottomans to crush the Hungarian defiance and make their way into Hungary, slaughtering 200.000 inhabitants. What remains unspoken is that the Ottoman triumph brought a respite to the Lutherans, since the newcomers would protect them. To understand this, let us go back to the year 1521.

9.13 Süleyman's indirect help to Hungarian Lutheranism

In the southeast of Mohács, the population of the Transylvanian mountains had enthusiastically accepted the message of the Reformation. That is why King Louis promulgated several edicts against the "heretics" and commanded his advisor Count Pemflinger to supervise their execution without mercy.

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[621] The Holy League took Buda back from the Ottomans In 1686, but the kingdom was entirely liberated from their domination only in 1718.

"Nor could he stand silently by and see others execute them. He set out to tell the king that if, instead of permitting his Protestant subjects to defend their country on the battlefield, he should drag them to the stake, he would bring down the wrath of Heaven upon himself and his kingdom" (Wylie 2002[3]:3/380-381).

King Louis had strongly advised Count Pemflinger *not* to decline his offer, assuring him of a great future under his wings if he would comply. After all, the noble was notorious for his mercilessness and loyalty. Yet, he shuddered. On the way to the King's residence in Buda, he tried to shield the Lutherans so far he could. On arrival in Buda, the count heard that the monarch was marching on to Mohács. Louis never came back. After Mohács, Archduke Ferdinand was elected as Louis' successor. Having inherited the crown of Austrian hereditary lands of the Hapsburg Monarchy from his elder brother Charles V, the new king Ferdinand I had always been claiming Hungary by marriage with Louis II's sister, Anna of Bohemia and Hungary. In pursuit of his claim, he occupied Buda (1527); but the young Ferdinand lacked political experience and imagination. Süleyman delighted in humiliating him as the "little man of Vienna". He appointed Ioan Zápolya, a wealthy lord, as "his" *protégé* over the areas the Ottomans were now securing. Relevant for us is that with Zápolya on the throne, i.e., under Ottoman control, the Hungarian Lutherans could exercise their faith unhindered, knowing the Catholics would have treated them in the worst ways had not the Ottomans interposed in Hungary's destiny.

"This was enough for the Mussulman governor. Without seeking to go deeper into the points of difference, he [Suleyman] straightway gave orders that no hindrance should be offered to the preaching of that Gospel which the great Mufti of Wittemberg had discovered; and thus, in all the Transylvanian towns and plains under the Moslem, the Protestant faith continued to spread" (Wylie 2002[3]:3/228).

"Under Ottoman administration Calvinism was propagated freely in Hungary and Transylvania, which became a Calvinist and Unitarian stronghold. Hungarian territory which lay outside the Ottoman frontiers was, on the other hand, dominated by Catholicism. In the seventeenth century the Calvinists in northern Hungary and Transylvania found in the Ottomans their strongest protectors." (Peter Holt, Ann Lambton & Bernard Lewis 2008[9]:329).

No wonder "the Protestants found the sceptre of the Turks lighter than the rod of the Papists" in Ioan Zápolya's realm. After Mohács, "the Habsburg keep on fighting against Protestantism while, in the territories gained by the Turks, the Muslim administration remains indifferent to the progress of the new Faith" (Andor Csizmadia 1975:2/

92). Yet the relationship between the Turks and the Protestants was so tight that people began speaking of *Calvino-turcismus*.[622]

Of particular interest is the remark made by the Reformer Philipp Melanchthon (1494-1560), who assisted Martin Luther in his translation of the Bible. In a letter dated 8 January 1539, he stated (in Bethmann 1950:98):

> "Under the Turks in Pannonia, pious churches[623] are established, and the doctrine is being spread into Transylvania and Walachia."

Writing on 15 June 1545, Melanchthon (Letter to N. N., 15 June 1545, in CR., Vol. V, col. 771) presented the Turks as praiseworthy examples:

> "The Turkish rulers allow among the Hungarian people that they elect their own pastors, and many are called to teach the pure Gospel."

In another letter to his friend Sutelius, dated 31 May 1544, the same Melanchthon reported (in Bethmann 1950:98-99):

> "Yesterday I received a letter from Hungary telling that the gospel can be propagated in Hungary, here and there in the places occupied by the Turks, and in those which are not yet occupied; and the pious write that they congratulate themselves that in the midst of the ruins of the political kingdom, they learn the true worship of God and the teaching on the kingdom of God."

Of note is one more quotation under Melanchthon's pen. It was written to Michel Meienburg[624] on 26 March 1554:

> "In Hungary, because the Turks remain inactive, the pious pastors[625] are beaten by the bishops, and some have been thrown into the Danube, and some flee to those places which the Turks hold. There they can teach safely."

In his Master's thesis, Bethmann (1950:99) comments Melanchthon's statements as follows:

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[622] The appellation stems from the title of a pamphlet of 1106 pages entitled "Calvino-Turcismus" written by William Rainolds Guilielmus Rainoldes (1544–1594), *Calvino-Tvrcismvs, id est calvinisticae perfidiae, cvm mahvmetana collatio* (Antwerp: Coloniae aggripinae, 1597).

[623] i.e., Protestant communities.

[624] Michael Meyenburg, Nordhausen's mayor at that time, was a fervent supporter of the Reformation (1491-1555).

[625] Referring to Protestant pastors.

"These letters, reaching over a period of years are a significant proof that the Turk allowed full freedom for the propagation of the gospel, that the Protestant churches increased and that even persecuted Protestants found a refuge under the Turks."

Gottfried Simon mentions the case of the Roman Catholic bishop of Zagreb, who had sent a priest to Voska to convert the Lutherans back to the mother-church. When he arrived, "he was nearly killed by the Turks, so much did they resent his interference" (in Simon 1920:61). Simon concludes that "It seems to have caused the Turks no little joy to show about tolerance in contrast to the intolerance of the Roman church, especially of the Inquisition" (Simon 1920:62). This is how the acceptance of the Reformation became greater and greater. The preachers returned to where they had been escaping as refugees. Translated by János Sylvester (1541), the New Testament was the first book ever printed in Hungary. This sensation brought many influential Hungarians to embrace the Gospel or, at least, to support reformatory preachers. They built places of worship and founded schools grounded on scriptural principles. Some sent their sons to study as far as Wittenberg.

"Under the reign of Islam, the Gospel had greater quietness in Hungary, and flourished more than perhaps would have been the case had the kingdom been governed solely by the House of Austria" (Wylie 2002[3]:3/390).

9.14. Süleyman's indirect help to Transylvanian Calvinism

Shortly after the tragedy of Mohács, the past repeated itself in Transylvania and the Carpathian Basin. Under the pressure of the House of Hapsburg – all of them sincere Catholics – Count Petrovich, a strong supporter of the Reformation, was forced to give way to Stephen Losonczy (1557). Stephen belonged to the ethnic minority of the Székelys, probable descendants of the Huns who settled there a thousand years earlier. A man of war who hated the message of the Reformation, Stephen did everything he could to crush Protestantism in its founding process. Incidentally, within a year, "the Turks burst across its frontier. They approached Temeswar,[626] besieged and took the fortress, and slaughtered all the occupants, including the unhappy Losonczy himself" (Bethmann 1950:19). Transylvania returned to Süleyman's vassalage. One more time, the Protestants could enjoy the protection of the Muslim ruling class. Goffman (2002: 103) concludes that,

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[626] Today's Timișoara.

> "Just as the Balkan lands had become Ottoman in part because their Greek and Serbian Orthodox inhabitants despised Catholic rule, so did much of eastern Hungary enter the Ottoman realm in part because its Protestant inhabitants feared the absolute Catholic intolerance toward their beliefs."

9.15. The French-Ottoman alliance as a distraction against Lutheranism

Sultan Süleyman added another prominent actor of the European scene to the league: the French king François I. The recent election of François' rival Charles V as Holy Roman Kaiser implied that France found itself surrounded overnight by Hapsburg territories. This geographical situation isolated the *Grande Nation* from the rest of Europe. No wonder François was in desperate search of support. Likewise, whenever Charles wanted to travel from the northern part of his empire to the southern one in Spain, he had to obtain François' gracious permission to cross the latter's territory. What a humiliation for him who was "although a Habsburg, (…) at heart a Spaniard" (Grafton, 2009:42). As an effort of cooperation, the French king and Charles signed a truce based on a joint fight against the Lutherans and the Turks at the same time. François agreed, but probably without the slightest intention to implement the terms of the document. On the contrary, as soon as it was released, he broke the treaty and went to regain his lost territories in Italy.

But the hostility between these two most outstanding players on the European stage lay much deeper. After the death of Maximilian, François had good prospects to win thanks to his meticulous networking with the courts. However, in his opening address at the Diet of Frankfurt (1519), the Archbishop of Mainz drew particular attention to the Turkish threat. His plan was to sway the balance of the electorate in Charles' support, arguing that the French would be too weak to stop the Turks (Puaux 1923:9). The delegates voted François down and opted for Charles.

The clash was only a matter of time. François I expected the assistance of King Henry VIII of England in their shared interest to feel Charles' supremacy somehow weakened. But none of them could agree on sufficient common ground to ratify a sustainable agreement. The French army marched alone against Charles and was defeated (Battle of Pavia, 1525). François was jailed in Madrid as a trophy.

From his prison, François successfully forwarded a written proposal for an alliance against Charles to the sultan. The mastermind was that, after his liberation, he should

destabilize the Hispanic peninsula as the southwestern part of Charles' empire. By doing so, he would grant unhindered access to Ottoman ships to the western Mediterranean. It would open their way into the Atlantic and allow them to control Spanish maritime commerce.[627] After all, the access to the recently discovered riches of South America was fascinating. The Ottoman admiral cartographer Pîrî Reis had just compiled different maps into the first accurate world map (1513), which seemed to make the world smaller. While Süleyman would attack the southeastern part of the Mediterranean, he would seize the opportunity to issue on the way several treaties with the Venetians against papal prohibitions. Manuscripts published in the Ottoman archives confirm this plan. Among them is a letter Süleyman addressed to the French king (dated February 1526), in which the sultan pledges his full support to him (de Testa 1864:1/28-29).[628]

The sultan seized François' offer and moved his hordes into the Hapsburgs realm, coming first to Hungary. As a by-product, the bond with François granted the Ottomans a golden entry to European diplomacy. The French King's expectation was most likely to gain prestige in Süleyman's eyes. Without a doubt, the Ottomans were planning to besiege Hungary anyway. Although Süleyman would not have waited for François' request, it is remarkable how the French-Ottoman cooperation started and grew over the years. The Ottoman archives have kept a letter in which the sultan thanked François for the great details he had provided on the rapprochement of the German (Protestant) princes with the emperor (Le Baron de Testa 1864:1/40-41). Unfortunately, the message does not specify what "the state of relations between the German princes and the emperor" implies; but the context of this letter (1547) is the pacification between Catholics and Protestants – one of the leading controversies in Germany. Therefore, we may commend Süleyman's response as a token of grate-fulness to the French king. At that stage, my main research question raises whether Süleyman's inquiry about the Lutheran authorities was only political, or maybe a sign of his interest in the progress of the Reformation. A positive finding would be a mile-stone in my work, which is why I will develop this topic later on (chapter eleven). At least, it is essential to note that Süleyman's second intrusion into Hungarian territory was an indirect consequence of Pavia and motivated Charles to convene the First Imperial Diet of Speyer.

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[627] The will to dominate the Mediterranean was certainly nothing new.

[628] [Online] https://archive.org/details/recueildestrait01testuoft/page/28/mode/2up [retrieved 12 July 2021].

In their mutual interest in counterbalancing the Hapsburg hegemony by containing the Catholic states of the Holy Roman Empire with a geographical circle around them, the French king and the Ottomans signed the "Franco-Ottoman alliance" (Müller 1994:102). By doing so, France became the first European kingdom to institute formal ties with the Ottoman sultanate. Such an unprecedented move of "the crescent and the fleur–de–lis marching hand in hand" (Bethmann 1950:48). may have been interpreted as audacious. The covenant became so consequential that Charles had no choice but to limit his potential losses due to the presence of his sworn enemies on the right and left. As long as Charles concentrated his energy on the alliance, the Lutherans enjoyed the free space to expand their prerogatives.

9.16   The threat against Vienna and the threat against Lutheranism

In 1529, the Hapsburgs regained possession of Hungary. Charles V, who had just taken control of the Italian city-states, forced Pope Clemens VII to capitulate to his political objectives. François I should to sign an agreement with him (Charles). If only the German princes gave allegiance to him, the German emperor would secure the undisputed authority of the Holy Roman Empire over the whole continent.

But at this moment, Süleyman began to proceed northwards along the valley of the Danube. His cavalry reached Buda and took control of the burg, soon resuming his advance toward Vienna. In September, the sultan's troops surrounded the walls that lay in Turkish hands for three weeks. The onset of a bitterly cold winter brought a surprising turning point. Deprived of fodder, the Ottoman cavalry became unusable. The heavy rain made the roads partially impassable and transporting men and artillery impossible. Consequently, and due to the avowed opposition, it became clear to the sultan that he would not be able to move into Germany before winter. He chose to pull back, suddenly withdrawing from Vienna (14 October). Süleyman and Ferdinand agreed to a cease-fire, and Charles V went back to Germany – yet not without fear that the Turks would probably charge another time.[629]

> "The terrible calamity of Ottoman subjugation was not to befall Europe. The Turk had reached the furthest limits of his progress westwards. From this point his slaughtering hordes were to be rolled back. While the cities and provinces of Ger-

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[629] Despite the success of the Hapsburg armies, in the words of eyewitness accounts, "some 30,000 people in surrounding towns and villages had either been killed or taken back to Istanbul for sale in the slave market" (Miller 1994:67-68).

many waited in terror the tramp of his war-horses and the gleam of his scimitars, there came the welcome tidings that the Asiatic warriors had sustained a severe repulse before Vienna (16 October 1529), and were now in full retreat to the Bosphorus. The scarcity of provisions to which the Turkish camp was exposed, and the early approach of winter, with its snow-storms, combined to affect the raising of the siege and the retreat of the invaders" (Wylie 2002[3]:1/889-90).

Süleyman had reached his furthest northwest limit. He had not legally annexed Hungary but, at best, made her a tributary state. By doing so, he had erected a solid buffer between his realm and the Holy Roman Empire so that now, he could focus his attention on other places. First, he secured the eastern borders of his empire up to the Persian Gulf, conquered the Balearic Islands (1535), Jedisan[630] and Crimea,[631] Greece,[632] Nice in France (1543), Sicily,[633] and Malta (1565). It is how the Magnificent extended his domination on some strategic spots around the Mediterranean. Paul Coles' succinct comment says it all,

> "From the point of their first entrance into history as a nomadic war-band, the Ottomans were carried from one triumph to the next by a ruthless dedication to conquest and predation" (1968:77).

After the failure of Süleyman's siege of Vienna (1529), King Ferdinand I launched a counter-attack to retake territories he had ceded to the Ottomans, mainly in Hungary and Transylvania (1530). The sultan's response was swift. In 1532, he came back with no less than 120.000 soldiers. The Croatian forces stalled the Ottomans until the worst opponent made its apparition: another continental winter. Emperor Charles took the opportunity to send 80.000 troops, and when Süleyman heard it, he withdrew. For the second time, Vienna was spared and, with it, the rest of Europe.

in 1540, Ioan Zápolya, the Ottomans-appointed governor over Hungary, passed away unexpectedly. Zápolya's supporters immediately proclaimed his son, John Sigismund, king. Süleyman agreed. Ferdinand was furious, and he invaded Hungary to force his claims. Such a retort gave Süleyman the golden opportunity to head to the Magyar Kingdom for the fourth time (1541). By annexing most of the land south of the Austrian Danube, he would avenge the defeat suffered at Vienna.

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[630] The northern coast of the Black Sea.
[631] Victory of Bender (1538).
[632] Victories of Corfu (1537) and Monemvasia (1540).
[633] Victory of Reggio di Calabra (1543).

Ferdinand had no choice but to overcome his pride and contemplate a truce with the Turks this time. As was often the case, he acted on behalf of his brother Charles. He sent ambassadors to Istanbul, where the Holy Roman Empire concluded a five-year treaty with the sultan. The *anlaşma* – Turkish for "agreement" – sealed the territorial status quo that is, in fact, still shaping the Balkanic geopolitical map of today. The *conditio sine qua non* was that Ferdinand would give up his claim over the Kingdom of Hungary. What is even of greater symbolic importance is that "the humiliating treaty referred to Charles V not as 'emperor' but as the 'king of Spain', leading Suleiman to identify as the true 'Caesar'" (Imber 2004:54).

During his thirteenth military campaign (1566), the sultan led the siege of Sziget-vár against 2,300 Hungarian defenders. Here, on the battlefield, the Magnificent died with his 90,000 fellow combatants around him. It happened two days before the fortress capitulated.[634] Süleyman had just come back to Hungary for the last campaign. He was planning to crush Stephen Losonczy, himself about to shoot another deadly blow to the Transylvanian Protestants. Was it a coincidence?

9.17   Summary

This chapter has identified a recurrent pattern that brought the Ottomans step by step "from a small principality in western Anatolia into a full-fledged imperial power" (Kia 2008:3). How could communities of "goat– and sheep-herding Türkmen" defy "camel-raising Bedouins in North Africa and the Middle East" (Kasaba, in Woodhead 2014:11), humble European kings, and end up intimidating mighty emperors?

First of all, one myth that needs to be debunked is that of the invincibility of the Ottomans. Except for the islands of Cyprus (649),[635] Rhodes (654), the Iberian Peninsula (711), Sardinia, and Sicily (720), the decisive steps into Europe, for instance, failed until 8 February 1347. It is the date Osman's son Orhan brought his armed mob over the Sea of Marmara to Constantinople. I need to mention Sultan Süleyman's maritime disaster against the Holy League in Lepanto (1571). The agreements between John Castriota

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[634] On the other hand, it must be noted that even if Süleyman's reign certainly marked the apogee of the Ottoman era,

> "the process of decline was already under way during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent, but it did not manifest itself to outsiders, particularly to the Christian states of Europe, until a century later. (…) The death of Süleyman the Magnificent in 1566 was followed by a series of weak and incompetent sultans who were dominated by their mothers, wives, and chief eunuchs inside the *harem* and by the *janissary* corps outside the palace" (Kia 2008:10).

[635] Under Caliph ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān (6 November 644 – 17 June 656).

Skanderberg and János Hunyadi's brought them to success against Sultan Murat II. It proves that concerted tenacity among European players was possible and efficient enough to inflict severe defeats on the Ottomans – at least for the short term.[636] The Ottomans had to wait 103 years to put Constantine's city under their domination. Before that, Orhan had settled down by invitation of his father-in-law, the Byzantine emperor John VI Kantakouzenos. This explains why the Ottoman arrival on the European mainland took place without shedding blood; in other words: not a warlike conquest. Regardless of whether we attribute this proposition to genuine friendship, admiration, or naïveté, the fact is that Orhan peacefully vanquished at the very place where 120.000 Muslim Arab warriors (McLachlan 2004:77) had twice fought to make it (674-78 and 717-18) but could not.[637]

Yet, the overall superiority of the Ottomans is undeniable. It included more discipline and, at times, better cavalry and more advanced weaponry. Think of Orbán's "high-tech" cannons that operated as the unlocking pass to the gates of Constantinople. Europe's fate would have taken a turn into the opposite direction if the Hungarian iron-founder had sold his giant invention to Constantine XI rather than Mehmed II. Not to forget the *yeni çeri,* "janissaries", first made up of children taken by force out of Christian families and raised from youth to manhood to become an elite corp. Their good education, regular income, and prestige encouraged civilians to join them. On the other hand, we are aware that our overview may be deemed to be a simplistic revisionist view of the past. Tezcan (in Woodhead 2014:260) points out:

> "Attempting to reconstruct the Ottoman past is a daunting task. Such reconstructions oscillate between images of a merciless *tourkokratía* ('Turkish rule', Greek) and of a tolerant Muslim empire that created the Pax Ottomanica both in the region and for its subjects of different ethnicities and religions."

The first four steps involved human waves emerging out of Central Asia and coming to seek refuge. First enrolled as mercenaries, they profited from partly unwise alliances offered here and there by their Byzantine hosts until the migrants were integrated and gradually took over key positions:

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[636] After a promising start, the European forces lost the crusade of Varna. Yet, when they returned home, they were celebrated as heroes and remained in local memories as the winners.

[637] Said to have been the worst in living memory, the harsh winter did the rest. At last, the Bulgars came to the Byzantines' rescue and finished what the Greeks and the bad weather had started. They massacred the Arabs, and the remaining fled back.

1. The Göktürk came to Baghdad, where one of their leaders, al-Afshīn, became the head of several provinces.

2. The Oğuz escaped the Karakhanids and came to rescue Persia. There, they gained more and more control.

3. The Seljuk fought for the Abbasids, and Tuğril married the caliph's daughter.

4. The Kayı tribe was hosted by the Byzantines and, on top, entrusted with the authority over parts of the Seljuk territories.

The second element was the chronic need for more cohesion among the European monarchs. No matter whether Latins or Byzantines, all were unable to unite in decisive moments against the common opponent. At the same time, well-trained, best-equipped, and highly motivated Ottoman attackers progressed under a charismatic leadership. Especially the rivalry antagonising Hungary and the Hapsburg made the Turkish advance relatively easy.

Nevertheless, for the sake of our study, we should value the sultans' support of the heirs of "Apostolic" Christianity. Even if this help was more practical than theological, the remarkable Ottoman spirit of acceptance added to Islamic as a direct or indirect source of inspiration on the Renaissance truly deserves to be remembered as Muḥammad's legacy embedded in European history.

In Hungary and Transylvania's case, the Turks no doubt facilitated the progress of Calvinism.

The last fact is that the intrusion of the Ottomans into the Hapsburg territories came at a critical time and derailed – or at best distracted – the imperial attempts to snuff out Martin Luther's endeavour.

In regard to Luther and his supporters, one may wonder how they would have avoided being annihilated by their many oppressors if not for the help of the Ottoman phenomenon. The answer to this question requires some further explanation.

That will be the concern of the next chapter.

The Lutheran perception of the Ottomans

10.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have examined most preliminary aspects of the possible effect of the Ottomans on the Reformation. Now, we are reaching the point where Martin Luther and Sultan Süleyman faced each other – but did they? Even though historians do not witness such an interview, the reality of their encounters is accurate, and it will be the object of the next two chapters. In the following, I will overview the Ottoman role in the progress of Lutheranism and how the Reformers perceived it.

10.2 The Ottoman indirect protection of Martin Luther

To appreciate the extent of the Ottoman protection afforded to Luther – indirect as it may have looked like – I will try to connect some of the dots previously mentioned. The more Lutheranism gained ground, the more it generated hatred among the Catholic prelates and their political allies. Martin Luther's credenda were in diametrical opposition to the Roman Magisterium. Moreover, it severely challenged the clerical claim to decide on the conscience of Christians. The legal religion and the secular arm thrived in merging their activities to lessen Luther's popularity, but many of the German princes joined the ranks of the Reformation. Some did it by conviction, others to fight the rampant corruption and the egregious misuse of the church's authority. Many profited from this crisis as the perfect moment to assert their predominance. At the same time, a new phase of Ottoman growth distracted the antagonists so that Lutheranism could expand with fewer hindrances.

On 16 March 1517,[638] nearly seven months before the publication of the Ninety-five Theses, Pope Leo X unveiled his project *espedizione universale di tutta christanità contro a Selim principe dei Turchi*. It was a new attempt to unite the entire Christianity against Selim. His longing was to face the common threat by combining all western armies. That move would enable him to arbitrate and sign a truce between archenemies. Betraying his despair, he guaranteed total remission of sins – without contrition or confession – and even a personal reconciliation with the Highest. He decreed that

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[638] At the end of the Fifth Council of the Lateran.

whoever decided to march or contribute depending on his means would be associated with the angels in endless bliss. The papal vision sounded like the last attempt to save Europe. But despite diplomatic steps and pledges that surpassed anything undertaken so far, his plans failed.

Unexpectedly, Sultan Selim passed away (22 September), just a few days after the pope launched his wager. Süleyman's accession to the throne raised uncertainty to a new height. At the same time, only a few days later, an obscure monk dared to condemn the commerce of indulgences and even the authority of the Vicarius Filii Dei himself. In this context, it is easy to presume the infuriated reaction and embarrassment of Luther's opponents.

The renegade appeared before the Imperial Diet of Worms three weeks after his excommunication; but suddenly, dark clouds began gathering in the political sky on the other side of Europe. Less than two months after the end of the diet (25 May), the Magnificent approached Belgrade. While Luther was rushing through the gates of the Wartburg, the Ottoman assailants stood in front of Serbia's largest town. After 40 days of heavy shelling from at least 100 ships, Süleyman and his 250.000 men besieged the key fortress overlooking the confluent of the Save and the Danube. It fell into Ottoman hands (28 August), and most of it was immediately levelled to the ground. The Orthodox population – estimated at around 40.000 citizens – was deported to a place still carrying the name Belgrad Ormanı, "the forest of Belgrade", today a part of greater Istanbul. At the news of Belgrade's fall, the consternation in the West was great. Venice felt forced to accept the status of vassal of the Ottomans. It paid without hesitation a twofold tribute for Zakynthos – the third largest of the Ionian islands – and Cyprus – the third largest island in the Mediterranean.

The Serbian metropolis was one of the last barriers on the way into Germany. Here, the Pannonian plain meets the Balkan ranges. It would take one more disaster to open the northern route for yet another Ottoman wave and simultaneously secure the consolidation of the Reformation all over the Hungarian Kingdom. We have seen what happened in the strategic town of Mohács five years and one day after the subjugation of Belgrade.

It took Charles and his younger brother Ferdinand three years to reoccupy Buda, the western part of today's Budapest. At the same time, Süleyman was again progressing northwards along the valley of the Danube. He irresistibly regained control over

the Magyar realm. At the latest, it became evident that Europe's reaction needed to be more than an offensive, such as a crusade. The Ottomans presaged to invade Austria and the territories beyond, and panic grew to the point where Charles had to renounce any military action against the Lutheran princes. By then, he needed every support he could muster – even from those he hated the most. The question was, *how* should the old continent respond?

> "Charles V was haunted by the specter of Lutheranism, which a true instinct told him would one day rob him of his empire; but he could not understand how it should happen that every time he raised his sword to make an end of that detestable thing, the Turk unexpectedly presented himself, and seemed with menacing gestures to forbid the blow" (Wylie 2002[3]:3/175).

10.3   The compelling reality of the Turkish menace

The Turkish menace did not only alarm the emperor. During every step of the Reformation's progress, the foreshadowing of Islam was a focal point of attention. It had already been shaping Christendom as an eschatological reality. Then, Marco Polo and other travellers' narratives, the interaction with Islam amid the crusades, and the fame of Muslim Andalus broadened the medieval horizon up to the early modern days. But if Islam fascinated Europe, the glance behind what Miller (1994:12) calls "the crescent curtain" began to move its attention from exotic romanticism to the bitter reality of an enemy at the door.

The details of partly exaggerated accounts of fugitives from slavery fuelled the popular imagination. The subgenre of captivity narratives hit the list of the "sixteenth-century best sellers" and, as a result, "had an enormous impact on the shaping of Western views on Islam" (Miller 1994:12). After all, Islam had always been perceived as the ideological rival *par excellence* – maybe, even more, to be feared than is heresy within Christianity – and the relentless Islamic pursuit of political hegemony became a more urgent concern. Europe was back to the pre-Renaissance "islamophobia" that characterized centuries of crusades, whereas, according to Francisco (2008:9), "the image of Islam throughout most of Western Europe prior to and during the crusades was severely distorted if not completely fictious." The Turkish concern was dominating every agenda, including Luther's sermons and publications. John Merriman (2010[3]: 101) supposes that even the anthem of the Reformation, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott" (A Mighty Fortress is our God) was probably composed as an encouragement

at the time when the Turkish peril was most imminent. The theory may be hard to verify. Fact is that in his commentary on Genesis Chapter 41, Luther declared:

"No matter how much the world and his friends rage in the pope and the Turk, nevertheless they will not drive out my confidence in God once it has been attained. (…) To be sure, they can take away this life or property, wife and children, likewise good health; but I will hope in God forever."

David Grafton (2009:28) considers the parallel with the song as being "unmistakable".

Another hymn, "Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort" (Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word) was subtitled, "A children's song against the two archenemies of Christ and his Holy Church" and originally included the stance "Restrain the murderous Pope and Turk."

On the other hand, the reformer's opposition to a possible war against the Turks is one of the reasons why people were so enthusiastic about him. The leitmotiv from the Catholic part was that God would not bless the sword raised against the Turks if the Lutheran heresy persisted. Luther affirmed the opposite. God was using the Turks like a chastising rod the Christians deserved because of their unwillingness to repudiate the idolatry promoted by the papacy. It explains why, on top of censuring a large portion of the Ninety-five Theses, the bull *Exsurge Domine* condemned Luther's opinion on Islam (in Kidd 1911:70). Among the forty-one points of disapproval of Luther's Theses and subsequent writings, number Thirty-three referred to his remarks on the Turkish question, in particular, the famous declaration often reiterated, "To fight against the Turks is to fight God's visitation upon our iniquities." In one of the four replies that Luther sent to the bull (*Grund und ursach aller Artikel*), the Wittenberg professor concluded by attributing the Ottoman prowess not so much to their military achievements but to the evil nature of the pontificate instead.

No wonder Leo X's successor Pope Adrian VI sent a message to the First Diet of Nuremberg (1522) to implement the decisions taken at Worms. In his letter, the pope unmistakably expressed his reluctance to soften his position on Lutheranism and thundered contra Martin Luther:[639]

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[639] Breve an die zu Nürnberg versammelten Stände des Heiligen Römischen Reichs, den 25. November 1522, in LSS 5/2132-34.

"Even if we fought against the foreign foe [the Turk] and overcame him, all our effort would be utterly in vain and useless for souls' salvation as long as we are afflicted at home by heresy and schism."

10.4   Luther's non-violent policy toward the Ottomans

The climax of fear peaked during the First Imperial Diet of Speyer (1526). Emperor Charles V, who had just declared Martin Luther a heretic, decided not to attend the meeting but to send his younger brother King Ferdinand I to represent him. We may argue that Ferdinand was the custodian of the family's interests in Eastern Europe. Yet, Charles kept undoubtedly anxious not to bring himself into open discussions on Lutheranism. That could quickly polarize his subjects, even to the point of causing a split. At the same time, the emperor did not want to miss any opportunity to protect his empire against the Muslim invaders. The original purpose of the diet was to unite the German princes behind Charles as a reaction to the treaty signed by François and Süleyman. The Turks had already passed the gates of Istanbul and were heading to Hungary. Middle in the session, the news came that Süleyman had already seized the larger part of the Magyar kingdom. By preventing the Holden Horde from further advancing, the Hungarians had sacrificed themselves and were expecting external support (Merriman 2010[3]:54).[640] Hieronymus Balbus, King Louis's emissary, addressed the diet in a passionate plea for assistance. Charles evaluated his contest with François over Italy more important than is the fate of Hungary, and he was determined not to alter his plans. On the other hand, neither François I nor Pope Clemens VII would accept Charles' solution to the Italian issue. In the meantime, Süleyman had little to fear.

In that context, the German princes began to deliberate on which kind of support to send, if any. The controversy around the Turks immediately dominated the agenda.[641] Notice that if the unyielding and ever-menacing Süleyman had not pressured the eastern limits of the Hapsburg territories, Ferdinand would have taken the First Imperial Diet of Speyer as a pretext to exert pressure on the German elite to either

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[640] Cited from Oratio habita in Imperiali Conventu Die Tertia Aprilis MDXXI, summary in Deutsche Reichtagsakten unter Kaiser Karl V., 2/758-759.

[641] In his thesis, Bethman (1950:42) goes through the minutes and resolutions recorded from various diets on such occasions and letters written by those involved. David Grafton pretends that "Luther had stolen the show at Worms. After the two–day debate over Luther and his writings, the princes had no further taste for politics. There was neither energy nor will left in the diet. For the German princes, it was Luther and German pride that was at stake, not fears of the 'Terrible Turk'."

ban reformatory views or to face war. Again, it appears that Providence gave the Lutherans some breathing space, which allowed them to consolidate their progress.

Two weeks later (18 April), Luther strongly advised not to help Hungary. The following day, the diet's acceptance of Luther's rejective position reached the Hungarian envoy. The official minutes were written on 27 August. On the 29th, the fate of Hungary was sealed in the fields of Mohács. Three years later, the siege of Vienna again distracted Europe to the benefit of the Reformation. While the Hapsburg emperor was busy trying to save what he could of his realm, Martin Luther and his adepts enjoyed the freedom to preach God's grace to the world.

In 1529, Süleyman was pressing forward in Hungary and heading to Buda for the second time after 1526. Now, everybody sensed that Vienna would be next. In March, Charles V convened the Second Imperial Diet of Speyer in an attempt to take action against the Turks. It also marked a new try to prohibit the Reformation by maybe reversing the results of the First Diet of Speyer (1526). Indeed, the edict (19 April) devastated the Lutherans and other reformatory groups like the Zwinglians and Anabaptists. But a few days later (25 April), six princes of the Holy Roman Empire and heads of fourteen Imperial Free Cities appealed with dissent against the mandate. Their "protest" against the newly decided measures created the term "Protestantism" – still employed today as a synonym for the adherents of the Reformation.

On 26–27 August, the Ottomans had Buda encircled. After taking control of the Magyar capital, Süleyman directed his march onto Vienna. On 27 September, his troops surrounded the walls. The siege lasted just eighteen days. The sultan's ultimate vision was about to become a reality, i.e., the upper hand over the capital of the Hapsburg. No wonder that the move sent shock waves deep into western Europe, to quote Wylie (2002[3]:1/889-90):

> "The gates of Asia had opened and had poured out the fierce Tartar hordes. (…) Traversing Hungary, the Ottoman host had sat down before the walls of Vienna a week before the Marburg Conference. The hills around that capital were white with their tents, and the fertile plains beneath its walls, which the hoof of Mussulman [sic] horse had never pressed till now, were trodden by their cavalry. The besiegers were opening trenches, were digging mines, and were thundering with their cannon, and already a breach had been made in the walls. A few days and Vienna must succumb to the numbers, the impetuosity, and valor of the Ottoman warriors, and a desolate and blood-besprinkled heap would alone remain to mark where it

had stood. The door of Germany burst open, the conquerors would pour along the valley of the Danube and plant the crescent amid the sacked cities and devastated provinces of the empire."

"In Vienna, the Turk is closing in fierce conflict with the Christian, and the leisure of Ferdinand of Austria, which otherwise might be worse employed, is fully occupied in driving back the hordes of a Tartar invasion."

Therefore, the Ottoman march on Buda and Vienna played a decisive role in accepting the "Letter of Protestation" that marked the birth of Protestantism.

The subsequent imperial diet in Augsburg (1530) was another milestone. Ten years after Worms, Charles was determined to seal his domination in Germany by putting an end to the Reformation for good. But when the Roman Nuncio Vincentius Pimpinellus delivered the opening address – the most eloquent speech one could imagine – his appeal dealt primarily with the Turks. At that point, Count Palatine Frederick began to discuss the first agenda item: the Ottoman war. Here again, we can observe how, at this decisive diet, the perplexity created by the Turks played an outsized role. Coming back to its core agenda, the outcome of the diet was an accommodation favourable to Martin Luther, with an edict granting another six months of respite. Again, the Turks had given room to Lutheranism.

10.5   The Catholic status quo on behalf of Lutheranism

By Spring of 1532, the Holy Roman emperor was more than ever determined to sweep Lutheranism away. But again, the irrepressible Süleyman showed up in the East, aiming a new assault on Vienna. Charles had no choice but to postpone to a more convenient time, which should have been his ultimate blow against Lutheranism. Even though the summer rains unexpectedly stopped Süleyman's advance, Charles realised little by little that one day, perhaps, he could not get around a formal agreement with the Lutherans. His anxiety over the catastrophic prospect of a divided Germany facing a possible Turkish offensive compelled him to rethink his unconditional turndown of everything and anyone related to Lutheranism.

Charles was not the only one to think so. Facing the ongoing danger, all European parties knew the time had come to take a seat at the negotiation table. For the moment, and at the latest in case of another aggression, the emperor sensed the benefits of supporting those "heretics" he despised so much. That is why he decided

to consult Luther's supporters on resisting the menace – not without the pope's advice. The newly elected Clement VII [1523-1534], was Pope Leo X's cousin: He was also the pontiff who commissioned the fresco *The Last Judgement*. In the context of the Turkish question, we may wonder which legacy he, as a pope, wanted to leave to the world by paying Michelangelo to decorate the walls of the Sistine Chapel with a painting of eschatological scenes depicting Christ coming on the clouds of heaven. Note what Leopold von Ranke (2019:655) writes about one move Clement VII was likely to make:

> "We understand from recently discovered letters a point of which nobody has the least knowledge, that the pope of the time was inclined to let the Augustine pass. In April 1532, he presented this confession to moderate Roman theologians. They declared that some points were firmly Catholic. Others could be explained as agreeing in their meaning. As for a third group, reconciliation could be found – too bad that it did not happen earlier! The pope requested the emperor to do everything to agree with the opponents so that the Turks might not find too weak a resistance. Even being Lutherans, they are still Christians."

The result was the conclusion of a stand down, the "Religious Peace of Nuremberg" (23 July 1532). Again, Wylie (2002[3]:1/74-75):

> "First Soliman, whom thirteen battles had rendered the terror of Germany, made a sudden eruption into Europe. (…) The States of the empire, stricken with fear, hastily assembled at Nuremberg to concert measures for the defense of Christendom, and for the arresting of the victorious march of its terrible invader. This was work enough for the princes. The execution of the emperor's edict against Luther, with which they had been charged, must lie over till they had found means of compelling Soliman and his hordes to return to their own land. Their swords were about to be unsheathed above Luther's head, when lo, some hundred thousand Turkish scimitars are unsheathed above theirs!"

In Nuremberg, the "heretics" received the emperor's assurance that all discrimination cases would be dropped. This noticeably postponed the final settlement of the religious controversy and ended one of the most acute crises the Reformation had to face. It is indeed one of the strangest ironies of fate that while Martin Luther's growing popularity became so worrying to the emperor, the same powers ready to be directed against the Lutheran princes were diverted by Muslims. Even Catholic writers (e.g., Radecki & Radecki 2004:190) agree that Islam was the key to the Lutherans' success:

"Another contribution to the spread of Protestantism in the 16th century was the Muslim threat. During Suleiman the Magnificent's long reign (1520-1566), Ottoman armies reached as far as Algeria, Hungary, the Persian Gulf (1535), and Yemen (1547). Austria was attacked in 1529, and the Hapsburgs had to rally their forces to the defence of Europe. Little time to put down rebellions by the German nobles who sided with Luther's or Zwingly's followers in Switzerland. Alliances rose between the Ottoman Turks and France against the Hapsburgs (Holy Roman Empire). Others united the Persians and the Austrians versus the Turks. Europe, Asia, and Africa were divided between Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims."

10.6 The triumph of the Lutheran cause with the help of the Ottomans

Later, Charles V resumed his aggressions toward the Lutherans (in the Schmalkadic war) and beat them in 1547. Since 1537, though, Süleyman and the French king François I had worked on a combined strategy against the Italian parts of the Hapsburg Monarchy. François was to invade the north of Italy. Simultaneously, Süleyman would launch a seaborne assault on the South. The stratagem was to encircle the Holy League (the papal states, Charles V's and Ferdinand I's realms). The plan failed, but the Catholic estates were kept busy long enough to allow the Reformation to take hold. Again, Charles' hatred directed to Lutheranism could not materialize. This period of successive waves of negotiations gave Luther opportunities to propagate his cause. The events I am giving as examples were perceived as divine interventions. They demonstrate Osman's progeny's indirect but decisive role of on the European stage.

The never-ending story came to a halt. The Muslim warriors went on capturing one fortress after another: Buda (again), Vác, Višegrad, Székesfehérvár, and Pécs. If Germany was relieved, each actor understood that the sultan would probably not rest until he could come back with greater capability. The Ottomans resumed their attack on Hungary, captured Buda, and thwarted the German army (August 1541).

Charles had to start another round of consultation, one more step in implementing the Religious Peace of Nuremberg concluded nine years earlier (1532). In 1541, an imperial order allowed the cities to join Lutheranism. In the coming year, Regensburg decided to accept the Reformation. In 1552, Charles had to renounce religious discrimination (the Peace of Passau). That is how, little by little, the supporters of the *Solas* won their cause; but it would take some more years for the Lutherans to be recognised as equal citizens with the guarantee of the unhindered exercise of their

faith. On 25 September 1555, Charles and the Schmalkaldic League signed the Peace of Augsburg, formally ending the fight opposing Catholics and Protestants. The legal principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* ("the prevailing religion is the ruler's one") was implanted, leaving local governors the choice between one or the other religion.

Interestingly, as soon as the Catholic regents stopped fighting the Reformation, the Ottomans gave up their enthusiasm for western Europe. In case it was causality and not a coincidence, we may wonder how many bloodbaths could have been spared had the pacification taken place earlier. Again, the blindness generated by human pride had demonstrated its fateful consequences. The annals of History would do well to offer this moment of *Vernunft* as a notorious pattern of letting others enjoy a piece of the cake in order to secure the most prominent part.

Later, in 1571, the Holy League defeated the Ottoman fleet at Lepanto, Greece. Yet, the Turks kept their strategic location at the Bosporus. Starting there at the junction of three continents, they kept consolidating the crescent of containment they had placed around the expanding Germanic Empire.

> "Asia owned the scepter of Soliman the Magnificent. Often were his hordes seen hovering, like a cloud charged with lightning, on the frontier of Christendom. When a crisis arose in the affairs of the Reformation, and the kings obedient to the Roman See had united their swords to strike, and with blow so decisive that they should not need to strike a second time, the Turk, obeying One Whom he knew not, would straightway present himself on the eastern limits of Europe, and in so menacing an attitude, that the swords unsheathed against the poor Protestants had to be turned in another quarter. The Turk was the lightning-rod that drew off the tempest" (Wylie 2002[3]:1/739).

In 1683 – over a hundred years after Lepanto – the Ottomans planned to resume their offensive against Vienna. This time, though, they miscalculated. It was not until 1718 that they gave up their last foothold in Hungary. The point is, how could they achieve a peaceful cohabitation for so long? One cause was the high esteem the Turks had for Christians. Oddly enough, while the Sunni Muslims did not make any religious concessions to their Shiite brothers in Persia, they were willing to deal with the Catholic-Lutheran controversy.

10.7 Luther's knowledge of Islam[642]

The quick circulation of the Ninety-five Theses took place in the middle of the socio-political turmoil between the occidental and oriental empires of the sixteenth century. It created an intra-Christian crisis amid an intra-European race for domination facing a common threat: the Ottomans. "Brother Martinus" manifested interest in the matter this made, first of all as a theologian. In a foreword (*Martinus Lutherus lectori pio*[643]) he wrote in *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum* (an overview of the pomp and morals of the Turks) in 1530, the reformer expressed his eagerness to acquire first-hand information about Islam. He also regretted having access to secondary sources only, the leading ones being the *Confutatio Alcorani*[644] written by Riccoldo da Monte di Croce (1243–1320). Its original title was *Contra legem Sarracenorum,*[645] which expresses the author's disdain for Islam unmistakably. The Dominican friar had spent the major part of his life as a missionary in Asia Minor. His publication may be the most important and best-documented of the entire Middle Ages.

Luther's second point of reference was the *Cribratio Alcorani* authored by Nicolaus Cusanus.[646] The German philosopher and theologian ended his career as vicar general of Pope Nicholas V. Again, the content of the publication matches the choice of the title ("the screening of the Qur'ān"). Unlike Riccoldo da Monte di Croce and others, Nicolaus Cusanus had a conversational approach that speaks for Muḥammad's good intentions. He turned the reader away from the usual demonisation of Islam, and his well-balanced presentation of Islamic theology looked for common ground rather than divergences. That was quite revolutionary compared to anything written until then. As such, those two treatises were able to enrich Luther with a contrasting but complementary introduction to Islamic theology.

Another noteworthy account is Georgius de Hungaria's autobiography, remembered by Luther as "the greatest authority on Turkish culture in his time" (Francisco 2008:25).[647] Taken prisoner and enslaved at the age of 16 (1438), the Transylvanian

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[642] For a comprehensive presentation of Luther's view on Islamic theology, see Bethmann (1950) chapter 5 (Luther's Position Towards Islam).

[643] "Preface by Martinus Lutherus", in WA 26:204-208 (*Unterricht der Visitatorn an die Pfarhern um Kurfurstenthum zu Sachssen*).

[644] The Refutation of the Qur'ān. Translated into German (1542) under the title *Verlegung des Alcoran*.

[645] "Against the laws of the Saracens."

[646] 1401-1464, also called Nicholas of Cusa or Nicholas of Kues.

[647] Francisco quotes the historian John Palmer, who called Georgius' (1951/52:34/44) contribution "one of the most important if not the most important source for the *Lebensverhältnisse* in the Ottoman Empire in the fifteenth century." Moreover, the subgenre of captivity narratives fascinated Europe so

managed to escape and reach Rome, where he settled and published anonymously his *Tractatus de moribus, condictionibus et nequicia Turcorum* in 1480, a detailed account of his twenty years of servitude (Reinhard Klockow, ed., 1994). The title implies ("treatise on the customs, habits, and perversity of the Turks") that Georgius did not reflect a high opinion of his previous masters. Notably, his portrayal of the brutality of Ottoman raiding squads ravaging and plundering the Balkan towns was a source of fear for his readers. Eventually, it encouraged one of their most prominent, Martin Luther, to take the Turkish menace seriously. On the other hand, Georgius understood the most dangerous threat to Christianity as being apostasy within herself. The one who had become a Dominican friar in Rome pinpointed the political corruption and clerical excesses in his chosen location (in Francisco 2008:27):

> "In contrast with the simplicity of Ottoman culture, of which he cited several ranging from their abstinence from alcohol to their disdain for anything remotely idolatrous (…) Georgius suggested that the Turks appeared to have God's favor, for they were continually awarded military success, which, according to the notion of God's providence, seemed to imply that he must approve of their religion."

Later on, Luther got access to Rodbertus Ketenensis' Qur'ān in Medieval Latin, the standard version still in circulation at that time even though it had been translated as early as 1153.[648] Despite his contribution to making Allah's revelation attractive to the general public, the attitude of "Magister Rodbertus" regarding that religion is manifested in some of the titles given to his works, such as *Chronica mendosa Saracenorum* (the lying chronicle of the Saracens), and the Qur'ān itself: *Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete* (the law of the pseudoprophet Muḥammad).[649] Such an attitude has probably changed Luther in his rather negative approach of the holy book of Islam, which is recorded in numerous statements such as,

> "In this book, there is so much improper and incorrect (as told above) that it teaches nothing. It is overwhelmed with stupidity and lies."[650]

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that the details of such accounts of fugitives from slavery fuelled the imagination, hit the list of the "sixteenth-century bestsellers", and "had an enormous impact on the shaping of Western views on Islam" (Miller 1994:12).

[648] Robert of Ketton (1114 – 1187) was an English astronomer. He became a priest and translated numerous scientific volumes and Islamic texts.

[649] His translation remained the standard edition until the eighteenth century.

[650] "In diesem Buch steht soviel unördiges ungehöriges und unrichtiges (wie droben erzelet), das es nichts leret, sondern mit nareit und Lügen überschüt ist" (*Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi*, cit. in Martin Luther, *Martin Luthers Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (*Weimar Edition*):53/358, further on abbreviated in WA 53:358.

"Therefore, the Alcoran has preserved himself through the Devil's malice" (1542 WA 53:372).[651]

A few years after (1542), the Swiss reformer Theodor Bibliander (1509-1564) – himself an outstanding orientalist and linguist – attempted to publish his translation of the Qur'ān under the impressive title *Machumetis Saracenorum principis eiusque successorum vitae as doctrina ipseque Alcoran* (the life of Machumet, leader of the Saracens and their successors, and the doctrines found in Alcoran). The printer Johannes Oporinus agreed to publish it. When the work was ready to be issued, Heinrich Bullinger, the town's magistrate, vetoed "to have the Turkish law published within the honourable town of Basel." Johannes Oporinus was imprisoned. On the other hand, Luther and Melanchthon strongly advocated for its publication, so the magistrates of Basel finally reversed their decision and released the printed sheets (7 December). Meanwhile, Luther had written a preface (1542 WA 53:272-396) of 124 pages in which he presented the basis for his support of the project – with a rather singular explanation (1542 WA 53:396 and 368),

"I do not doubt that the more other pious and learned people read these scriptures, the more the errors and the name of Machumet can be refuted."

"No one will persuade me that a reasonable person could take such a book seriously and believe it."

Luther's conclusion on Islam (1542 WA 54:160) corresponds to Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's and others': The self-declared messenger must have borrowed most of his theology from Jews and dissident Christian groups like the Arians and the Nestorians who were surrounding him.

10.8   Luther's position on the Turkish question[652]

Luther's opinion about Islam and his advice on how to deal with the ominous moves of the Turks is extensively documented.[653] There is no need to repeat what has been

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[651] *Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi.*

[652] Sometimes called in the original *der Türcke* "the Turk" and sometimes *die Türcken* "the Turks". Later, we find *der Türke* und *die Türken* without *c*. As per my observations, the use of the singular mainly applies to the established beliefs and customs of Muslims, generally speaking, i.e., not limited to the invaders. The plural qualifies the Turkish armies on their way to Germany. Luther looked at Islam and the Turks as an immediate menace and, in the context of his disagreement with the Catholic Church, affected his ability to remain neutral and objective.

[653] Martin Luther's approach to Islam in theology and practical view has been presented in works like Francisco (2008), Miller (2018). See also Bohnstedt (1958):136-165.

written already. Since most writers on the subject may not master Luther's original language, let me provide a *first-hand*[654] overview of the introductory statements. They have been published in Luther's "Türkenbüchlein", known as the *Türkenschriften.*[655] Before analysing them, we should be aware that "writings on the Turkish threat were manifold all along the sixteenth century, especially in German. Bibliographers have listed nearly 2,500 booklets or other forms of literature such as hymns, ballads, plays, and so on which, in some way or another, addressed the turmoil created by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century" (Francisco 2008:53),[656] 600 of them (Miller 1994:11) dealing with the Turks and Islam as the predominant agenda. At a time when the printing culture was new, such a quantity demonstrates how relevant the issue was. Indeed, the spectre of a Muslim takeover had haunted the medieval world, and was still present in everybody's mind. Yet, Fischer-Galați (1959:18) view the general opinion toward the Turks as moderate.

> "The Turks constituted no immediate danger to Germany. (…) Their authors, although aware of Hungarian's peril, either minimized the danger to the Empire itself, or pointed to the Turks' efficiency as a model for German reforms."

Infact, the Turkish question endangered Germany's security, but without creating a nightmare. Hungary was not very much present in the Germans' minds. Fischer-Galați (1959:29) observes: "Pamphlets devoted to Turkish activities in Eastern Europe had increased considerably since Mohács. For the most part, they painted a dismal picture of atrocities committed in Hungary". Moreover, (1959:9) "the pamphlets condemn the conquerors for their religion rather than their aggressions".

I highlighted Luther's consequent veto opposing the prevailing opinion in favour of attacking the Turks. He was opposed to mounting any defence against them. No need to say his pacific attitude was occasionally misunderstood by his supporters and opponents, who all labelled his denial as gross negligence.

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[654] Whoever understands enough German to appreciate Luther's rhetoric will be significantly rewarded by the lecture of the original texts.

[655] The *Türkenbüchlein* is a title qualifying the distinct genre of booklets that proliferated during times of more intense military menace (like the siege of Vienna in 1529).

[656] I also refer to Carl Göllner's three volumes *Turcica: Die europäischen Türkendrucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts. Die Türkenfrage in der öffentlichen Meinung Europas im 16. Jahrhundert* (Bucharest, Romania; Berlin: Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana; Bucharest & Baden-Baden: Editura Academiei / Akademie Verlag, Librairie Heitz, 1961-1978, German).

"In general, Luther took note only marginally of political activities outside the German Empire. Of course, he had also known for years about the threat the Turks posed for the western world" (Estep 1992[2]:364).

Luther's position was sealed at the First Imperial Diet of Speyer, where the great majority adopted his advice to deny aid to the Hungarians. Likewise, when King Louis II was killed in Mohács soon after Speyer, Martin Luther did not spend a single word to assess this tragedy as a possible result of the diet, but rather as a sign of the Last Day. For the sake of objectivity, it must be mentioned that the Ottoman armies did not spare Protestant dominated areas, which implies that their esteem on behalf of Lutherans was not unconditional. Eventually, "the Evangelical authorities had to protect and defend their subjects. In case of Turkish aggression, they were obligated to do so" (Martin Brecht 1990:2/ 368). Receiving more and more reports of evangelical pastors preaching radical pacifism, Luther answered by developing the idea of a *gerechten Krieg,* "a just war against those who start an unjust war"[657] whose only purpose should be national security.

Very soon, Luther was asked to make a written statement attesting to the legitimacy of the military profession. By the end of the same year (1526), the prolific writer (WA 19:623-662) published *Ob Kriegsleute auch im seligen Stande sein können* (can warriors enjoy a state of grace too?). The introduction (1526 WA 19:616) starts with the words,

> "As long as the spiritual and secular entities do not overcome their opposition, the question of whether the soldier's rank is compatible with the Christian rank threatens to depress consciences again and again."

Generally speaking, Luther insisted that the emperor should respond with a defensive attitude rather than using aggression. Secular entities should fight the Turks in their own strength, but with a spirit of trust in divine intervention. Further on, he understood that a war against the best-organised Turks had no chance to be successful except if people were to arm themselves sufficiently to be prepared for conflict over the long term. In return, Luther defines war as a merely secular matter and not as a try to offending people of another faith. Consequently, the church's unique role is to remind the emperor and the princes of their duty as guarantors of their protection.

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[657] Luther expounds on those concepts in WA 19:656-7 (*Ob Kriegsleute auch im seligen Stande sein können*).

From the pastoral side, sermons should be preached against every sign of defeatism that would encourage surrender to the Turks.

It is how, very simply and more astutely than any politician can be, Martin Luther laid a foundation for indirectly protecting his radius of action. Just as religion must not mingle with temporal affairs, the emperor should not be worried about ecclesiastical matters. It implies that it was not Charles' duty, for instance, to charge Lutheranism. At the same time, Luther challenged the idea of the crusades as joint operations between church and state. In closing, Luther's first policy on war is a carefully crafted example of his distinction of the two kingdoms and a specific guideline about how to deal, as Christians, with the secular aspects of warfare.

At the beginning of 1528, Luther (WA 26:195-240) published a voluminous work *Unterricht der Visitatorn an die Pfarhern um Kurfurstenthum zu Sachssen* (Instructions for the visitors of the pastors in the Electorate of Saxony). In it, we find a section of only two pages (1528 WA 26:228-9) inserted under the subtitle *Vom Türcken* (about the Turk), a guideline on the practice of self-defence against the invaders. The work is viewed as Luther's response to a wrong comprehension of Christian passivity, as an apparent dissociation, for instance, from the Anabaptist movement preaching non-interference and non-violence. On the contrary, Luther maintained the rights and duties of the authorities as executors of a legitimate vengeance. By writing so, he proves his loyalty to the emperor and his fellow citizens – an unprecedented move.

After the capitulation of the Greek island of Rhodes (1522), several writers formulated their prognostics on the situation.[658] But now, the Golden Horde had left Hungary and hastened in the direction of Vienna. Martin Luther deemed this the perfect time to write his first pamphlet, which dealt entirely with the Muslim *Ungläubigen* (unblievers). In *Vom kriege widder die Türcken* ("about the war against the Turks") published on 16 April 1529, Luther (1529 WA 30/2:107-148) stated in its introduction that, for five years, he had felt compelled to write it. He added (1529 WA 30/2:107):

> "There are quite a few clumsy preachers among us Germans [as I am sorry to hear] who let the populace think that one should not fight the Turks and that one does not need to. Some are so dumb to teach that it is not proper for a Christian to wield the secular sword and to rule."

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[658] Listed in WA 30/2:81-90 (introduction to *Vom kriege widder die Türcken*).

The tract has a virulent tone – as if Martin Luther had written it in rage. Proverbial for his "scathing malevolence against just everyone, peasants, the papacy, Jews, and others" (Goffman 2002:4). When it came to the Turks, Brother Martin suddenly took a moderate stand. He added to the necessity of armed retaliation a solemn exhortation to spiritual warfare centred on prayer and repentance.

In the meantime, the landgrave of Hesse Philip I – better known as the Magnanimous – had embraced Lutheranism: He immediately took steps to create a defensive coalition against Charles V. Luther dedicated *Vom kriege widder die Türcken* to the Landgrave, so that it has never been really clarified if he targeted the Turks, or if he wanted to demonstrate his gratefulness to the Landgrave in a subtly way.

10.9   Luther's plea for a spiritual answer

Luther believed that "the sword was appointed by God to punish the wicked, protect the pious, and guarantee peace. As such, it is proved that war and tribulation ("*Würgen*") are instituted by God" (1520 WA 19:625).[659] He insisted less and less on a confrontational approach. Instead, he preached more and more on repentance aiming at a revival of true godliness as the best way to turn away God's wrath.[660] In fact, combatting the Turks with spiritual weapons was accepted by Catholic and Lutheran theologians alike. The common thread was that "Christians must desist from sin and put their own house in order before they can free themselves from the Turkish menace" (John Bohnstedt 1958:10). However, the Catholic approach insisted on acts of penance in order to gain God's favour, and the Lutheran accented a reformation of life habits.

In his lecture on Psalms 2 (*Operationes in Psalmos, Psalmus II,* Latin, delivered between 1519 and 1521), Luther (WA 5:63) conveyed to his Wittenbergian students another idea:

> "If we want to overcome the Turks – and we are not done with them on this day as we wished – it is necessary to increase the number of Christians among them."[661]

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[659] *Ob Kriegsleute auch im seligen Stande sein können.*

[660] Choi (2003:151,185; cit. in Francisco 2008:3) remarks that "Luther was interested in the Turks primarily as a pastor and only secondarily as a theologian, and incidentally as a scholar and polemicist". He "was primarily interested in encouraging Christians to 'repent, to love the gospel, and to be obedient to their authorities' as an answer to the Turkish question."

[661] "Nam et turcas, quos hodie non nis querimus, vincere oportuit augendo christianorum numerum, qui inter eo sunt."

Erich Bethman (1950:58) remarks:

"This is a very interesting statement; no longer a crusade nor direct mission work, but helping the Christians in Moslem lands to become better Christians – a policy which was adopted centuries later by the missions working in those countries."

For the sake of balance, and maybe to accommodate former Catholics who were accustomed to religious prescriptions, Luther developed a new liturgy addressed exclusively to God and Christ and not to the saints. One of his leitmotifs was a call to prayer that God may "give to our emperor perpetual victory over his enemies." The congregations should be encouraged to "earnestly pray and repent", on the premise that "You can only fight the Turk by reforming the church."

Then, as a direct response to the latest Islamic aggression, Martin Luther preached his *Heerpredigt widder den Türcken* ("a sermon against the Turk")[662] published between the 20th and the 28th of October 1529 (WA 30/2:160-197), i.e., a few days after the Turks left Vienna (15 October). This work is the most extensive presentation on the Turkish question. Based on an exegesis – or rather an extrapolation – on the Little Horn of Daniel Chapter 7 applied both to the papacy and the Muslims, Luther (1529 WA 30/2:171) warned that the Doomsday mentioned in Daniel 7:26 was "at the door." With this in mind, the apologist (WA 30/2:188) began to moderate his discourse by valuing the Turks. He was willing to appraise the virtue of their abstinence, their exemplary conduct, their modesty in avoiding bragging and cursing, and their respectful obedience to their masters.[663] In addition (1529 WA 30/2:194), "the Turks do not force anyone to deny Christ or to embrace their faith". In conclusion (1529 WA 30/2: 196), Luther recommended that "If someone is at the service of the Turks, he should show loyalty as long as he did not need to deny Christ and God. We ought to obey God rather than men, but we should also promote peace with all men".

While Luther labelled Islamic theology as "wrong" and "antichristian", he outlined some positives. Luther's *Schriften* abound in statements such as, "The fact that the Turks do not tolerate images and are even holier than our image destroyers is also part of their holiness" (1529 WA 30/2:128). At the same time, Luther verbally attacked

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[662] Often called "the Battle Sermon".

[663] Much attention and praise were given by a range of authors to the exemplary conduct of the Turks. "Every bit of detail – from toilet habits to dress – was noted. In general, Turkish society was described as clean, disciplined, and modest. (…) Turks were also very well educated, studying poetry, astronomy, philosophy, grammar, logic, metaphysics, geometry, philology, and rhetoric in schools for both men and women, although they learned separately from each other" (Francisco, 2008:63), so that Luther was by no means the first to draw attention to these positive aspects.

"some Christians" as much worse than the Turks. He advised that criticism was misplaced if one did not act better than them. He even urged his readers and listeners to take Muslim godliness as a lesson in several regards. When saying this (1529 WA 30/2:111), Luther was not referring to the Catholic faith, but to Christendom in general:

> "In such an army, there are scarcely five Christians, and perhaps worse people in God's eyes than are the Turks."

The two books I have just mentioned (*Vom kriege widder die Türcken* and *Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*) are Luther's central works on the Turkish issue. Apart from these, we read hundreds of mentions of Muḥammad, the Qur'ān, and the Turks omnipresent in his writings, which reflects how much of an interest Luther took in the debate around Islam.

10.10 The Turks as a rod of God's wrath

Another central aspect of Luther's viewpoint is his qualification of the Turks as "a rod in God's hand" and "servants of the raging Devil". Straight at the beginning of *Vom kriege widder die Türcken,* Luther (1529 WA 30/2:108) quoted himself,

> "Pope Leo X (…) wants to ban me because I said, 'To fight against the Turk is as much as to resist God, who punishes our sin with such rods'." [664]

Luther referred to Pope Leo X's bull *Exsurge Nomine* pronounced in 1520, i.e., at the early stage of the Reformation. Yet, nearly sixty years earlier, Pope Pius II [1458–1464] had himself described the plight manifested by the Ottoman approach as God's punishment for the wickedness of the nations. [665]

A similar assertion is repeated in the middle of *Heerpredigt widder den Türcken* (1529 WA 30/2:180):

> "But even though the Turk is both God's rod and a plague on the sin of Christians – non-Christians and false Christians – it does not mean that anyone can make

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[664] "Papst Leo der zehende (…) will mich verbannen, das ich gesagt hatte: Widder den Türcken streiten ist eben so viel als Gott widder streben, der mit solcher ruten unser sünde heimsucht." Cf. also WA 30/2:116.

[665] In his invitation to the Congress of Mantua, he summoned the Christian nobility to join a crusade against the Turks (12 October 1458). Pius II saw his two main tasks as reforming the Catholic Church and continuing the battle against the Ottomans (Fischer & Wollpert 1988, 2003²:312).

himself safe by saying, 'I am a Christian'. But beforehand, he should repent, reform his life and then come to such comfort and strength with fearful earnest prayer."[666]

On the other hand, Martin Luther's ambiguous attitude toward Islam is well established in sentences such as (1529 WA 30/2:118):

"Machumet is a destroyer of our Lord Christ and His kingdom."

The paradox between the Turks being "God's and the Devil's rod" matches Luther's peculiar conception of evil. George Forell (1994:73)[667] asserts that, according to Luther, "In attempting to counteract God, the Devil automatically serves Him." Another explanation for this association is that if God chastises apostate Christianity, He does it indirectly – not by sending the Turks, but by withdrawing his blessings from Christianity and thus letting the invaders move forwards:

"We are aware that God is not with us in our war against the Turks" (1529 WA 30/2:113).

Consequently, Luther saw the most significant menace for Christianity not as being Islam but as Christian apostasy. Yet, when the Ottoman hordes suddenly turned back instead of continuing into Germany, "He (Luther) recognized in this unexpected deliverance the hand of God, and the answer of prayer" (Wylie 2002[3]:1/891). It could harmonise the ambivalence in his appreciation of Islam with his quasi-demonisation of it. "The Turk is the servant of the Devil" (1529 WA 30/2:120) also repeatedly called "God's rod." This is precisely where the three entities of my main research question meet: Islam and two distinct approaches of Christian theology it faced.

The notion of "a rod of God's wrath" is a biblical expression applied to the Assyrians (Isaiah 10:5). Luther took up the idea that, in the ancient time, God chose individuals, sometimes whole nations, as His instrument. The Bible mentions the Babylonians,[668] the Medes and the Persians,[669] the Palestinians,[670] and the Arabs.[671] Christian

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[666] "Aber weil der Türcke gleichwohl Gottes rute und eine plage ist uber die sunde beide der Christen und unchristen odder falschen Christen, so sol sich solches trostes und trotzes, davon bis her gesagt, nicht ein iglicher an nemen und tolküne daher faren und sprechen: 'Ich bin ein Christ, Ich wil dran', Sondern zuvor sich bekeren und sein leben bessern und also mit furcht und ernstlichem gebet zu solchem trost und trotz komen." The old German word *Unchristen* chosen by Luther can refer to *non-Christians* or to the *enemies* of Christianity.

[667] Cit. in William Russel, ed. (2004:73).

[668] Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6

[669] Isaiah 45:1

[670] Judges 2:2-3

[671] Genesis 37:28; 45:5

observers (for example, Burns 1994:233) have also called some aggressive figures like the Visigoth king Alaric I "God's wrath upon a still pagan Rome". Because of this, fighting back the Ottomans could accomplish only little and would be like "taking the rod out of God's hands" (1529 WA 30/2:120).

Hence Luther's solemn advice:

"If I were emperor, king, or prince in a campaign against the Turk, I would exhort my bishops and priests to stay at home and mind the duties of their office, praying, fasting, saying mass, preaching, and caring for the poor" (1529 WA 30/2:114).

"I fear that the sword will accomplish little. For this man is not to fight in a bodily way with the Turk, as the pope and his followers teach. We cannot resist him with the fist. Instead, we should recognize the Turk as God's rod and anger, which Christians must either suffer if God visits their sins upon them. Let us fight against him with repentance, tears, and prayer" (1529 WA 30/2:129).

"I repeat it here, that I would not urge anyone or tell anyone to fight against the Turk unless the first advice mentioned above has been followed, and men have first repented and been reconciled to God" (1529 WA 30/2:129).

We may wonder whether any commander has ever addressed wiser words than these to their officers before engaging in battle.

Several Catholic authors urged the Lutherans to submit to the *Ecclesia Catholica* to permit God to pour His blessing. Some (Bohnstedt 1958:12) even blamed Luther *expressis verbis* for the Turkish victory of Mohács. But they understood very well that Luther meant them as the primary target of "God's rod", and so they retorted to troublemaker in self-defence (Wylie 2002[3]:1/890),

"'It is you who have brought this scourge upon us. It is you who have unloosed these angels of evil; they come to chastise you for your heresy. You have cast off the yoke of the pope, and now you must bear the yoke of the Turk.' 'Not so', Luther replied, 'It is God who has unloosed this army, whose king is Abaddon the destroyer. They have been sent to punish us for our sins, our ingratitude for the Gospel, our blasphemies, and above all, our shedding of the blood of the righteous'."

10.11 Luther's taking over of the mainstream position

Due to the poor reputation of the established church created by her political involvement, her responsibility for the crusades, and her financing by using indulgences, the separation of jurisdictions advocated by Luther right at the beginning of his statements on the Turkish issue received great acceptance. This advice reflects the prevailing consens[672] in favour of a hierarchized society in which each one's duties is clearly delimited. Luther's words not only secured relief for all, including the emperor and his civil servants, but at the same time, they were an indirect rebuke to the church who had never given up her prerogatives on secular matters.

The reformer's second important message related to the Turks is their reference as tools under divine guidance. Such a view was not new either. We have noticed in chapter four that Saladin's storming of Jerusalem (1187) provoked in Europe an emotional upheaval that allowed the pope to call for a third crusade. Christians judged Saladin's success as the result of God's disapproval due to their wickedness. In his reflection upon the fall of Jerusalem, William of Newburgh claimed that, as stated in the Holy Scriptures, those who polluted the Promised Land would always be swept away like the Israelites brought into captivity – first by the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, and ultimately the Romans. Emperor Constantine had donated the Holy Land to the Christians, and it was wrested from them by the Saracens. During the First Crusade, the Holy Land had received Christian strangers with joy; but now, because they had committed too much injustice, it turned them down (William S. de Newburgh 1858:1/249-55). This very same opinion was shared by Regis Ricardi, the author of the *Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi,* a thorough report of the Third Crusade (1189-1192):

> "To explain the mystery of this vision, we need, I think, only take the words of Scripture; 'the Lord hath bent his bow, and in it prepared the vessels of death'" (English transl. 2001:9).

> "The Lord had suffered Saladin, the rod of His wrath, to put forth His fury to the destruction of those stiff-necked people" (English transl. 2001:22).

> "The Moslems are agents – not of Satan, but of God. They were sent to chastise God's believers who have given themselves to sin" (English transl. 2001:175).

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[672] Bohnstedt (1958:42) has listed its different views.

The same definition of Islam was reiterated by Luther four centuries later. It was so well accepted that it shaped some of the reformers' theology, particularly Erasmus of Rotterdam's (Bainton 1995:113). The "Prince of Humanists" stated: "War against the Turks is resistance to God's visitation". Let us mention the peculiar perspective of one of the early champions of the Reformation, Thomas Müntzer (1489–1525). Müntzer is the one who (Georges Williams 1992[3]:1266-1271) endorsed the view of Islam as a scourge coming from God but complemented it with a new dimension: Muslims as "potential members of the *allgemeine Kirche der Auserwählten* (the global church of the elect)". Müntzer's logical consequence was that Christians should by no means wage war against Muslims. Instead, they ought to mend their ways so that, by their example, they might bring the unconverted to conversion.

Born just after Martin Luther's death (1546), the Lutheran theologian, anthropologist, and orientalist Salomon Schweigger (1551–1622) published a "Description of a Journey from Germany to Constantinople" (1608:57-64), one of the first German travel reports about Turkey ever written. In it, Schweigger presented God as the *causa principalis*, Himself fighting against Christians and giving the Turks the upper hand. In conclusion, Schweiger called the Turks the *causa instrumentalis*, a divine instrument to punish Christianity:

> "The power of the Turk is big, but not so big that Christians cannot weaken it. If it does not happen, it is only due to God who stands for the Turk and gives them victory over the Christians. Therefore, we have to look at the One who awakes such an evil against us, for God uses the Turk as rod, whip, stick, or axe,[673] and as a broom to sweep away sin" (Schweigger 1608:158).

In his report, Schweigger (1608:116) reasserted his position several times:

> "Therefore, his [the Turk's] war is nothing else than outrage and robbery, with which God is punishing the world, as He often does through wicked scoundrels."

> "He [the Turk] is God's rod and the Devil's servant."

> "The Turk is the rod of the Lord our God's wrath and the servant of the raging Devil."

> "We have earned God's wrath and disfavour, so that He justly gives us into the hands of the Devil and the Turk" (1608:117).

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[673] German, *Ruten, Geißel, Stecken oder Axt.*

Interestingly, Schweigger also authored the first translation of the Qur'ān into German (1616).

10.12 Luther's eschatological views of the Turks

Undoubtedly, the eschatological role of Islam is the cornerstone of Luther's position. We should remember that it goes along the long-standing tradition. In fact, the application of Islam to apocalyptic features started way before the emergence of Islam. LeRoy Froom (1954)[674] lists the proponents of Islam as the fulfilment of St. John's visions. Pope Gregory I[675] proclaimed the Antichrist's imminence (1/518-526) but died too early to witness the rise of Islam. Among the Greek fathers, Andreas of Caesarea, archbishop of Cappadocia, is the one who raised awareness for apocalypticism in the East (1/570).[676] Yet, his commentary on John's Revelation – the oldest Greek patristic work on this topic – does not mention Islam first in the early medieval eschatology.

The next to comment on the Muslim presence in prophecy is Beatus of Liébana (730–785). The Spanish priest illustrated his *Commentaria in Apocalypsin* with a realism sufficient to scare imagination[677] and applied the 5th Trumpet of Revelation 9: 1-11 to the Saracens (1/896). But the most prominent figure in this regard was probably the Dominican abbot Joachim de Fiori (1135–1202).[678] Bernard McGinn qualifies Joachim "the most important apocalyptic thinker of the whole medieval period and even in the history of Christianity after the prophet John."[679] His exposition of Saladin as one of the seven heads of the Dragon (the Devil) of Revelation 12:3 got acceptance with enormous popularity. The scholastic theologian Albertus Magnus (1193 or 1206–1280) went in his footsteps and compared Jezebel's seduction (Revelation 2:20) with "the heresy of Mohammed" (1/654).

Surprisingly, Pope Innocent III stated in his introduction to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215, i.e., at the same time) that "Machumetus" was the first beast of Revelation 13 and incarnated the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonian 2:3-10 as well (1/

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[674] Kenneth Setton (1992) Bernard McGinn (1998), and other authors have documented the medieval Christian perception of Islam.

[675] Gregory the Great [590–604].

[676] Historians disagree on the time of his life. Some place it in the fifth century, while others go up to the ninth.

[677] Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris.

[678] Gioacchino da Fiore.

[679] [Online] https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/joachim.html [retrieved 16 June 2021].

676). The physician Arnaldus de Villanova (c.1240–1311) translated several medical of Avicenna's and Galenius's works. But he was also a theologian; and like Joachim of Fiore, he understood Saladin as one of the heads of the beast depicted in Revelation 17:2 (1/688). At the same time, the archbishop of Aix-en-Provence Petrus Aureolus (c.1280–1322) interpreted the pale horse of Revelation 6:2 as the Saracens with Muḥammad as its rider and the second beast of Revelation 13 (1/724).

Almost every terrifying power mentioned in St. John's Revelation was assimilated to Islam one way or the other. Aside from the lack of theological cohesion, it demonstrates that Islam was a central preoccupation in Europe's theology of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For the same reason, Martin Luther took on the medieval Christian perception of Islam. But he added to the picture some Old Testament texts: the little horn prophesized in Daniel Chapter 7, and, at other times, the Gog and Magog of Hezekiel Chapter 38. Moreover, his exposition is much more comprehensive than everything written so far, and eventually, his co-reformers widely adopted it.

Yet, Martin Luther's *novum* is to add the Catholic hierarchy to the eschatological scenario. As far as recorded, only the archbishop of Salzburg Eberhard II in 1241 had openly taken such a position.[680] By doing this, Luther set a pattern for further thinking and sealed his definitive rupture with Rome. Luther associated the "two kingdoms, the Turk's and the pope's" as "the last two plagues of God's wrath, as the Apocalypse calls them". The reference to the papacy in that context was revolutionary, even though it rarely occurred, compared to the numerous mentions of the Turks. Yet, whenever Luther mentioned the Turks as a reference to the Antichrist, he also commented on the papacy. The justification for this paradoxical association is that, according to Luther (1531-1546 WA 3:135), [681] "the pope is *spiritus* (the spirit), and the Turk is *caro* (the flesh) of the Antichrist".

> "The body of the Antichrist is simultaneously the pope and the Turk because the body consists of flesh and soul. The spirit of the Antichrist is the pope, his flesh the Turk; the latter opposes the church with carnal weapons, the former with spiritual warfare. Both are from the same master, the Devil, because the pope is a liar and the Turk a murderer."

Both the popes and the Turks were part of the same demonic plot (WA 53:394). According to Luther's exegesis of Revelation Chapter 13, the Beast was Islam in the

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[680] See chapter seven.

[681] *Sinnreiche Tischreden.*

East, and Catholicism was the *antíchristo*s in the West (1541 WA 51:620-621;[682] 1542 WA 53:294,392;[683] 1529 WA 30/2:162[684]). Moreover, Luther was convinced that he lived close to the end of the world, so he took it for granted that the Devil would attack Christians by using all the resources available (1529 WA 30/2:162).

Luther evaluated "the tyranny of the church" and "the oppression of the Turk" as two distinct manifestations of the same evil. Yet, he expressed his assessment of Islam in a relatively moderate tone compared to the aggressiveness of his language against Catholicism.[685] The recurrent motive of God's rod as one angle in the triangle "apostasy – faithful Christendom – Islam" does not diminish the dark dimension of "the Mahomedan and his kingdom" identified in his *Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*:

> "Through his instruments – the Turk –, the Devil does not look for the world dominion but also to bring God's kingdom, his saints and members to fall, as Daniel said in his Seventh Chapter" (1529 WA 30/2:161).

Luther also noticed that Catholicism and Islam were focusing on outward works and ceremonies and did not accept the necessity of sacrifices to atone for wrong-doings. But if the two insisted on the merits of good works to counterbalance the evil deeds on Judgement Day, at least the Turks were consistent in living out the quranic ordinances. In contrast, the Catholics had gone astray from the apostolic principles. In line with his view, the Vatican had always posed the most acute threat, which may be one primary reason why Rome hated Islam so much. His hermeneutic of Daniel Chapter 7 brought him to the conclusion that the days of the Turks were numbered, but the papal system would remain in place until the end. It became clear: Nothing could top Luther's resentment against the papacy:

> "Compared to the pope, Machumet appeared before the world as a saint" (1542 WA 53:396).

On 11 October 1541, Martin Luther sent his first copy of his newly written *Vermanunge zum Gebet wider den Türcken* ("Admonition to Pray Against the Turk")[686] to Johannes Friedrich I, Elector of Saxony. The trigger for that publication, made at the elector's request, was that the Turks had again occupied Hungary. War appeared

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[682] *Vermahnung zum Gebet wider den Türcken*.

[683] *Verlegung des Alcoran Bruder Richardi*.

[684] *Heerpredigt widder den Türcken*.

[685] … and later against Judaism as well.

[686] WA 51:585-625.

inevitable. In his 40-page appeal written at the request of the Saxon princes, Luther intended to disprove the charges that he was promoting defeatism in the face of Turkish danger. He did not clarify his viewpoint, not because he was withdrawing, but as a confirmation of his reference to the government's temporal authority. At the same time, the princes expected Luther to plead with his German supporters to perform their spiritual duties and build the morale of the civilians and the troops. Until the end, Martin Luther was very much disturbed that the representatives of the clergy played with marching against the Ottomans. He dissociated himself from the idea of war as a Christian commission and ignored every plea for a holy war. He saw in such an endeavour nothing but a scam to bring money out of Germany. After all, all former expeditions had been conducted without the essential condition for success: the willingness to repent.

10.13 Summary

In his dissertation and the resulting publication, Fischer-Galați has remarkably demonstrated how Charles, Ferdinand, the Pope, the Catholics, and the Lutherans have exploited the Turkish back-and-forth between Hungary and Vienna to increase or release the pressure on each other. The Turkish issue ended in the quest for equal recognition with the Catholic faith. At last, those who categorically refused to negotiate with the Lutheran league (Worms 1521, Nuremberg 1522) admitted the necessity to overcome their pride and hatred against Lutheranism. It makes clear why most decisions taken in Speyer (1526), Nuremberg (1532), and Regensburg (1541) were never fully implemented.

On the other hand, everybody needed Lutheran aid at a specific time. For the political actors, there were too many interests at stake. The supporters of the Reformation could use the status quo by offering their support for the price of their claims. The details were a bargain with little pressure or necessity to make concessions. On a practical level, the general perplexity allowed them to expand by creating *faits accomplis*.

It is how the spectre of the Ottomans gave the Lutherans unexpected protection. Some authors go so far as to speak of a "miraculous intervention" (Marc Thomsen, in Grafton 2009:9). The Catholic Church and her political arm under Charles V did what they could to eliminate the renegade monk. But everyone was aware that the Ottoman battalions would do everything to transform Europe into a Muslim empire. Moreover, without the support of the German princes to prevent this horrendous

scenario, the Catholics could not win. Quoting an Austrian saying popular at that time, "the Turk is the Lutheran's luck",[687] we are reminded that the success of Lutheranism was partly due to the Islamic threat and to the fear of the "terrible Turk" (Marty 2004: 165), that diverted the multiple attempts to quash Lutheranism. Forell (in Grafton 2009: 21) sums up well Martin Luther's relationship with the "terrible Turk" in a concise way:

"Instead of fearing the Turks, Luther had every reason to be grateful to them."

Süleyman's essential role in the success of the German Reformation was that he forced the European elite to split its resources between defending against the Turks and fighting the advance of Lutheranism. In that respect, Protestants owe great indebtedness to the Islamic world. Martin Luther and others elegantly attested to this moral obligation by reviving the old idea of the Muslim threat as a rod in God's hand. They identified the Turkish expansion as providential. When Lutheranism was in the greatest danger, Islam became a godsend for Christianity to repent and convert to its original message.

Luther's ethic of the "two kingdoms" as developed in *War against the Turk* brought a solution to several issues. First, it caused the separation of church and state by encouraging the civil actors to attend to their duties. It also signified that the emperor should not infringe on the conduct of religious affairs and, in the case of Lutheranism, leave the theological debate to theologians – and Luther in peace. The theory of two separate entities brought him out of the dilemma of whom to please in case of conflict. In return, Luther's neutrality made him and his admirers more profitable should the necessity for military aid increase.

Lutherans did not wish to support any action that could lead to Zápolya's destruction. At the same time, Charles and Ferdinand knew very well that allowing Lutheranism to be equal to Catholicism was out of the question. In Hungary, Zápolya and the Ottomans would be the perfect allies of the Lutherans in case someone chose, for instance, to rescind the Speyer Recess.

Fischer-Galaţi summarises his detailed study of (1959:33)

"The Lutherans decided to exploit Ferdinand's predicament in Hungary to secure concessions at least as liberal as those granted under similar circumstances in 1526. They indicated to Ferdinand that they would not consider the question of

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[687] „Der Türck ist der Lutheraner Glück."

assistance for the defense of Hungary until a satisfactory solution for the religious problem were found."

Yet, after the siege of Vienna, Lutherans began to think about assisting Charles against the Turks by stopping their "No aid without concessions" card.

Nevertheless, Luther kept his attention on helping his readers and listeners to prepare themselves spiritually. Being able to pay due respect to Charles V's secular responsibility over warlike deliberations, the renegade was free to continue to preach his pastoral message no matter how large the eastern menace would loom. On the other hand, he was torn between his eschatological view of Islam as the Antichrist and, at the same time, God's rod. Inasmuch as he was aware of the Turkish peril, he often appreciated some positive traits he could observe among the Turks. In a sermon he gave near the end of his life (26 December 1531), he encouraged the congregation to emulate the Turks in remaining silent when holding their religious services. This statement brought many Lutherans to reappraise their view on the Turks, not necessarily as "enemies of faith", but possibly as potential brothers. If God had chosen them as tools, i.e., for a divine mandate, they had to be accepted without hatred. At the same time, the quranic message needs to be radically disregarded.

Furthermore, Luther saw the papal abuse of authority and the Catholic doctrines as the real threat to Europe – and not so much the Turks. No need to say that he was sorry about the takeover of Christian lands by the Turks. But he conceded that Germany was in an equally depraved – if not worse – condition than it would be under the Ottomans (1519 WA 2:110-111).[688] Consequently, "if we want to fight against the Turks, let us start where the situation is worst of all", within Christianity (1519 WA 6:427).[689]

Luther's positioning of Islam as the Antichrist resumes a long apocalyptic tradition. In addition to Luther's paradox in attributing the role of God's rod to the Turks, the novelty in his end-time theology consisted in his bold declaration that the pope was *ein Tyran und wider christ* ("a tyrant and antichrist") (1520 WA 6:374).[690] Thus, he did not avoid the Turkish question but emphasised its spiritual outcome.

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[688] *Auslegung deutsch des Vater unnser für dye einfeltigen leyen* (Exegesis in German of The Lord's Prayer for simple-minded laymen).

[689] *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung* (To the Christian nobility of the German nation on the improvement of the Christian state).

[690] *Eyn Sermon von dem newen Testament, das ist von der heiligen Messe* (A sermon from the New Testament on the holy mass).

I dare to conclude that, unlike the Protestant leaders after him, their champion never instrumentalised the Turkish issue to win concessions for the Reformation. On the one hand, he could hardly have accepted any direct help from those he despised as being one out of the two incarnations of the Antichrist. On the other hand, the universally accepted view of the Turks as a manifestation of Evil would associate any sign of cooperation between Islam and Lutheranism with selling out to the adversary. The Catholics would then have sufficient excuses to blame the Reformation.

One last reflection is that the ongoing discussion on the Turks, evidenced by a large amount of popular material in circulation, strongly polarized the spirits. Luther was wise to keep the theological debate around the Reformation distinct from that of taking a clear stand on the Turks. Such an attitude could have presented his cause as a social threat, which would have obstructed the progress of the Reformation. That is why, by dealing with Islam, Luther separated its spiritual and temporal dimensions. It may justify why, in his writings, the reformer resisted the pressure to join the fight against the sultan. The same applies to his appearances at the Diet in Augsburg (August 1530) and others. Luther found a brilliant way out of the dilemma to demonise Islam – which would have been contrary to his convictions – and associate too much with it without imperilling his mission.

Indeed, several eastern thinkers have highly regarded the unorthodox way Luther intervened in the Turkish debate. We should commend Luther's insistence on the negative and the positive characteristics of his theological opponents. Likewise, think of his denunciation of the crusades as a courageous balance to the Ottoman advance! A careful interplay between Turkish and Lutheran affairs could have set up a good deal for all parties; but it did not happen.[691] It raises the question of why statements about him cannot be found in their documents.

That is what I will try to answer in the next chapter.

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[691] Imber (2004:61) states that there was a time when "the Protestant princes briefly approached Süleyman the Magnificent to find in him an ally."

The Ottoman attention given to the Reformation

11.1   Introduction

The former chapter examined how Lutherans addressed the Turkish issue in theory and practice. Now, we shall deal with the reverse question, How did the Ottomans perceive the non-conformist Christians? Was their view filtered through the quranic lens, enjoining them to acknowledge the separate identity among the "People of the Book"? Were they even aware of the existence of two distinct Christian groups, and if so, did they apply the āyāt to them that are quoted here:

> al-Mā'idah 5:82
>
> "You will truly find the enemies of the believers among the Jews and the Adoptionists; and you will find the nearest in love to the believers among those who say, 'We are Christians!' Indeed, among these are men devoted to learning, who have renounced the world; and they are not arrogant."

> al-Mum'taḥanah 60:8
>
> "Allah does not forbid you to be kind and fair toward those who did not fight you for religion and did not drive you out of your homes. For Allah loves the just."

Those two āyāt add to a practical aspect that fits well into Martin Luther's pacific approach to the Turkish question. In the first instance, the distinction between two groups of Christians is not based on a theological but on a relational level ("the nearest in love to the believers"). The second requires "kindness and fairness toward those who did not fight you for religion". These texts stand in stark contrast with what happened during the crusades. Not only did they target Muslims, but some were directed against the Albigenses in France and the Bogomils in Bosnia. In the same way, the Inquisition touched the Lutherans in Germany, Hungary, and Transylvania. As presented in chapter five, kindness prevailed against hatred in the general attitude of Muslims toward Christians during the early Arab campaigns. Therefore, being victims of Catholic holy wars and, at the same time, promoters of pacifism, "Apostolic" Christians had a good chance of being treated "kindly and fairly" by Muslims.

It raises the question: To what extent did this quranic concept of two Christian approaches have any chance to be applied? Islamic Shariah ultimately implies a theocratic form of governance. Yet, we must look at the expansion of Islam by disconnect-

ing its political and religious competencies. Indeed, the first four caliphs occupied the double function of regents and spiritual leaders; but Islam underwent a critical transformation under the Umayyads. As soon as they stabilized their dominion, they gradually adopted the manners typical of secular potentates, living in palaces and leaving doctrinal issues to be debated by theologians. The trend continued in the Abbasid period, and religion became less and less tied to the caliphs. Then came the time of the Ottoman sultans. The one remembered by Turks as Kanunî (the Lawgiver), Sultan Süleyman ordered a strict separation between the political, military, and bureaucratic classes. The *sheykh al-islām* ("Islamic elder"), as the mufti was called, was to be in charge of clerical matters. Appraised as the highest authority in his domain, the *sheykh* acted as the sultan's spiritual advisor, assuming that the sultan would refrain from re-negotiating the wording of the mufti's regulations. But the more the sultan was absorbed in warfare, the lower the priority for him to mingle into moral issues.

Coming back to Süleyman, he was far away from the *Devlet-i ʿAlīye-i ʿOsmānī-ye* (the Sublime Ottoman State), and close – geographically speaking – to pre-reformatory and reformatory groups. Trapped in the rigidity of Islamic theology and busy with formulating *fatwas* related to everyday's realities, we may question the ability of the muftis sitting on the hill upon the Bosporus to grasp the nuances typical of Christian dissenting opinions happening at thousands of kilometres of distance.

11.2   The Ottoman *millet* as a refinement of the Arabic *dhimmī*

What about the official position of the Ottoman on non-Muslims? I have mentioned the treaties previously uniting Muḥammad – and the caliphs after him –, and Jews and Christians, ending up in the status of *dhimmī*. Due to their foundational value in the Islamic rules of conduct, the Ottomans had no choice but to validate them. Süleyman's father Selim I provides a notorious example for it. When the sultan reached Jerusalem (1517), the Armenian patriarch and his priests received him in an audience. There, his Muslim guest granted Christians the assurance of his protection and updated the ʻUmar treaty on their behalf (Aḥmad aṣ-Ṣifṣāfī al-Kathūrī 2005:1/32).

Before him, Mehmed II anchored legal recognition to religious communities. Just entering Constantinople, he granted the Christian Byzantines and other non-Muslim groups a millet status. The name *millet* is significant given my central research question because it stems from the Qur'ān, which is mentioned only once and in the

specific context of the original faith of Abraham. Somewhat analogous to the dhimmī, the millet is a spiritual and not an ethnic concept.

> an-Nisā' 4:125
>
> "Who can be better in religion than the one who surrenders his whole self to Allah, doing good and following Ibrāhīm's state of mind, him the straightforward in faith? Allah chose him for a friend."

This āyāh defines Islam as an act of submission to God, not necessarily the label for those who believe in Muḥammad's prophethood. On the contrary, the religion *par excellence* is Abraham's *millat*,[692] best translated with "state of mind". Moreover, applying this concept to Jews and Christians is a great sign of respect and a recognition of their common spiritual lineage originating from the father of the three monotheistic faiths. However, interestingly for my research question, the *millet* status applied to all non-Muslims, regardless of their allegiance to their roots. That points out why Ottomans treated "Apostolic" and Catholic Christians with equal kindness as long as they did not show animosity toward Islam.

> "Each group observed its respective religious tradition, followed its own hallowed legal code and organized itself according to its own personal status law" (San Diner 2004:11).[693]

> "The millet de facto prevails in all religious perspectives. Each religious community had a responsible representative to the government in the main city and internally possessed a non-territorially defined autonomy. The representatives could be chosen among their group's religious or secular authorities. It was their right to collect the tax and levies set by the state" (Abdel Fadeel 2006:111).

The *millet* had its specific jurisdiction, including legal issues on marriages, divorces, testaments, and court cases. It was essentially a retention of the institutions in place before the Ottoman conquests. But the *novum* of the *millet* was to improve the condition of "Apostolic" Christians, as it secured them legal recognition after centuries of being disadvantaged. Indeed, for the first time, these Christians were guaranteed the integrity of property, and even a form of self-government.

> "Under the [millet] system, many ethnically diverse communities in different geographical areas, cultures, and languages became unified into a single religious

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[692] Arabic *millat*, Osman Turkish *millet.*

[693] [Online] https://www.uni-essen.de/unikate/u-arch-06-07.html [retrieved 24 September 2021].

community. Thus, the Armenians, Romans, Bulgarians, and Greeks were united under the one Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople. Such unity would never have been thinkable under the Byzantine rule" (Abdel Fadeel 2006:111).

I should add to Fadeel's list the ongoing presence of Arab Christians freely exercising their religion under the caliphs and the Ottoman administration.

The result was, thanks to the *millet*, even the Orthodox achieved the completion of their religious unity, which had previously failed under the Byzantines. We may say that the *millet* was an opposite concept to the *divide et impera* so dear to European strategists.[694] It would be easy to assume that by promoting unification instead of division, the Ottomans were running the high risk of facing a united rebellion against them. In summary, the *millet* built a unifying principle that brought peace and contentment to the Ottoman-governed territories.

> "The new regime was often much fairer than the policy prevailing before it, so that the peoples of these cities called the Ottoman liberators" (Gerhard Schweizer 1990:170).

On the other hand, Kamal Ḥabīb (2002:263) insists that the *millet* was beneficial to non-Muslims and to "the Ottomans themselves, since the unification of the Orthodox was an advantage over the threat from the great Catholic powers of Europe".

11.3   The Ottoman protection of discriminated Christians

The Ottoman approach to Christianity deserves special mention. Reflecting a remarkable spirit of generosity, this policy is not only related to the pre-Reformers and Reformers. It applies to Jews and Christians in general without making any differentiation depending on their level of adherence to Bible doctrines. Kia (2008:2) points out:

> "Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived side by side under the Ottoman sultan, a Sunni Muslim Turk, who acted as the protector of all religious communities of the empire. Each community enjoyed religious, cultural, and legal autonomy and managed its own internal affairs under the leadership of its own religious hierarchy."

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[694] The maxim "divide and rule" (Greek *diaírei kài basíleúe*) is attributed to Philip II of Macedon and was vulgarized by Julius Caesar, Napoléon Bonaparte, Thomas Jefferson – to name the most significant ones. Philosophers like Niccolò Machiavelli, Francis Bacon, and Immanuel Kant followed.

Goffman (2002:47) is more specific. He commends the Turkish spirit of openness.[695] Their remarkable hospitality as a support of marginalised communities like "Huguenots, some Anglicans, Quakers, Anabaptists or even Jesuits or Capuchins" (Goffman 2002:111) seems to have been well known.

On that point, Armstrong Starkey (2003:156) adds that "Groups such as "Calvinists and Unitarians from Transylvania, Protestants from Silesia in the seventeenth century, religious dissidents in the form of the Old Believers, who resisted state control of the Orthodox Church" enjoyed the new governance. Kemal Karpat (2002:207) mentions those "seeking refuge in Ottoman lands to escape religious and political persecution in Russia around 1736.[696] Many of them peacefully settled down in the Ottoman territories and in the Arabian Peninsula,[697] where they were granted the permit to stay and the freedom to worship. These examples are taken long after the German Reformation and mark the continuity of the Muslim protective stance. Notice that it was because the newcomers were escaping oppression and not because Muslims showed themselves from their best side in order to convert them. On the contrary, Ottomans were aware that those refugees continuously bore new ideas into their realm. Levten Stavrianos (2008[4]:232) brings out the Ottoman openness in contrast with the bigotry prevailing in the Christian West; to quote the Greek historian,

> "The Ottoman Empire was unique (…) for its unequaled degree of religious tolerance. In a period when Catholics and Protestants were massacring one another and when 2151 Jews were being hounded from one Christian state to another, the subjects of the sultan were free to worship as they wished with comparatively minor disabilities."

One mark of Ottoman support for Christianity in an inscription found in the Yıldırım Bayezit Mosque (built between 1390 and 1400) in Alaşehir.[698] It is said that, during the Ottoman time, some Muslims were unhappy with the presence of the Saint John Basilica in their place and demanded its demolition. As an answer, Beyazit I ordered

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[695] "The Ottomans drew upon the egalitarianism and inclusive traditions of Central Asia and the relative tolerance of Islam to construct a society in which non-Muslim monotheists could live and work in relative freedom. Oppressed inhabitants of exclusionary Christian states found such an alternative enormously attractive."

[696] On p.667 of the same book, Karpat assumes that some *who came later might have been "*Orthodox Russians or Old Believers."

[697] Again Karpat (2002:659), "The overwhelming majority of the immigrants were Muslims, but among them were also many Jews and Christians [the Old Believers, Russian-speaking German Catholics and Protestants] who preferred the sultan's rule to that of the Orthodox Christian governments."

[698] The biblical Philadelphia, Turkey.

that a mosque bearing his name be erected opposite the church. Moreover, the sultan demonstrated how much he supported the variety of religions by stating:

> "He who wishes to practice his religion may go to the mosque or, if he wishes, to the church. No one may interfere in someone else's religion and beliefs.[699]"

Among other examples of good relations between Ottoman and Byzantine elite, Tijana Krstić (2011:127) comments on the status of Mount Athos:

> "The monasteries of Mount Athos acquired significant tax and other privileges as well as independence from the Byzantine emperors, which they managed to partially retain in the Ottoman period by maintaining good relations with early Ottoman sultans. According to the oldest known title of privilege (*berāt*), dating to Murad II's reign in 1430, the monasteries gained the privileges of not having the *timār* system established on the peninsula and not having to allow any Ottoman official to enter the peninsula. In contrast, the properties of the priests and monks were recognized as religious endowments (*vakıf*) and private property (*mülk*), which meant that the monks did not have to pay either the poll tax or taxes for the products they produced locally."

11.4 The Bogomils in Bosnia: A case study of Ottoman support

The Bosnian history is inevitably linked to the Bogomils. We have classified them as forerunners of the Reformation, so the symbolic value of Bosnia in its Ottoman period deserves special attention. After one hundred years of freedom under Byzantine benevolence, the Bogomils began to be harassed[700] by Catholics and Orthodox alike.

We have noticed in chapter four that Ban Kulin, regent in Bosnia from 1180 to 1204, had made the Bogomil faith the official religion. His Bogomil – friendly policy went so far that his son Stjepan Kulinić [1204–1232] is said to have been deposed because of his anti-Bogomil activities. His successor Matej Ninoslav [1232–1250] roused again to the apostolic roots and fiercely upheld Bosnia's Bogomil faith. In anger that the era of the Bogomils still prevailed, the Hungarians, who were strong Catholics, launched a crusade against Bosnia (1235–1241). With the help of Dominican monks,

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[699] "Dinini yaşamak için isteyen camiye gitsin, isteyen de kiliseye gitsin. Kimse kimsenin dinine ve inançlarına karışmasın."

[700] A thorough report is found in Roll (1979:74-77).

he concentrated all his energy on eradicating what he regarded as heresy by putting everyone deemed to be a "heretic" at stake.

But at that very moment (1241), a new threat appeared on the horizon. Sube'e-tai, the most efficient general the Golden Horde had ever had, overcame Moldavia and Wallachia, crossed the Danube and defeated the Croatian-Hungarian coalition. A non-negligible side effect was the abrupt ending of the Bosnian Crusade. "The Mongols saved Bosnia" (Janet and Bernard Hamilton & Yuri Stoyanov 1998:265); and allow me to slightly modify them for: "The Mongols saved the Apostolic Bogomils."

The religious turn came when after the death of King Matej Ninoslav, his Catholic cousin Prijezda I took the throne [1250–1287]. It meant the resumption of the Catholic administration of Bosnia. We skip a few decades until 1319, the year in which Pope John XXII urged the Croatian Ban Mladen II Šubić to conduct another crusade against the Bogomils, justifying it with the words (Roll 1979:78-79):

> ""The heresy entirely contaminates Bosnia. (…) Church buildings lie fallow, and there are no more priests, no confession, no baptism."

Then, under the administration of Ban Stjepan II [1322–1353], it is said that (Stavrianos 2008[4]:104),

> "Forty thousand Bogomils fled from Bosnia to neighboring countries, and others who did not succeed in making their escape were sent in chains to Rome. But even those violent measures did little to diminish the strength of the Bogomils in Bosnia."

Indeed, as the Turkish menace to the official church in his home country grew, Stjepan realized the pressing need for alliances with his – mainly anti-Bogomil – neighbours to save his nation. In Serbia, Stjepan Dušan dreamed of expanding his newly inaugurated Great Serbian Empire. Yet, "this imposing structure proved to be a phantom empire" (Coles 1968:22). His death in 1355 sealed the failure of his vision, but it gave Bosnia a chance to gain more autonomy. Despite the attempts of the Catholic minority, Bogomilism remained the state religion for a long time (Roll 1979:123). King Stjepan Ostoja [1398–1409] fully supported Bogomilism (John van Antwerp Fine 1975: 281), and his son Stjepan Tomaš [1443–1461] followed him in his conviction (Fine 1975:282).

The religious back and forth that characterizes the Bosnian administration are characteristic of the tug between Bogomilism as the prevalent religion in their kingdom

and the need for remaining on good terms with those of his fellow monarchs who were also opposed to heresy. Yet, whenever the Bosnian elite did contemplate possible conversion to Catholicism, it was mainly motivated by political calculation. Therefore, I am asking, why did Stjepan Tomaš and some of his predecessors turn to Bogomilism and not, for instance, to Islam? Why did they remain a vassal of the Ottomans while they remained Bogomil believers for such a long time and without experiencing ongoing pressure? After all, the Ottomans had been hoping to conquer the Bosnian kingdom since the end of the fourteenth century.

The first Ottoman battle in Bosnia (Bileća, August 1388) ended in a defeat, and many raids followed. Interestingly, the decisive move came at the request of Bosnia's grand duke. Sandalj Hranić Kosača [1392–1435] was fighting against the Ottomans in Serbia, and he accused his rival Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić [1380–1416] of a plot to destabilize him with the support of the Ottomans. While Sandalj sought help against the Serbian despot Stjepan Lazarević, Hrvoje contacted the Ottomans for support. Pretending to back Sandalj, Hungary hoped to profit from the players's rivalry and, in that context, came to fight the Ottomans. Sultan Murad II saw this as the perfect moment to invade the disputed kingdom (May 1414). When he crushed the Hungarians (Doboj, August 1415), the door was open to the Ottoman expansion into the region. Later on (1451), Sultan Mehmed II originated the Bosansko Krajište, "an interim form of military and territorial organization of Ottoman rule" (Omer Ibrahimagić 1998:77).

Yet, Bosnia became an integral part of the Ottoman Empire only after the death of King Stjepan Tomašević [1461–1463]. It means that it took forty-eight years after the Battle of Doboj for the Ottomans to bring Bosnia under their full authority. The question is, why did it take so long? The answer is partly that the Ottomans probably had no specific interest in enforcing their dominion. Islam had begun as a spiritual reformation and was not intended to become a well-installed theocratic monarchy. Therefore, it offered a more people-oriented communication ethos and not religious-centred governance. Just as during the Arabic annexations, the Ottomans merely took over the old administrative structures without interfering in everyday life. We also recall Süleyman, who let Hungarian noblemen "run the business" and expected from his subjects an annual tribute and nothing else. At every social level, the locals kept their properties and exercised trades, and "laborers, regardless of religion, were well rewarded by the Ottomans" (Hans Kissling 1964:6).

The cards were reshuffled during the short reign of King Stjepan Tomašević. After the peaceful time of his father Stjepan Tomaš, the new monarch developed a tense relationship with the Muslims. It is recorded that he complained of not being able to fight against the Turks in his kingdom "because of the Manichaean majority of his vassals, who had more sympathy for the Turks than for the Catholics" (Roll 1979: 126). In fact, Stjepan Tomašević's desire was to organize a European-wide Christian coalition against the Turks under his leadership. The Catholic writer Ignaz von Döllinger adds (1890:2/249),

> "Due to the threatening proximity of the Turks and the Cathars' connections with them, this sect[701] became[702] more and more dangerous."

At that point, Stjepan Tomašević took the ultimate step. Wishing to impress the Catholic leaders and to eliminate possible enemies within his nation, he proscribed the Bogomils and engaged in their systematic extinction. He became the first Bosnian king to do so, but also the last Bosnian king at all. Before he could carry out his plans, Stjepan Tomašević, who had done everything to distinguish himself, was beheaded by Mehmed the Conqueror (1463).[703]

11.5   The Bogomil loyalty to the Ottomans

The annexation of Bosnia in 1461 was sealed by the same Mehmed who had overtaken Constantinople eleven years earlier. We had noticed that the Ottomans were already present in Bosnia long before, i.e., in the time of the siege of Constantinople, during which the Bogomils greeted the Turks as liberators (Boris Primov 1960: n°8/269). Could this indicate that those "Apostolic" Christians helped the Ottomans prosper in Bosnia? If so, the word "invasion" does not apply to the Bosnian conquest.[704] As a partial answer, the Turkish writer Ayşe Betül Kayahan (2016:7) mentions that when Hungary invaded Bosnia in 1408,

> "Influential Bogomil noblemen were beheaded – just like DAESH does today – and thrown into the Bosna River. This led the Bogomils to see the Ottomans as libe-

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[701] I.e., the Bogomils.

[702] I.e., for the Catholic authorities.

[703] After he had refused to handle the customary tribute to the sultan (Mark Pinson 1996[2]:11).

[704] "The Ottoman Empire conventionally has been seen as a persecutor of Christians, but one might judge it instead a haven for runaways from a fiercely intolerant Christian Europe. After all, whereas in the Ottoman world there were thousands of renegades from Christendom, one almost never discovers in Christian Europe converts from Islam" (Goffman 2002:6-7).

rators and help the Turks against the Hungarians in 1414. Building closer ties with Turks, Bogomils later welcomed Ottomans when they conquered Bosnia in 1463."

As the Bosnian historian Esad Kurović (2010:33/77) notes, both Bosnian dukes (Sandalj and Hrvoje) were members of the "Bosnian Church", i.e., the Bogomil faith. It implies that they preferred being under the Ottoman sultan than under a devoted Catholic like Sigismund of Bohemia.

> "The following year when Bosnia was invaded by Muhammad II the Catholic king himself deserted by his subjects, the keys of the principal fortress the royal city of Bobovatz were handed over to the Turks by the Bogomile governor. The other fortresses and towns hastened to follow this example and within a week seventy cities passed into the hands of the sultan and Muhammed II added Bosnia to the number of his numerous conquests" (Stavrianos 2008[4]:104).

The Catholic historian Franz Babinger (1959:1/260) makes the "Bogomils" responsible for the general acceptance of Islam in the Balkan Peninsula. This statement reminds us of what happened in Spain in its Islamic period, as stated in Cantor (1958: 133-135):

> "When Muslim warriors marched into the Iberian Peninsula less than one hundred years after the death of the prophet, they were greeted as liberators by the Jews."

On the other hand, many of the Bogomils were among those who, with time, embraced the Islamic faith (Émile G. Léonard 1961:1/17). The protective governance of the Ottomans appealed to the Bogomils, who "were easily converted to Islam – and not to Catholicism!" (Roll 1979:128). In other words, Bosnia, "the promised land of heresy, the ultimate outpost of [Bogomils] dualists",[705] slowly became Muslim; but it happened by sympathy rather than by obligation. Speaking about Bosnia after the occupation of the Balkans, Kemal Karpat (2002:755) provides several theological elements as a practical explanation for the kindness of Islam in favour of Christians:

> "In contrast to Christian Orthodoxy, which appeared as the instrument of an alien ruling order, the Byzantine state, Islam preached the equality of people as individuals. It extolled the omnipotence of a merciful and understanding God, who allowed believers the complete freedom to choose their ways [*tarikat*] of reaching him."

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[705] A Statement by Giacomo Bech in 1388, i.e., before the beginning of the Inquisition, quoted in Malcolm Lambert (1998:297).

It would be naïve to pretend that the coexistence of Muslims and Christians has always been free of conflicts. There certainly have been cases of unfair treatment, among which was the *cizye* to be paid by non-Muslims, and the *devshirme*, or child levy – not to forget the recruitment by force of the Janissaries among Christian populations. Nevertheless,

> "Granted all this, the position of the nonconformist was much more favorable in the Ottoman Empire than in the Christian Empire" (Stavrianos 2008[4]:232).

11.6 Religious liberty in Bosnia and voluntary acceptance of Islam

Indeed, the Bogomils had good reasons to rejoice about the Ottoman presence. One of Sultan Mehmed's first achievements immediately after he entered Bosnia was securing religious liberty. He issued a document that guaranteed freedom of movement and activity and the security of his Christian subjects, stipulating:

> "The monks of Bosnia will receive the fullness of my gracious favor, as I have ordered that no one is allowed to hinder or trouble those mentioned above nor their monasteries. They are to live in my realm without misgivings; and even those who leave the country and return shall enjoy security and protection."[706]

The original Carta, in Bosniac *Ahdnama*,[707] was handed over to the Franciscans and is still displayed today in the museum in Fojnica.[708] Next to it, one can read the permission granted by Sultan Selim III in 1798 "for repairs to the church and the monastery". Another one signed by the sultan in 1831 authorises "the roof and the altar to be renovated."

A by-product of Ottoman benevolence is the slow but ongoing conversion to Islam of the Albanian, Bosnian, and Macedonian populations. European historians agree that this happened (André Miquel & Henry Laurens 2003:278) as "the result of social processes. One reason was the determination to retaliate, for instance, in Bosnia, for the Catholic persecution or the burden of high taxation under the Orthodox Church". Miquel adds (2003:278) that,

> "No one could have enforced with a sword a movement of such magnitude as the Islamification of Bosnia in the fourteenth century."

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[706] Text seen in Fojnica during my visit on 5 May 2017.
[707] Ottoman *Ahidnâme*, "document".
[708] Fojnica was the seat of Bosnia's bishops at that time.

11.7　The Jews and the Ottomans: Another case of a successful symbiosis

Let us turn to a completely different situation: the Jews in Western Europe. This piece of our puzzle is essential for my main research question because it illustrates that the Ottomans were not keen on helping a specific group of Christians. Instead, they behaved with kindness to the Jews despite possible theological disagreements. Often victims of injustice, many Jews were expelled from various principalities of Germany,[709] England (1290), and the Hapsburg- controlled territories (1421), the Ottoman caliphate showed benevolence to them (Martin Gilbert 1993:46). When the Jewish persecution started in 1478 amid the Spanish Inquisition and reached an unusual scale some years, later expulsions from those places required restricted actions compared to the systematic killing.

> "In January 1492, the Muslims of Granada, the last vestige of Moorish Iberia, were brutally overrun by the army of Ferdinand and Isabella. A cross was mounted on the highest tower of Granada's fortress-palace, the Alhambra" (James Harpur 2008:22-23).

Two months after Granada's Reconquista, the "Catholic Monarchs", as Ferdinand and Isabella were known, ordered the purge of all Jews from Castile and Aragon.

> "The Jews had three months, either to convert to Christianity or to get out of Spain. It is difficult to establish the numbers with certainty. There were probably about 300,000 Jews in Iberia at this time. About half of the Jews chose to become Christians rather than to go to exile" (Benjamin Gampel,[710] in Vivian Mann, ed., 1992:32).

Tens of thousands left Spain in the spring and summer of 1492. Some sought refuge in Portugal. There, they were sooner or later forced to accept baptism (Andrés Bernáldez[711] 2014:6). Most of them travelled from the Iberian Peninsula along the southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea – safely passing by areas controlled by Muslims – to finally reach the Ottoman outposts, where they were well received.

Sultan Bayezid II remains notorious for his generosity in favour of those oppressed Jews. In order to safely rescue the Jewish victims of the Reconquista, he sent out his fleet to the Iberian Peninsula and gave the order that Jews were to be offered hospita-

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[709] The Jewish persecution started in Europe in 1007.

[710] "Christians and <u>Muslims</u> in Medieval Iberia, Convivencia Through the Eyes of a Sephardic Jew."

[711] "Chronicos de los Reyes catholicos comentares, Historia de Segovia." [Online] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Oy_EpZ7tSNyT_x9kx53Cc_XM-Qry6pBo/view [retrieved 12 March 2021].

lity all over his empire (Vernont Egger 2008:82). While granting the strangers permission to settle down with the full rights and duties of all other citizens of his empire, the sultan allegedly made fun of the Spanish monarch Ferdinand and Queen Isabella who allowed part of the top class of their kingdom to emigrate. "You venture to call Ferdinand a wise ruler", he said to his courtiers, "he who has impoverished his own country and enriched mine!" (Isidore Singer & Cyrus Adler 1912:2/460). The legal status of the refugees was anchored in the codification of Ottoman customary law that Bayezid initiated.[712]

What is valid for the annexation of Palestine may apply to the Jewish diaspora around the Mediterranean. If it is true that Jews have been protected by Caliph Omar, Sultan Bayezid II, and many others,[713] the common idea that Isaac and Ishmael's offspring would be enemies forever has to be replaced by that of a good relation of kinship. Until today, the descendants of those rescued by Bayezid still hold leading positions in Turkey's economic life.

> "The most striking evidence of Ottoman tolerance is the large-scale immigration of Jewish refugees following their expulsion from Spain. The newcomers were welcomed and were accorded the same privileges enjoyed by other non-Muslims. This unprecedented reception stimulated new waves of Jewish immigration until a total of approximately one hundred thousand found refuge under the star and crescent" (Levy 1992:3).

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[712] It was thus in his reign that "the 'classical' Ottoman institutions came to receive their 'classical' formulation" (Imber 2004:44).

[713] Avidgor Levy (1992:4) adds that German Jews, known as *Ashkenazim*, had come to the Ottoman lands during the reign of Murad II due to mistreatment up to expulsion from the dutchies of Baiern.

Yet, Levy (1992:4) writes:

> "In 1492, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled the Jews of Spain, only small numbers actually set out for the Ottoman Empire. In fact, in 1492, most refugees from Spain found temporary shelter in neighbouring Portugal, the small Kingdom of Navarre and the French region of Provence, all of which could be reached overland. Others escaped to the relative proximity of North Africa. The significance of 1492, however, was that it uprooted a very substantial segment of Spanish Jewry. Consequently, when in subsequent years Portugal, Navarre, France, and several Italian states implemented oppressive measures against their Jewish populations, or expelled them outright, new waves of migration were set in motion. The diminishing possibilities for refuge in Europe and the establishment of successful patterns of immigration to, and settlement in, the Ottoman Empire had made a preferred destination for increasing numbers of Jews. The migration of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, as well as from Italy and France, to the Ottoman Empire was, therefore, a gradual process that spanned many decades."

In April 1892, the Jews of the Ottoman Empire celebrated what was described as "the fourth centennial of their immigration to Turkey. The Central Committee of the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris sent a congratulatory message to Abdülhamid II, which read, in part (p.3):

> "In the spring of 1492, the Jews expelled from Spain found shelter in Turkey. While they were oppressed in the rest of the world, they enjoyed in the lands of your glorious ancestors a protection that never ceased. It enabled them to live in security, to work and develop."

Coming back to the German Reformation, it is worth noting that the Jewish exodus from the Iberian Peninsula to the Ottoman shores happened at the very time when Martin Luther was born (1483); and far away from Constantinople, the pre-Reformation was blossoming. Too bad that Bayezid, nicknamed "the righteous and compassionate king Sultan Bayezid Han the Second" (Levy 1992:3) did not live long enough to help the Lutherans as he did for the Jews. One may wonder what turn destiny would have taken under such a champion of benevolence.

11.8 The Ottoman application of *jihād*

At that point, we need to ask the same question as for the Arab campaigns eight hundred years earlier: How much religious motivation did fuel the Ottoman advance?

Right from the start, we remember that the first Turkic tribes who entered Byzantium were not yet islamised and their conversion did not change their tactic. This is where it is crucial to separate between territorial gains and islamification. Similar to medieval Christianity, Islam does not separate secular and clerical concerns. In both cases, it seems that the mix between politics and spirituality makes it challenging to know whether the wish to expand was made attractive by the promise of the remission of sins, such as during the crusades: by the assurance of Paradise, by getting the credit for the good works of those who accepted one's religion, or simply by demonstrating superiority in front of a religion considered primitive. Another motivation could have been the conviction to exercise mercy for the benefit of the "enemies of faith" bound to eternal damnation – however brutal or cynical that may be, or – least likely – obeying a divine command to go into the whole world and preach. A sociological answer is that, in religious matters, personal agendas often prevail over religious convictions.

Furthermore, in case of success, the victor's religion is further sanctioned, since presumably, God is on the side of the winner. Practically speaking, if Allah blessed the Ottomans through victory, Islam must be the ultimate Truth. For Martin Luther, though, the conclusion was obvious even though divergent, namely, that the Turks were God's rod, which is why He had to let them win.

Whatever the answers to our questions may be, there is no doubt under which flag the Ottomans carried their advance. A simple look at the collection of yatagans

belonging to the Ottoman sultans and now displayed in the Topkapı Museum in Istanbul provides the answer. All of them are engraved with explicit content such as:[714]

> "Bless and strengthen Mehmed II, son of Murad II, the poignant sword that is drawn in the name of jihad: the sultan of ghazis[715] and mujahideen that striveth to glorify the holy men of Allah. May the necks of the enemies of Shariat becometh the scabbard of his sword; shed your grace on the ink of his pen. Son of Osman, son of Orhan, son of Murad, son of Beyazıt, son of Mehmed; may Allah cleanse them with the heavenly waters (*zulal*) that streameth by the sword of ghazis and place them under the shadow of swords in heaven. Amen, ya rabb-elalemin (God of all universe)."

But were not the words on Sultan Mehmed's sabre similar to what was engraved on European shields later – "God with us"? Were the Ottoman warriors like the first crusaders who forgot the original intention of Pope Urban's rallying cry "Deus vult"[716] – God wants it – as soon as the temptation of greed and adventure awoke their basic instincts? The Ottoman Archives have kept a Turkish diary of the siege of Vienna in 1683.[717] The sense of divine calling permeates almost every page. Here are some excerpts:

> "Saturday, 17 July: Verily a land that is bound to be given to Islam! Praise be to Allah for having given it into our hands!" (Richard F. Kreutel 1977:27).

> "Sunday, 18 July: May Allah grant us that the fortress of Vienna, the Grand Ruler's ultimate longing be inserted into the Kingdom of Islam!" (Kreutel 1977:28).

Written by the master of ceremonies of the Sublime Porte,[718] the phraseology[719] reminds us of the forced catholicisation of South America by the *conquistadores* – which incidentally started just when Süleyman reached Vienna for the first time. Notice that Hungary is named "the enemy of our faith" (1977:27 written on Tuesday, 31 August), which may refer to the Catholic majority or to Christendom as a whole, including the Lutherans. By the way, the gunshots as "the fire bright of divine anger" (Kreutel 1977:72, written the same day), surprisingly echoe Luther's "divine rod."

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[714] I have written down the existing English translation in the showcases.

[715] "veterans".

[716] Sometimes *Deus le volt* or *Deus lo vult*.

[717] Even though the siege of Vienna in 1683 lies outside of this study's time frame, these statements' importance lies in their reflection of common and well-established perspectives.

[718] Two copies exist (*Vekayi'-i Beç, the events around Vienna*): nº 1310 of the Library of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, the second in the London British Museum (Manuscript or. 6647). The text was published by Kreutel (1977).

[719] Reports with the same religious inspiration have been listed in Walter von Sturmiger, ed. (1968²).

The same Topakı Museum displays the swords allegedly belonging to Muḥammad, to the caliphs after him, and to several of their generals. Notice that not one has a single quranic engravement on it. That does fit into the warlike application of *jihād*. But can we reconcile both dimensions? The answer is that whether *jihād* is manifested as a spiritual effort or a bellicose endeavour, it invariably calls for the same spirit of self-denial, i.e., the consciousness of serving a higher cause. It may be an inner battle against temptation, practicing self-control during the fasting month of Ramadan, or risking of one's life as a combatant. It may justify the high level of discipline peculiar to Muslim fighters. Moreover, the struggle begins when a recruit leaves the well-protected ties of his family, and the group dynamic among young soldiers gives the rest, not giving too much room for a pacific idealisation of *jihād* – notwithstanding what theologians sitting in their living room may write on it.

11.9   The pragmatic motives behind the westward expansion

In the words of Norman Itzkowitz (1972:38), "the ideological motivation behind the westward expansion was the determination of the Ottomans to turn 'infidels' to Islam." Yet, my research demonstrates that Muslims did not have a particular interest in converting non-Muslims but advocated a policy of protection for money instead. For example, Historians record Bayezid's first and probably last contact with Catholic Europe. It occurred when the Polish king Vladislaus II[720] expanded his claims over the Croatian and Hungarian parts of Pannonia (1490). Bayezid's answer consisted in deploying his armies. They would conduct regular raids of provocation along the southern end of Vladislaus' kingdom. But unlike his father, who had been constantly involved in further incursions, the new sultan disliked war. In April 1495, he signed a three-year truce with the Polish king, after which the Ottoman would guarantee peace in the region in exchange for yearly compensation. Granted, Bayezid did not excel in defeating others. As a pious Muslim, he did uphold warfare against infidels as a meritorious act. Yet, his genius was somewhere else. His revolutionary approach consisted of dominating while letting vassals on the throne. He offered to protect them with his armies, and his protégés had to pay a tribute for the 'help. This *modus operandi* enabled the winners to maintain the integrity of an empire constantly growing in size

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[720] Croatian, Vladislav II Jagelović, Czech, Vladislav Jagellonský, Hungarian, II. Ulászló, Polish, Władysław II Jagiellończyk, and Slovak, Vladislav II Jagelovský [1472–1516].

and diversity. They did so by minimising administrative costs and human resources while the vassal states enjoyed relative autonomy.

> "The early Ottoman policy had demonstrated a remarkable tolerance toward the existing cultures and religious traditions, allowing the Christian orthodox churches of southeast Europe to survive as long as taxes were paid to the Ottoman central authority and the rule of the sultan was not challenged" (Kia 2008:23).

The risk of this scheme was that "as soon as the Turks were busy somewhere else, the colonized powers tried to get their independence back" (Zappe 2001a:109).

At the time of the German Reformation, the status of non-Muslims in Ottoman-gained territories became a matter of ample discussion. A few tracts noted with relief the religious openness of the Ottomans. Erasmus stated that "The Turks force no one to renounce his faith or to accept theirs in their land" (in Francisco 2008:63-64).[721] Gregory Miller (1994:246-247) quotes Joachim Greff, a contemporary writer of Martin Luther, recording what he had heard several people in Europe saying,

> "Ha, what do I tell who conquers us – the Devil, his mother, the Turk, or whoever! It's all the same to me who is my ruler. (…) It is far better to live under the Turk than under some papist tyrant."

The Turks, it was well-noted, even permitted Christians to retain their faith. Bohnstedt (1958:20) lists these conditions:

> "Our Lord the Turkish emperor and his officials allow everyone to believe whatever he chooses, as long as he always keeps his opinions strictly to himself."[722]

Adam Francisco (2008:64) remarks that several authors, such as Justus Jonas (1493-1555), a German theologian and friend of Martin Luther, believed (in Danielis 2004:138) that such friendliness "was a sham used to entice Christians toward Islam":

> "People say that the Turkish emperor allows freedom of faith to everyone. But this is far from the truth. Consider what the Turk does to all those who come under his control. He forcibly takes from parents one of every three children."

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[721] Ausz Ratschlag Erasmi 16b.

[722] *Ausszug eynes Briefes wie einer so in der turkey wonhafft seinem freündt in diese landt geschreiben un wessen sey und wie Türckisch Regiment un wessen sey und wie er es mit den landen so ererobert zu halten pflegt kürtzlich in Teutschde sprachgebraucht nützlich diser zeyt zu wissen* ("Excerpt from a letter in which one who is so detained in Turkey writes to his friend in that country and lets the Turkish army be to him what he wants and what the customs are in the conquered countries, and what it is useful for the Germans to know at this time"). Wittenberg, Germany: Schirlentz, 1526.

Gregory Miller (1994:182-190) has a different opinion:

"Central European and even the Germans were apparently well aware of, and even admired, the 'wealth, splendour, power, simplicity, and rapidity of action' of lands governed by the Ottomans."

If the general European look at the Ottomans ranged from admiration to fear, the fact is that it did not bring many westerners to embrace Islam.

Another thought is to compare the Ottoman approach with the Arab. The Ottomans took over the Abbasid legacy. The new caliphs of the Muslim world were convinced of Islam's superiority. On the other hand, their religion had an unconscious connotation as an Arabic import that did not always fit into their own nomadic, non-conventional way of regarding things. That, in return, secured a greater sympathy for dissenters and a preference for pragmatic solutions instead of rigid dogmatism.[723]

11.10 The Ottoman direct help to the Reformation

My presentation has demonstrated a significant reformatory presence along the Ottoman route, such as the Bogomils of Bosnia, Lutheran groups in Hungary, and Calvinists in Transylvania. Since we should not underestimate the consciousness of Allah's omnipresence all along the Ottoman advance, the help given to the Reformation could have been an avowed policy for Süleyman based on the quranic awareness of steadfast Christians. In that case, the sultan could have acted more exclusively with them. However, this is not what he did. On the contrary, he befriended a Catholic monarch like François I of France. That indicates that the choice of his partners did not depend primarily on their theological affiliation. On the other hand, if Süleyman had openly taken a stand to back Luther and the supportive princes, Catholic regents would have had an excellent pretext to suspect Lutheranism of complicity – with all the consequences that we may imagine. First and foremost, Charles and François would have had two enemies in common and formed a coalition against the Lutherans and the Ottomans.

The answer is that it was just a matter of time until the Lutheran princes would come to Süleyman's attention – the latest when the Ottoman support to François I

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[723] This is my subjective observation after 45 years of interactions with Turks.

would reach Hungary. It is said that the French king is the one who put Süleyman in touch with them, since they were his first choice as possible allies against Charles V.

"He [Süleyman] said that he himself was about to embark on a campaign and promised on oath that they [the Protestants] would not be harmed when he entered Germany" (Holt, Lambton & Lewis 2008[9]:1a/329).

Süleyman's concrete assurance of protection implies that the Ottoman part played during the Reformation was real and not only of indirect nature.

"In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries support and encouragement for Protestants and Calvinists were, like the French alliance, one of the fundamental principles of Ottoman policy. This aimed at keeping Europe divided, weakening the Habsburgs and preventing the launching of a united crusade" (Holt, Lambton & Lewis 2008[9]:1a/329).

The above statement indicates that this repercussion was part of the global Ottoman strategy. The support offered to Calvinists in Transylvania and Lutherans in Germany was a way to counter others' attempts for dominion in Europe – in this case, the Holy Roman Empire. On the other hand, Lutherans and Muslims had common political antagonists. These were Catholic states, but they could have been any others.

Eventually, the Ottoman line of conduct appears to be merely tactical rather than theological. It seems that Süleyman would have supported any dissident, provided it could help them build up his advantage. Even the sultan's alleged friendship with François I was mainly due to his obsession with controlling the Mediterranean. An alliance with the French would uphold his maritime advantage, giving each one open sea access. Yet, partly on their own, partly under the high command, his fleets roamed the *Mare Nostrum*. They did not ravage only the coasts of Italy, Spain but also those of France. It illustrates that even the friendship with François had its limits.

The prioritisation of geopolitical interests over religious issues may disclose why there is no specific evidence that the Ottomans acclaimed Martin Luther and his supporters as the promoters of the biblical message or heirs of the Christians mentioned in the Qur'ān. Even though their predilection for Lutheran believers over the Catholics became visible in their conduct, such patronage was simply not their priority.

"The Turks were wholly indifferent to the doctrinal controversies between the Protestants and the Papists. In truth, had they been disposed to draw the sword of

persecution, it would have been against the Romanists, whose temples, filled with idols, were especially abhorrent to them" (Wylie 2002³:3/390).

Another possibility is that the sultan chose the German Lutheran princes as a provision for a possible invasion of Charles V's empire. This tacit assistance built enough of a threat for an emperor in a constant dilemma within two battlefields at the same time: to fight the French king and the Turkish sultan, or eradicate the Reformation. Even though the threat of the Franco-Ottoman union never became a reality, the casual Ottoman-Lutheran relationships implied the guarantee of religious freedom wherever Süleyman came across Christians adhering to the Bible content.

11.11   Süleyman's perception of the Lutheranism

Another hypothesis is that the Ottomans were unaware of what was at stake in the revolution unfolding within Christendom. Indeed, there is no evidence of tangible esteem of the German Reformation among the Ottomans. Being of a relatively rigid religious nature, Islam has never been easily impressed by outside development (Bethmann 1950:92). One could raise the question of the geographic distance between the doors of the Schlosskirche and the Sublime Porte. After all, did not they have other concerns?[724]

Worth of notice is a letter Süleyman addressed to the Protestants in Flanders. In it Karpat 2002:53), the Magnificent claimed, "he felt close to them, since they did not worship idols, believed in one God and fought against the pope and emperor." Süleyman added that he would provide military aid to them whenever needed (Mehmet Bulut 2001:112). However, the Flemish left Catholicism for Protestantism in 1566 – in the year of Süleyman's death – so this document can only be dated twenty years after Martin Luther's death (1546) at the earliest. Therefore, it does not say too much about German-Ottoman relationships. The same remark applies to the epistolary correspondence between Süleyman's grandson Murad III [1574–1585] and the "members of the Lutheran sect in Flanders and Spain". The sultan declared (in Jonathan Burton 2005:62),

> "As you, for your part, do not worship idols, you have banished the idols and portraits and bells from churches, and declared your faith by stating that God Almighty is one and Holy Jesus is His Prophet and Servant, and now, with heart and soul, are seeking and desirous of the true faith; but the faithless one they call Papa does not

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[724] The main other concerns were the Ottoman-Safavid war against the Persians and the Hapsburgs (1532-55), the campaigns in the Indian Ocean mainly against the Portuguese (1488-1564), and the consolidation of his advantage in the eastern Mediterranean and North Africa.

recognize his Creator as One, ascribing divinity to Holy Jesus, and worshiping idols and pictures which he has made with his own hands, thus casting doubt upon the oneness of God and instigating how many servants to that path of error."

Murad III also corresponded with Queen Elizabeth I of England. He wrote (Burton 2005:64): "Islam and Protestantism have much more in common than either did with Roman Catholicism, as both rejected the worship of idols", and went on by advocating an agreement between the Brits and him. Even though the text raises some doubt about the nature of his primary interest, we can conclude that the Ottomans were aware of Protestantism and felt closer to it than to Catholicism.

"Nevertheless, the simplicity of the Protestant belief in contrast with the Catholic must have made a favorable impression upon the Turk as it was closer akin to his own ideas of worship. Not only did he tolerate Protestant Christians in his territories but he even gave shelter to those who fled from Catholic oppression" (Bethmann 1950:98).

But why did Süleyman the Magnificent remain so quiet about the German Reformation? Was he afraid the religious revolution would sweep into his territories? Indeed, there is evidence that many who embraced Lutheranism in Europe made great efforts to preach it, at least in the European part of the Ottoman Empire. One example is Primož Trubar (1508-1586), a priest who had been in contact with Erasmus and became the champion of the Reformation in Carnolia.[725] Trubar translated the New Testament into Slovenian, Serbian, and together with Stipan Konzul Istranin (1526-1579), into Croatian. In his preface of the Slovenian edition, Trubar expressed the view that (Gottfried Simon 1920:57-58),

"The saving message of the Gospel may be spread all through Turkey, the heart and the conscience of the Turks aroused, the poor Christian prisoners in Turkey be comforted and strengthened, and our Saviour made to be known in Turkey."

A concrete Ottoman and Lutheran interface – this time rather an area of friction – appears in numerous accounts of Protestants zealous to convert Muslims, and of Muslims converted to Christianity who preached the superiority of Jesus over Muḥammad. To name one, Hans Ungnad, Baron of Sonnegg, accepted the message of the Reformation in 1530 and spent his wealth translating and publishing the Scriptures and other works in several Slavic languages. Ungnad received overwhelming support enabling him

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[725] Today's Slovenia and some parts of Croatia.

to print 25.600 copies. Yet, it is said that his commitment was to translate as many pages as possible into the Turkish language, since he believed in the potential of the printed word to convert, for instance, the Turks (Damişmend 1948:2/60).

Written in 1714-1716 by Dimitrius Cantemir, Prince of Moldavia, *The history of the Growth and Decay of the Othman* provides notorious illustrations.[726] One of them concerns a certain Kabis Ajem,[727] "a man of great learning among the Turks, and well versed in the law and several sciences" (Alexander Duţu & Paul Cernovodeanu 1973:181). Kabis attempted to turn Muslims away from their faith and was then sentenced to capital punishment. The exciting detail is that "the sultan heard the whole discussion (of his trial in front of two judges and the Grand Vizier) behind a curtained window" (Duţu & Cernovodeanu 1973:182). In addition, Turkish chroniclers justify the verdict by the fact that the Catholic Church branded Kabis a heretic, "which gave the Muslims the right to execute him" (İsmail Hami Damişmend 1948:2/125). Because this case happened during the Reformation, it does not speak for a specific affinity bringing Süleyman and Martin Luther together in terms of theology.

Even though they were not necessarily aware of the theological issues behind it, Süleyman and the Turkish vizier must have been well informed of the ongoing controversy. There are several statements by envoys on their way back to Europe. The following anecdote arouses a thirst to know more about what it expresses. In his two tomes on Martin Luther's life and writings, the German theologian and orientalist Julius Köstlin (1826-1902) describes (2015[8]:2/290)[728] a brief meeting between Sultan Süleyman and a certain Schmalz, an attaché to the German embassy in Turkey. Schmalz related that the sultan once inquired about Martin Luther, if he knew him, and how old the reformer was. Hearing that Luther was 48 years old, the sultan replied:

> 'I wish he were even younger; then he would find me a gracious lord.[729] me from this gracious lord'."

To introduce this statement, Köstlin (2:290) postulates, without further explanation, that "The sultan had long since taken into account the division in the empire that Luther had initiated". Should Köstlin's citation be reliable – which has never been

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[726] Duţu & Cernovodeanu, ed., 1973.

[727] A name indicating his Persian origin.

[728] Julius Köstlin. [Online] https://books.google.hr/books?id=Cp5CAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq =bibliogroup:%22Martin+Luther+sein+leben+und+seine+schriften%22&hl=hr&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=o nepage&q&f=false [retrieved 17 August 2021].

[729] "Ich wollte, dass er noch jünger wäre, denn er sollte einen gnädigen Herrn an mir wissen."

confirmed[730] – it would witness Süleyman's particular interest in the rebel himself, or at least that the sultan was aware of the potential of the Reformation to split the Holy Roman Empire.

But can we detect here any application of the quranic invitation to "only argue with the People of the Book in the most courteous way" (al-'Ankabūt 29:46) and to "ask them in case of doubt" (Yūnus 10:94)? Probably not, because, as far as we have demonstrated, the level of Süleyman's possible interest for Martin Luther was not of theological nature. Even though this time, the issue was not to deal with the spiritual eminence of the Reformation *en personne*, the problem with Luther could be that his *Schriften* denigrated Islam as the Antichrist. Such a view could only close the door to any further agreement.

Another encounter is mentioned by one of Martin Luther's closest collaborators Philip Melanchton, who had an unusual interest in everything related to the Turks.[731] Melanchton knew personally Jérôme de Laski, the one who went to Istanbul in 1527 as the envoy of Ioan Zápolya. We remember from chapter six that Zápolya was Süleyman's *protégé* in Hungary and that, all along his regency, the Hungarians could exercise their biblical faith unhindered. Melanchton reports Laskis' success in concluding a satisfactory treaty with the Ottomans (in von Hammer-Purgstall 1827-1835:2/62-64). Then, in a private discussion with Sultan Süleyman, Jérôme was questioned whether he knew Martin Luther. He replied, "Yes, I have talked with him."

> "Thereupon Süleyman asked him in what respect Luther had made a change in that part of the world. Laski explained it to the sultan, whereupon Süleyman said, 'There is a great man whoever he is, but not yet has he arrived at that light in which we are.' He said that because he thought it superstitious of Luther to hold fast to a concept like the Trinity" (cited in Bethmann 1950:96).[732]

This statement is revealing. It gives an idea of Süleyman's view on Lutheran theology. For him and his co-believers, Luther may have been on track and only needed some more clarity, for instance, on the question of God's unicity. They would then make excellent Muslims. Any Christian who takes his religion seriously can witness the same reaction by Muslims, consisting is a mix of respect and regret for those close

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[730] The mention does not provide any source, which prevents us from giving it too much importance.

[731] According to *The Cambridge History of Islam* (Peter M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton & Bernard Lewis, eds., 2008[9]:1a/329), Melanchton has direct contact with the Patriarch of Istanbul, who was, in effect, an official of the sultan.

[732] Postilla Melanthonia on „*Historica de inventione et exultatione crucis Christi*, in CR., XXV, col. 504.

to the goal (which would only be to recite three times the *ṣahāda* in order to join the *Dār ul-Islām*, the House of Islam), without going the ultimate step of conversion. For Muslims, not to do so equals the refusal to accept the Messenger's message. Without this step, listening to the Gospel becomes irrelevant for someone who believes in the Qur'ān as the last revelation. Consequently, Süleyman's admiration for reformatory doctrines could not primarily be theological for as long as he, Luther, did not accept the normative authority of the Qur'ān. The only way would be for the sultan to deny the quranic superiority over all former revelations; and this was out of the discussion. It explains why the sultan's explanation for the impression left on him by the Reformation could not go further as his appreciation for Luther's revolution against the corrupt church and her pagan rites.

On the other hand, whenever Christians underlined beliefs and practices common to Muslims, Süleyman fully approved their actions. The best example is the sultan's support of the act of "destroying idols" during the Dutch Revolt (c.1566/68–1648). The rebels, like himself, were fighting against Spain (İnalcık, in Karpat 2002: 53).[733] Yet, I may well imagine Sultan Süleyman dreaming of having someone like the renegade monk as his right hand to convert Europe to Islam. Such speculation would validate Luther's reaction to Süleyman's to be "a gracious lord to him." Köstlin (1903[5]:2 /290) continues the story:

> When he (Luther) heard this statement, the earthly theologian took another draft of Wittenberg beer, made the cross sign and guffawed, 'May God protect me from such a gracious lord'."

In the previous chapter, we took notice of Martin Luther's praise of the Turks as civilians and partly as servicemen for their exemplary conduct. Yet, the reformer had far too much of a consciousness of the theological stumbling blocks and Bible eschaton to consider his possible conversion to Islam a viable option. Despite all reasons for mutual appreciation, it is clear that Brother Martin and Sultan Süleyman would both stay where they were.

In August 1532, Süleyman stood only a few kilometres from the Austrian border (Siege of Kőszeg) but could not go further. His second attempt to enter Charles V's territories failed (May 1533). Since this time, Süleyman did not target the House of Hapsburgs, Ferdinand seized the opportunity to invite the Ottomans to sit together and

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[733] "The Turkish Impact on the Development of Modern Europe."

establish a basis for a peace treaty. Cornelis de Schepper, counsellor for both Charles and Ferdinand,[734] acted in the name of the latter. While Cornelis was about to finalize the terms of the negotiation, von Hammer-Purgstall (1827-1835:2/103-104) writes that the Grand Vizier Pargalı İbrahim Paşa made the statement:

> "Charles had been in the meantime in Italy, had threatened the Turks with war and the Lutherans with force to make them return to the old doctrine; he had gone to Germany and had accomplished nothing. It was not like an emperor to begin a thing and not to complete it, to say something and not to fulfil it; he had announced a council and had not brought it together. He had led siege to Buda and had not conquered it; it was his duty to make peace between his brothers Ferdinand and King John, he had done anything in this time. If I, Ibrahim, should wish so, I could bring together a council today. I would place Luther on the one side and the pope on the other and force both of them to such a meeting."

This instance is highly relevant. The Hapsburgs and the Ottomans were about to sign a satisfying agreement, and Pargalı İbrahim Paşa tried to pit Charles and Ferdinand against each other by insinuating that the emperor lacked mental competence. At the same time, the allusion to possible negotiations between Catholics and Lutherans under the aegis of Muslims can be taken either as sarcasm or as a seed carefully planted into the mind of the Austrian representatives. In the context of a historic treaty, I doubt that such a declaration could not be made without the Ottomans being sufficiently informed about European developments in the religious and political fields. Indeed, a move of this dimension would need more preparation than what the Grand Vizier was pretending.

Whatever the real intention behind the declaration may have been, it reveals that the Ottomans welcomed the Reformation as a source of friction among their European enemies. On the other hand, the legendary receptiveness of the Muslims demonstrated in Bosnia and Transylvania for the benefit of Christian minorities ensured the protection of the Lutherans' religious immunity. Therefore, besides Luther's reaction to what he called "the threat posed by famine, plague, the Turks and war" (1530 WA 32:16),[735] I can only speculate on what the sultan would have accomplished for the Reformation had he lived longer, given his interest to foster it.

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[734] Cornelis Dupplicius Schepper.
[735] *Predigt am Sonntag*, 20. März.

In that regard, there is one crucial statement about Sultan Selim II [1566-1574] six years after the death of his father Süleyman (6 September 1566). Deeply moved by the St. Bartholomew Day massacre in which Protestants were systematically put to death on a concerted action in the major cities of France (24 August 1572), it is said that (Holt, Lambton & Lewis 2008[9]:1a/330),

> "In a letter to Lutheran princes in the low countries and in all the other lands subject to Spain, the sultan offered military help and saw them as standing close to him, since they did not worship idols, believed in one God and fought against the pope and emperor. In the second half of the sixteenth century, it was the Calvinist Huguenots in France who wanted to return to a policy of an Ottoman alliance against Spain. The Ottoman Court reacted violently at the news of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, which it saw as the elimination of its partisans."

It would be of great interest to learn what this "violent reaction" consisted of. Yet, no known action was taken. We can assume it was just a verbal reply. What we know is that (Holt, Lambton & Lewis 2008[9]:1a/330),

> "The Ottomans showed an interest also in the struggle waged by Dutch Calvinists against Catholic Spain; they extended their friendship to them and, as a result, granted them, too, capitulation in 1021/ 1612.[736] In this way, the Ottomans not only gave political support to the national monarchies and the Protestants against Habsburg hegemony in Europe but also, by opening to them the market of the Levant, extended a large measure of support to their mercantile development."

11.12 Suleyman's religious ambitions

We remember from chapter nine that Sultan Mehmed had claimed the title of *Qayser-i Rūm* as an indication that technically speaking, he did not terminate the Eastern Roman Empire but intended to take it over as its heir. His stood at the top of his sophisticated pyramidal structure of viziers, officers, and – not to forget – the imperial harem[737] as its temporal and spiritual leader. His plan as custodian of the Holy places of Islam was to overtake Italy and replace the Catholic supremacy. He would have pursued his ultimate goal, but his death in 1481 put an end to his vision.

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[736] Islamic/Gregorian calendar.

[737] A large part of Süleyman's decision is attributed to his favourite wife. Coming from Ruthenia – the western part of the Ukraine of our time – Roxelana was Orthodox and converted to Islam. She became the sultan's legal wife under the name Hurrem Sultan and his adviser after the assassination of the grand vizier Pargalı İbrahim Paşa (after dinner with Süleyman on 5 March 1536). Roxelana is regarded as the most powerful and influential women ever, not only in Ottoman but in world history.

Süleyman did not only play geopolitical games to increase his dominance. Records of the past make clear that his supreme goal was the same as his ancestors' who had reached the gates of Europe: to annex the Holy Roman Empire. Indeed, part of the answer to the mystery around Süleyman's passion was his bold pretention to replace the pope in Rome. The sultan did not hide this at all. He openly chartered a similar course as Bayezid I, who had modified his title to *Sultan-i Rūm,* sultan of (Eastern) Rome. Moreover, he styled himself *Qayser-i Rūm*, a claim his grandfather Mehmed II had already made, indicating his will to take the place of the (Eastern) Roman emperor as his heir. He chose the arabised Indo-European word (Latin *caesar*, Slavic *tsar*, and Germanic *Kaiser*) on purpose, to show that he was the continuation of those who had borne the same title so far. The strongest message sent by the monarch in that sense came in 1532, in a unique form: the order he placed for a tiara to be manufactured in Venice – hence its common name "Venetian helmet." Otto Kurz adds that (1969:74/ 249–258):

> "The elaborate headdress intended to demonstrate the sultan's power in the context of the rivalry between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs"

> "With enormous twelve-carat pearls, a headband with pointed diamonds" (Gülru Necipoğlu 1989:71/416)[738] the four-tiered showpiece was "modelled on the three-tiered tiara of the pope, this seemingly imperial headgear was meant to signal Suleyman's right to universal sovereignty."[739]

Consisting of "four superimposed crowns" (Carolyn Springer 2010: 32) "in detachable parts" (Necipoğlu 1989:71/416), the helmet was publicly displayed before its shipment to Istanbul.

> "The syncretistic extravaganza combined elements from the Papal tiara and Habsburg parade helmets but by implication surpassed them all: it represented a transparent challenge to both authorities and announced the sultan's design on all of Europe" (Springer 2010:32).

"Sultans did not traditionally wear crowns" (Daniel Savoy, ed., 2017:13) and Süleyman would typically cover his head with a turban. Springer (2010:32) comments:

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[738] Plus "fifty diamonds, forty-seven rubies, twenty-seven emeralds, forty-nine pearls and a large turquoise".

[739] Description of Portrait of the Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent Wearing the Jewel-Studded Helmet, the webpage of the MET (The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art). [Online] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/338723 [retrieved 11 August 2021].

"The piece exhibited the crown for its pure semiotic value (…) as the helmet was part of the mise-enscène (sic) of Ottoman power and played in critical role in the sultan's self-staging."

"The sight of the golden helmet turned the Hapsburg ambassadors into 'speechless corpses'" (Springer (2010:33).

"As demonstrated in the case of a golden helmet made by Agostino Veneziano for the Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent, objects made for diplomatic events reveal the frames of reference and expectations of senders as well as receivers" (Savoy 2017:15).

The completion of a crown that incorporated motifs taken from the coronation of both Charles V and Pope Clement VII had a predominant purpose: to signal its client's pretension to world domination, both political and religious.

"No western observer could have missed the Ottoman sultan's challenge to the emperor's universalist claims in this choice of headgear" (Goffman 2002:108).

We may assume that the Ottomans were of nomadic-shamanistic origin and did not accord great importance to the sophisticated theology of the Arab *'ulemas.*[740] As such, they were inclined to pragmatic considerations rather than dogmatism. Yet, beyond his thirst for supremacy – merely motivated by human appetites, – Süleyman's aspirations reflect Islamic theology in two ways. First, he united the indivisibility of the secular and the religious worlds, represented by the Ottoman military and the state. Second, the claim that the Christian message had been corrupted implicates the necessity to accept the quranic revelation as being an upgrade. Even if this view is not anchored in the Qur'ān *expressis verbis*, it reflects the Islamic attitude in its relation with Christianity. Therefore, the Muslims' aspirations to gain Europe were only the logical consequence of their belief in undefiled monotheism formulated in *Lā ʾilāha ʾillā-llah* ("No other God besides Allah"). Islam should ultimately supplant Christianity in the same manner as Christianity claims to have supplanted Judaism. Goffman (2002: 109) notices that "Süleyman seems to have challenged the Catholic version of European history itself" by "fashioning the Ottoman caliphate rather than the papacy or the Holy Roman Empire as the rightful successor to Greek and Roman civilizations." Goffman (2002:109) raises a pertinent question, and Kia (2008:3) gives the answer

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[740] "The Islam of the early Ottoman sultans was simple, personal, unorthodox, eclectic, and mystical" (Kia 2008:3).

> "What gave Germanic barbarians (whom Charles V represented) any more right to carry the banner of Rome than Turkic ones?"

> "Under Süleyman, Ottoman authorities proposed to reinvent a Europe in the empire's own image, even as Protestantism was forcing Europe to reinvent itself."

A famous instance showing how Süleyman displayed his superiority is the letter he addressed to Austria, England, France, the Netherlands, and Venice, as an introduction to a treaty for trade (in Necdet Kurdakul 1981:73-77),

> "I, the sultan of sultans, the sovereign of sovereigns, dispenser of crowns to the monarchs on the face of the earth…" (Merle Severy 1987:vol.172, n°5/573).

For Süleyman, the agreement was of high symbolic significance. Let us note that the letter merely refers to Charles V as "king of Spain" (Stéphane Yerasimos 1990:221). By doing so, he (Süleyman) implied his superiority over him (Charles V), formally downgrading the one who, as a teenager, already held the reigns over half of Europe and a large part of Latin America. Therefore, the question is legitimate: What would have happened to Europe if Süleyman had fulfilled his hopes? The answer is that, very probably, the Holy Roman Empire would have given the way to a new European era under Ottoman rule. Like in the areas dominated by Ottomans in which actors like the newly elected Byzantine patriarch Gennadius II [1454–1465][741] had *de facto* not much to say, European governance would be subject to the Sharia.

11.13 Summary

With this presentation, I hope to have widened the mutual perception of two religions by highlighting essential aspects such as the reciprocal admiration between the reformer and the sultan, and the protection of religious liberty. These qualities benefitted "Apostolic" Christians and Lutherans. The direct and indirect Muslim interventions to protect Bible-oriented Christians imply that the two faiths shared the same opposition to the Catholic-dominated countries, even though their agendas diverged.

Yet, for the Ottomans, the issue was geopolitical, and for the Lutherans, it was spiritual. For greater sympathy, some theological alignments could have been made on each side. However, Luther's comprehensive study of Islam was not reciprocated by the Ottomans. They did not signalize any in-depth interest in the biblical message.

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[741] Gennadius Scholarius.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Conclusions and recommendations

12.1   Introduction

The last chapter's aim is to evaluate the research results. First, I will assess the validity of those approaches challenging the generally accepted ideas. Then, I will present what I believe to be my contribution to the matter.

A substantial part is a synthesis of the research findings in line with my sub-questions (formulated in chapter one), including more explanation of the answer to the main question.

Last, I will again point out the limitations of the study and list the historical and theological fields linked to my topic, which deserve closer investigation.

Wherever previous concepts are repetitions of my text as part of the summary, I have added the number of the corresponding subtitle (in brackets).

12.2   Summary of my literature review

My search for existing literature brought several challenging thoughts. The first that merited more reflection concerns Emperor Constantine's motives. His predisposition to accept Christianity and become its patron implied to western Christendom a decisive turn directly related to my topic. Countless books have been written, mostly acclaiming "The Great" but also questioning his intentions. The first camp falls along the line of Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea Maritima (c.260.–c.340) and author of the Ecclesiastical History, and more to the point, of a biography on the life of Constantine. The second group questions Eusebius' version. Carroll, for example (2001:178) names him "not a historian but the emperor's myth-maker". Eusebius uses what I call a propagandistic style, but that is easy to say when someone did not experience the ill-treatment the bishop himself witnessed. In stark contrast with Maxentius and Maximinus' tyrannical spirit, Constantine's regime was like a breath of fresh air and likely to find eulogisers. What is more, an attentive reading of Eusebius makes clear that, for the Christians of his time, there was no question that Constantine's conversion was genuine. To make it simple, debating over the value of his religious change can only be done in light of his achievements. Therefore, reducing his legacy to have opened

up the doors of syn-cretism and paganism in the church does not do justice to reality. Another confirmation of Constantine's sincerity is that he amended the right to change one's religion and "explicitly commanded all imperial officials to refrain from offering pagan sacrifices to the divinities" (Barnes 1981:210). Lastly, he refused to have any statue of himself erected in the temples of his empire, forbidding any form of emperor worship. After all, alone, the Edict of Milan stands as a monument. To conclude, we may describe Constantine as an opportunist or, according to Lactancius' narrative, someone who indeed recognized a divine intervention in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. But the answer does not revise the fact that Constantine is responsible for the Christianisation and the partition of the Roman Empire alike, which are the points where my study starts.

The next controversial issue was to present non-conformist groups of believers existing from the beginning of institutionalised Christianity. Most historians have stig-matized the Bogomils (4.8) in particular as "Dualists" and "Manichaeans". At the same time, their relevance has been downplayed,and their presence relegated to the side-lines. At that stage, John van Schaik published a ground-breaking work focusing on those groups. Van Schaik's vindication of the Bogomils as keepers of the authentic apostolic faith (4.9) intrigued me, inviting me to gather evidence on the Bogomil identi-ty. I also stumbled on Voltaire's assimilation of eighteenth-century French Protestants with the Bogomils. I took the chance to visit descendants of the Bogomils in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro and those of the Albigenses in France. Indeed, many cherish Bible-based reminiscences in their collective memory, and some still practice their faith – without noticeable gnostic or manichaeistic conno-tations. On the contrary, my study of their theological world, coupled with my first-hand look at some of the numerous tombstones in the Bogomil graveyards of Bosnia, confirms van Schaik's conclusions.

Another critical area is the idealisation of the Middle Ages. Far away from languid romances, magnificent cathedrals, and novels of knights defending honour that may fuel our imagination, the reality at the grass-root level was a life of misery, steeped in disease, filth, and at the mercy of a ruthless nobility (7.7). Feudalism (3.5) was slavery in its worst form. It flourished with the blessing of a church that played her part in holding people in anguish (3.7) and extracting from them whatever their ruling lords had left. Fortunately, human memory is selective and tends to repress the trau-mas of the past so that, in the end, the positive outweighs the negative. But for the

sake of the truth, historians must switch off this mechanism of self-protection and face the real catalysts of the Renaissance, Humanism, and the German Reformation.

The fourth common place is the barbarity of the Islamic conquests (6.3). Muslims themselves love to depict their heroes of old brandishing their daggers while galloping on their Arabian thoroughbreds, still to be recognized on numerous Arabic bank notes and reminding us of the apocalyptic riders (9.8 & 10.12). This imagery applies to the entire process of the conquests, including the treatment of "infidels" and their forced conversion to the Right Path, and many western writers have adopted the same line. Indeed, no one can forget how the masters over al-Andalus went north, razed nearly almost the entire city of Lyon, and put Bordeaux to the sword. The question is: Did the – mainly – Christian Vandals, Visigoths, and Franks act more squeamishly in these very same towns? In every conquest, blood flows on all sides.

I have listed shreds of evidence that History must be revised in favour of a more positive view of these events. It should take into account the acceptance – and even the relief – when the Muslims came, respecting local occurrences and issuing policies to guarantee the exercise of all religions. Therefore, "The Arabs gained as much by treaty as by the sword. Key cities, such as Damascus and Alexandria, fell because the Muslim high command was instantly prepared to offer generous terms" (Brown 1971: 193). On that point, I agree with Antonio Ubieto Arteta. The Spanish historian challenged the nature of the conquest of the Iberic Peninsula by using the word *absurdo* to qualify it, if nothing else (6.2).

The next cliché is the ongoing Turkish menace during the German Reformation. While most authors focus on its imminent threat, Stephen Fischer-Galați (1959) affirms that even Charles V did not prioritise the Ottoman question. For centuries, Islam had indeed created nightmares in the West, at least in the fantasy world woven about them. Muslims were made into scapegoats for every possible challenge, but the *Feindbild* was mainly to justify the crusades – with the ultimate purpose of implanting a Latin state in the East. At the latest, when the crusaders came back home (7.6), the demonisation of Islam turned out to be a diversionary manoeuvre. Then, what had been decried as the very root of evil became the object of coffee and sugar delight and a source of admiration for a better way of life. The outward expression of this transition was the oriental touch added to fashion during the early modern period. But what about the aristocracy? Did it feel a sense of urgency to repel the invaders? The Franco-Turkish *rapprochement* is historical proof that the Turks could be good allies and not

a menace. After all, King François took a stand for the "enemies of faith" (9.15), and regarding my main research question, the Lutherans were likely to cooperate with them. The Turks stood far away; and as long as they remained where they were, Germany's security did not seem to be endangered.

Fischer-Galați (1959:43) is correct in noting that the hatred between François I and Charles V has been a more serious threat than the Turkish menace could be. The rivals shared a common priority: to fight for Italy's annexation to their respective realm. That background discloses why "when Adrian VI proned a general crusade as the best solution, the quarrelsome Christian monarchs questioned the pope's motives and the Turkish threat" (Fischer-Galați 1959:13). As long as François was shoulder-to-shoulder with Süleyman's side, Charles could take no action. Thus, "Charles was unwilling and Ferdinand unable to help" (Fischer-Galați 1959:14).

At that stage, the historian may lean too far out by maintaining that Süleyman's intention in Vienna was not to move farther but to only administer an unforgettable lesson to Charles V (Fischer-Galați 1959:39). This is easy to say about someone who had to retreat after a resounding defeat, as happened in Vienna.

What we can agree on is that,

"The awakening and ripening process of German Protestantism was made possible by the fact that Charles V had been busy for almost one decade with his war campaigns against France and Turkey since Summer 1532" (Karl Heussi 1960[12]: 301).

It brings us to search for the answers to this alleged menace. The proliferation of *Türkenschriften* is proof that the Ottomans occupied the ordinary people's minds; yet not sufficient to motivate them to contribute funds or human resources to, for instance, liberate Hungary. In fact, many believed that the Turkish question was a plot to divert attention from the internal tensions between Catholics and Lutherans and to enrich the Vatican at their expense (1959:17). Despite the imminence of the danger, to down-play it was the best strategy to display self-confidence. The contrary happened. The progress of Lutheranism prevented the Catholic Church and the emperor from fighting against the Turks. If the omnipresence of Islam in the eschatological awareness of medieval Christians has been well documented, the ongoing concern caused by the Ottomans thundering at the gates of the Holy Roman

Empire during the time of the Reformation lost the attention it had. Compared to the enormous socio-religious scope of the Reformation, this may well be understandable.

I cannot close this review without reflecting upon three widely spread ideas that do not make the picture look right. First, Erna and Willem Oliver (2020) have demonstrated that the principle of *Sola Scriptura* – so emblematic of the Reformation – was not a reformatory novelty (4.6). Instead – even though not *verbatim* – it was an integral part of the hermeneutical approach of the sacred text advocated by early church fathers like Hippolytus of Rome, Irenæus of Smyrna, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, and several others. My research has asserted the consistency of this very principle among pre-reformatory actors, in particular Helvidius, Jovinian, Vigilantius, Patrick, Colomba, the Patarenes, the Waldenses, the Bogomils, and the Albigenses up to John Wycliff, Jan Hus, and Martin Luther.

The second "copy/paste" is the nailing the Ninety-five Theses on the Schloss-kirche in Wittenberg (8.8). This narrative is highly implausible because, at that time, Martin Luther still submitted to the desiderata of the church in all respects. Nor were the theses put up on the notice board of the university. Such a break of the rule would have cost the renegade monk his position. At least, we need to be aware that severe doubts about the validity of the iconic story are legitimate. See, for example, Perrigo (2017).

The last correction is the slogan "Better the turban of Mahomet than the cardinal's hat" (9.8). Quoted by nearly every author dealing with the fall of Constantinople – and in every possible variation, no primary source has ever been provided. Therefore, the question of whether it is appropriate to rehearse it one more time or not is legitimate. I chose to quote it because my research includes several examples of the welcoming attitude displayed in favour of Muslim newcomers, illustrating the veracity of this saying. The fact is that, not very long – on the scale of History – after Sultan Mehmed's onslaught on Constantinople, the Dutch employed this phrase. Indeed, the same legendary slogan marked the course of the Dutch rebellion against the Catholic Hapsburgs (the campaign started in 1566).[742] "Liever Turks dan Paaps" (rather turkish than papist), or "liever Turcx dan paus", "was coined as a way to express that life under the Ottoman Sultan would have been more desirable than under Philipp II, King of Spain" (Benjamin Schmidt 2001:104). Said in passing, Philipp was the one who had

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[742] The Low Lands (the Netherlands) belonged to the Hapsburgs by heritage.

just started an inquisition against Protestantism. One may argue that the Low Landers, always known for their broad-mindedness, were not likely to embrace Islam since they stood deeply rooted in Calvinistic thinking. But it is said that "the banner and pennants of their ships were red, with the crescent, i.e., Turkish colours" (Mehmet Bulut 2001: 112), which confirms their genuine sympathy for the Islamic symbol of the crescent and, to a certain degree, their assimilation with it.

The same applies to the crescent-shaped Geuzen medal minted around 1570. Powerfully evoking the Turkish half-moon, the "Beggars", as the hardcore Calvinists were named, wore it around their necks. Such a demonstrative symbol in the context of the revolt against the Roman Catholic Church indicates that the Dutch "would rather become a tributary to the tolerant Turks than live against their conscience and be treated in agreement with those [anti-heresy] edicts" (Schmidt 2001:104). The poet Jan Fruytiers wrote in 1577 (in Johan Koppenol 2002:96),[743]

> "That is why some of the Beggars at the time wore silver half-moons with the inscription 'Rather Turkish than Papist'. For they considered the tyranny of the pope to be greater than that of the Turk, who at least leaves the conscience of the people untouched when they pay taxes and, moreover, fulfils his promises just as well, or even better, than the pope."

A song popular among the Beggars (Paul Peter Leendertz Jr., ed., 1924-1925: 245) praises Willem van Oranje, the leader of the Dutch Revolt against the Hapsburgs [1533-1584]. It addresses words of appreciation for the legendary Turkish tolerance:

> "To the Prince van Oranje triumphant: God give him wisdom and intelligence!
> Oh, that God's Word on which he stands may be preached from each pulpit!
> Rather Turks than pope (*Liever Turcks dan paus*)
> Though the Turk is not called a Christian, he has not burned anyone for faith,
> As the papists do every day."[744]

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[743] Original in the Dutch language (my translation).

[744] Original in the Dutch language (my translation).
A few verses earlier, the song enthusiastically mentions how the Turkish empire is waging war against the Kingdom of Spain, preventing the latter from acting with full force against the Dutch rebels:
> "The Turk, he comes as intended. With three hundred thousand men, he is in the field,
> On foot and also on horses, he has won, as you are told, two cities of greater defences.
> Within them were so many Italians, Bishops, Cardinals, Spanish nobles,
> They have stayed there; please understand, they will not call us here anymore."

12.3 Synthesis of the research findings

12.3.1 Sub-question 1

The first sub-question is: Can the quranic allegation of Christian apostasy be related to some of the theological controversies of that time?

The answer to this question is that such a connexion is legitimate. The Greek word *apostasía*, to drift, corresponds precisely to the Arabic *ḍālīna* (Sūrat al-Fātiḥah 1:7), "those (among Jesus' alleged disciples) who have been drifting" (2.1). Moreover, there is no doubt that pagan elements infiltrated Christianity when Islam emerged as a religious authority. In particular, the *theotókos* dogma fits into the etymology of the word *mushrikūn* (2.4), mainly translated as "polytheists" or "idolaters", but referring to those who ascribe partners to God, in this case, Mary mother of God. Finally, the third word employed in the Qur'ān, *kuffār* (2.3), comes from *kaffara*, to cover, and may well describe those who have covered the truth. Either they added human maxims, preached the Bible in a language not accessible to the masses; or they ignored its precepts.

I must add that the apostasy process started earlier than Islam's rise. Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215), for instance, already advocated that sun worship and the adoration of Jesus, the "Sun of Righteousness," were compatible. Origene (c.183–c.253) did likewise. Thus, the prestige of Alexandria was far-reaching in making this shift toward syncretism – long before Constantine came on the scene.

Nevertheless, apostasy found its ideological champions in the East rather than in the West, and the theological drift continued until the German Reformation.

12.3.2 Sub-question 2

Which groups contemporary to the apparition of the Qur'ān can be associated with the "peculiar Christians"?

In chapter four, I have listed several groups of "Apostolic" Christians. Yet, except for the Ḥasibī in the Levant (4.4), they were all located in Europe, all the way to Russia, Scotland, and southern France, all regions situated far from Islam's birthplace. In the East, however, Justinian condemned those who held to the *christotókos* theology (c.551). Many of them found refuge in West Rome under the Ostrogothic emperor Theodoric the Great until the Holy See chased them out of the Western Roman Empire (5.2). According to the chronology of the S.I.N., this coincides with

Muḥammad's birth (c.570). At the same time, the non-Chalcedonian Nestorians and Heruli, and to a certain extent the Samaritans, escaped Justinian's pressure and came to the Middle East. In summary, several groups, including the Bogomils, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses in the West, and those collectively known in the Middle-East as Nestorians, can be associated with the "peculiar" Christians. Hence, we can answer this sub-question in the affirmative.

12.3.3 Sub-question 3

Is there any historical and theological common ground between Christianity and Islam? Do the differences arise out of a different lecture of the Bible, or are they the product of various schools of interpretation within the type of Christianity we are dealing with?

The examples brought in chapter five should be sufficient to demonstrate the extent of the semantic similarities between the Bible and the Qur'ān, notably in the use of the same Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew words to convey theological concepts (5.4). On the theological level, my previous research (Romain 2010, 2013 & 2019[5]) demonstrated that the more I liberated my approach from given interpretations of the Qur'ān, the more the common ground became visible (5.5). On the other hand, if "Apostolic" Christians were remarkable for their fidelity to the *Sola Scriptura* principle (4.6), one challenge was to find out whether their Muslim equivalents used the same approach with the Qur'ān. I will state in my answer to the main research question that this was not the case.

12.3.4 Sub-question 4

How (when and where) did early Islam identify two groups of Christians, which were the criteria, and how were they implemented?

An explicit distinction between the two strands of Christianity is the order Caliph Abū Bakr gave to his army leader during the conquest of Egypt (5.10):

> "You will find people who claim to have given themselves to Allah. Leave them to what they claim to have given themselves. You will find people who have shaved the middle of their heads. Strike what they have shaved with the sword."

The other case – that may need some more research – is Ameer as-Samḥ's benevolent attitude in behalf of Narbonne and other towns in Southern France. Interestingly, those cities were mainly inhabited by Arianist Christians. The ameer pacified them and, at the same time, sacked other areas on his way (6.2).

Historical records are available about the Nestorians in Baghdad (5.14), the Bogomils in Bosnia (11.4), the Calvinists in northern Hungary and Transylvania (11.10), and, of course, Martin Luther himself, to whom Sultan Süleyman offered his protection (11.11). As we can observe, so do those records that cover different periods and places and are credited to both Arab and Ottoman Muslims. Although, the help granted to Christian subjects of persecution seems to have been without regard to their theological orientation. Except for Abū Bakr's command quoted above, no distinction was made, so approval was granted to all. A notorious example is that, soon after the arrival of Caliph Omar in Jerusalem, he made a treaty with the inhabitants of Jerusalem to protect them. It applied to Jews, Monophysites, and Christians, including some discriminated against for cherishing the instructions of the Word of God; but it does not necessarily mean that the caliph favoured them. We also remember Beyazid II's generosity in favour of the oppressed Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish Jews (11.7), whereas the quranic view on Judaism is quite negative overall. My conclusion is that the Muslim policy was implemented to protect the differing faiths among their subjects – and for other interests as well – and not so much motivated by some benevolent admiration of those recognised as "peculiar Christians."

12.3.5 Sub-question 5

What elements did the Muslim world provide to promote the Reformation outbreak?

The first element is the protection of the apostolic faith since the emergence of Islam. The aid was indirect, but it gave those Christians an excellent opportunity to endure and share their faith. One example is the Bosnian king Matej Ninoslav, who had to give up his plan of conducting a genocide of the Bogomils due to the sudden approach of the Golden Horde (11.4). Another is the Hungarian King Louis, who died in Mohács just after he had promulgated several edicts to eradicate the Calvinist "heretics" (9.13). If the few words "The Mongols saved Bosnia" (during the Bosnian Crusade in 1241) say it all, allow me to adapt them for "The Mongols saved the Apostolic Bogomils" (11.4). The same can probably be said about the Turks in the context of the German Reformation.

The second is also of geopolitical nature. We have explored James Wylie's concept of a crescent of containment around the northern coasts of the Mediterranean Basin, al-Andalus, and the Balkan. This Muslim presence, forming an imaginary crescent, prevented the old continent from pursuing its expansionistic appetites and also acted as the sword of Damocles. We think of Islamic interference often occurring whenever Christians got into a difficult situation. In addition, the menace of Islam significantly distracted the minds of the enemies of the Reformation – at least sufficiently to consecrate part of their attention to Lutheranism. That is particularly true for Charles V (10.2.) and his brother Ferdinand I (10.2), the best example being the attack on Belgrade at the same time the Diet of Worms was meeting.

The third contribution is of intellectual nature. The Abbasid "Golden Age" fostered the rediscovery of science and ancient philosophy, beginning in Baghdad. Then, it exported its scholarly and scientific treasures to Europe via Sicily (Frederick II, 7.11) and al-Andalus (7.12) in the form of translated literary works. Many distinguished guests of the House of Wisdom were not Muslims but Jews and Christians who escaped oppression or came on invitation due to the appreciation of their knowledge and skills. Then, the crusaders were confronted with a reality correcting the sordid expectations they had nurtured (9.9). Finally, Marco Polo and other travellers' narratives should also be recognised as essential agents of transformation (8.2). The west quickly understood that it was possible to think outside the box built by the church. In return, those who acted like they had a monopoly on knowledge slowly lost their credibility. The box was opened. The Renaissance came, and the Reformation followed. Muslim scholars played a decisive role in preserving and translating manuscripts of the Bible corpus and bringing Hebrew back to life, first by analysing its semantic similarities with Arabic and Aramaic, then by treating the Christian scholars invited in their midst and treated them with respect and dignity.

12.3.6 Sub-question 6

Was the German Reformation an extension of those described by the Qur'ān as "peculiar Christians"?

I have stated in my answer to the second sub-question that those described by the Qur'ān as "peculiar Christians" must be placed into the same lineage. The answer is found in the unbroken chain of "Apostolic" Christians, starting with the early church and continuing as groups like the Ḥasibī in Asia Minor, the Nestorians, and christotó-

kos Christians in the Midde East. But suppose their most visible expression is found in the German Reformation. In that case, it is essential to remember that the flourishing of Lutheranism did not happen in a theological vacuum. Luther was preceded by men dedicated to the Truth like John Wycliffe and Jan Hus (8.3), Thomas More, Girolamo Savonarola, Johannes Reuchlin, and Erasmus of Rotterdam. All of them had their part in the Christian renewal (8.4). It needs to be underlined because mentions of the Reformation are often reduced to a few figures (Zwingli, Calvin, and Luther). Moreover, History has ignored chiefly the pre-reformatory nature of the Bogomils, the Albigenses, and the Waldenses – or, at best, underestimated them. It is time to vindicate the movements represented by these names as precursors of the *Solas* that made the Reformation special. Think of our discussion around the early mentions of *Sola Scriptura*.

Consequently, the German Reformation must be defined as an extension in the line described by the Qur'ān as being "peculiar Christians."

12.3.7 Sub-question 7

How did the Ottoman Empire, in its growth to the status of a global player, apply the Islamic recognition of these two strands of Christianity to the Reformation and its antagonists?

This question cannot be answered definitively. Like their Arab predecessors, the Ottomans had clear regulations defining the rights and duties of the non-Muslim subjects under their care. Notice, though, that the *dhimmī* (5.12) and the *millet* (11.2) applied to all religious communities, no matter their beliefs. Adepts of non-monotheistic cults, like the Yezids and the Zoroastrians, also enjoyed security.[745] Therefore, even though the Muslims' attention accorded to the Apostolic Christians gave relief to those who had suffered so much pressure, it does not refer to a special status considering the quranic definition of these two strands of Christianity.

12.3.8 Sub-question 8

What was the scope of the immediate Islamic effect on the Reformation, if any, and how did the reformers perceive it?

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[745] The proof is that these religions have existed until today.

As an answer to the sub-question 5, I have explored the Muslim world's indirect assistance to the Reformation outbreak. The next step has been to detect a possible role of a direct nature. Here, I can only evoke the presence of Ottoman troops moving to their next conquest at the very moment when Charles V was about to make another move against Lutheranism. All the European players well noted this coincidental diversion: the pope, the emperor, and Luther himself, the latter recognizing a divine plan behind the Turkish menace. The fighter for the biblical truth and his fellow believers saw God as the *causa principalis* and the Turks as the *causa instrumentalis*, the instrument in God's hand to punish Christianity (10.11).

Luther's solution was to delegate political prerogatives to secular institutions as much as possible. His ministerial position was to present the Turkish menace as a God-given chance to repent and as what I would call a Muḥammad-given opportunity to learn from Turkish religiosity and good conduct. This view represents a switch from the demonisation of Islam to a more ambiguous portrayal of it constituting God's rod on one side and the "flesh of the Antichrist" on the other (10.12).

12.3.9 Sub-question 9

Did the Ottomans identify Lutheranism as a God-given chance to invite Christianity back to its apostolic roots? If so, did they base their interaction with it on any quranic order?

11.11 provided a few hints confirming that the Ottomans recognised Lutheranism as a movement inviting Christianity back to its biblical beginnings. As such, Süleyman might have compared the Lutherans with those "peculiar Christians." But this did not affect their modus operandi; first, because of the pragmatic impetus behind their westward expansion (11.9), then because of Süleyman aspired to replace the pope in Rome (11.12). After all, it is said that Charles V had paid the equivalent of 15 tons of pure gold to receive the crown of the emperor, and Leo X eight times more to become pope (8.9). If this is the case, we may wonder to which extent the European nobility was defending the well-being of its subjects rather than its vested advantages. That is why we cannot blame Süleyman as being the only one putting geopolitical interests above ideological convictions (to which religion belongs).

Whether Süleyman seriously wished to become Martin Luther's gracious protector is objectionable. At least, he secured a pact of mutual protection with the Catho-

lic king François I in France and supported the opportunist Ioan Zápolya in Hungary. Zápolya became Süleyman's *protégé* even though he was not one of the many adepts of the Reformation in the country. Granted, the former leader of the Hungarian coalition against King Ferdinand was a strong defender of the *Solas*. But Süleyman could have chosen a Lutheran leader if he had wanted to. In the same way, even though François had a benevolent attitude for the benefit of the Reformation, he did not hesitate to burn some "heretics" occasionally at stake. He sensed Lutheranism as politically advantageous, since it incited most German princes to weaken Charles V's authority. Yet, his combined operations with the sultan started in July 1533, and the Franco-Ottoman alliance was created in 1536. That was a significant setback for Charles and his brother Ferdinand. However, in the meantime, François reversed his policy in favour of Calvinists in France and begun to persecute them (October 1534). This radical reversal did not affect Süleyman's wish to cooperate with him. Again, we notice that religious principles were only relevant, since they served the primary purpose, i.e., secular interests.

12.4 Summary of new insights

After having answered my sub-questions, here is what could be my contribution to the scientific world. My research's result consists of several facts that deserve to be known better and some links to bring them closer together.

The first new insight (4.4) is the discovery of the immediate offspring of the early Christians. According to the New Testament (Acts of the Apostles 11:19-26), the cradle of Christianity has been in Antiochia. In Adana, the geographic middle between Antiochia and Tarsus (the city of Saul/Paul, Acts 22:3), I have spent six years exposed to the theological world of the Ḥasibī. This Muslim group still recalls the basics of the apostolic faith. Unfortunately, the background of the Ḥasibī is more akin to a collective memory than an active faith. Still, there is no other valid conclusion but to recognise in them the descendants of these first Christians.

Secondly, my research establishes the biblical foundation of what I call the early defenders of *Sola Scriptura* (4.6) up to the Waldenses, the Bogomils, and the Albigenses (4.11). This discovery draws a complete and uninterrupted line of bearers of the apostolic flame, originating among the disciples of Jesus and kept alive up to the instigators of the Reformation.

My third result relates to the origin of Islam. As reported by the S.I.N., Islam is a *religio ex nihilo*, which God sent down (*anzala*) in the form of a revelation on Monday, the 21st of Ramadan, just before sunrise (10 August 610), to be gradually complemented by more messages over 23 years. The claim of verbal inspiration occurred independently from the Messenger's personality (Bell 2005:38). As soon as Islam emerged as a separate religion, its definition of the Qur'ān as the undefiled word of God, co-eternal and uncreated (Rudi Paret 1971:422) stirred internal controversies.

Few did dare to break the taboo of the inviolability of the Qur'ān. Critical voices have formulated numerous theories and called for a Judeo-Christian lecture of the Qur'ān. Those going beyond the textual evidence contextualise it by invoking the presence of Christians and Jews in Muḥammad's background during his infancy. Recently, historical criticism has gone further by denying the historicity of the Messenger and assimilating his name to some other historical figures (including Jesus). This debate is relevant to my thesis since the S.I.N. contains sufficient elements to perpetuate the process of demonisation of Islam, as can often be observed in some Evangelical circles. Indeed, whoever labels Muḥammad's religion as anti-christian will have difficulty accepting any evidence of the Muslims' role in creating conditions favourable for the boost of the Protestant Reformation.

But whoever bases his analysis on the text rather than on the narrative is likely to face some evidences: The quranic corpus as we possess it today *must* have been subjected to human intervention. Just remember its numerous Aramaic, Farsi, Greek, and Hebrew terminology (5.4) It must be added that no effort has ever been made to question this reality. On the contrary, Muslims still use the Hebrew name of God in its theophoric form, such as in Ismāʿīl ("'Ĕl / 'Ĕlohim has heard me") for Ishmael, instead of Ismāʿ-Allah. Part of the consensus should be that the quranic language is not pure Arabic. The same applies to the angel Gabriel, named Ǧabrāʾīl (or Ǧibrīl). A glimpse at the Arabic-Christian side surprised me, as the earliest version of the Arabic New Testament uses the Basmallah as a heading and names Jesus ʿĪsā, and God Allah.[746] Notice that the codex is dated in the tenth century, which is much later than the Islamic conquests. It proves that the Christian hatred against Muslims was not as intense as would be expected later due to their alleged unbridled expansion and forced conversions.

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[746] Until today, almost all translations of the Bible in Arabic use Allah for God.

Beyond that, my leading finding touches the *raison d'être* of Islam. Its appearance as a new religion is to place it into the context of the debate within Christianity around the dogmata of *theotókos* (Mary, "birth-giver to God") and "Mother of God", which found their climax at the Second Council of Constantinople (551). The decision resulted in the expulsion of many Christians who refused the new orthodoxy, who found refuge in the very region where Islam originated, and just at the time when it began to be organised as a new faith (5.2). Such a view would validate the claim made by the Qur'ān to be the seal certifying (*musaddiqan*) the Bible's authenticity and to present the nature of Jesus in opposition to the *theotókos* axiom as well as other Christian heresies. In this case, Islam did not position itself *against* Bible Christology – as a superficial reading suggests – but in *favour* of a more authentic comprehension of the nature of Christ (5.6). If so, the distinction (4.2 & 4.3) between apostate Christians and those described by the Qur'ān as "not alike" (3: 111-113) gains a capital dimension in the comparative study of the two religions.[747] It also partly justify why many "Apostolic" Christians like the Bogomils in Bosnia eventually embraced Islam as the truth.

In this regard, another area of research – not necessarily a *novum* – (6.8) was to recognise that the concept of *jihād* is primarily an appeal to a spiritual struggle on a personal level rather than a call to arms. My new look at *jihād* fits nicely into the dynamics marked by the sympathy felt by the Muslims on behalf of Bible-based Christians on the one hand and the acceptance the latter offered in favour of those who rose to defend proper Christology on the other. It clarifies why Muslims have been welcomed as protectors in the context of ongoing discrimination against non-compliant Christians by "fellow Christians" throughout the Middle Age. Whoever was dissatisfied with the legal religion (6.9) was inclined to welcome Muslims as protectors. Many perceived Islam as a viable alternative to non-biblical Christianity. Rounding out the picture of "Islam" and its concept of surrender reconsidered as a value steeped in the Bible and its terminology (5.7) shed a different light on the records mentioning forced

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[747] Besides the proponents of *Christótokos*, Justinian banned another group from his Imperium (538-539); the Samaritans (Nuh Arslantaş 2008:43). Both groups moved to the Arabic Peninsula and longed for a new life (Arslantaş 2008:45). Today, the "Church of the Samaritans" – which is still in existence – practices traditions similar to the Islamic ones: ablution, way of praying, way of dressing, all rites being older than Islam. See online https://www.google.at/search?q=samaritans&hl=en&tbm=isch&sxsrf=Aoa emvJXEsC3uuta8bQRL4hPv2Q97LKEzw%3A1642946308145&source=hp&biw=1283&bih=595&ei=B F_tYeL2BNOLxcPjsWwkAI&iflsig=ALs-wAMAAAAYe1tFMOh7Ta5jNPNJR9I-sAsTPdv3S9L&ved=0 ahUKEwjiiND4g8j1AhXTRfEDHY4iDCIQ4dUDCAU&uact=5&oq=samaritans&gslcp=CgNpbWcQAzIF CAAQgAQyBQgAEAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAQgAQyBQgAEIAE MgUIABCABDIFCAQgARQAFjCGGDmK2gAcAB4AIABlwGIAdQHkgEDNS41mAEAoAEBqgELZ3dzL Xdpei1pbWc&sclint=img#imgrc=zh7d0XzIXWQzYM [retrieved 11 December 2021].

That could be another explanation for the origin of Islam and the way it is practiced.

conversions. It could, at least partially, resolve the mystery around the swiftness of the Islamic expansion.

My last input relates to the recurrent pattern of invasions. In the West, migrants mainly came as refugees; first the Visigoths, then the Vandals and the Ostrogoths under the pressure of the Huns (2.11). The last ones to arrive were the Heruli (2.13). All were welcomed, then hired to defend vested interests, given the status of *foedus,* and ended up playing a pivotal role in bringing about the decline of the Western Roman Empire.[748] The same constellation possibly unfolded in Andalusia. Berbers crossed the Strait of Gibraltar on the invitation of some Andalu landlords to support retaliation actions or to help the Byzantines take control of the area (6.6). Later, the Göktürk sought their independence from the Chinese Táng and became allies of the upper class in Baghdad. Then, the Oğuz Turks went to the rescue of the Persians against the Karakhanids (9.2); the Seljuk armies followed the pattern when the Abbasid caliph al-Qa'im commissioned them to re-capture Baghdad (9.3). Finally, Genghis Khan brought the Byzantines to fight shoulder-to-shoulder with the Seljuk to resist him.

However, the best was yet to come. In his quest for allies against his rival, the emperor John VI made a pact with Orhan, invited him to set foot on the European continent, and gave him his daughter in marriage. It was the beginning of Byzantium's end (9.4). Therefore, we cannot limit the Ottoman extension to Europe a purely warlike endeavour, but as an advance favoured by Byzantine opportunism and Christian failure to press together.

12.5 Connecting the dots

Historical research assists with connecting dots into more visible lines and shapes.:

The first line is made of three stitches in the wall: Pope Leo I's declaration of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome above all others (*Plenitudo Potestatis*, 2.8), which was cemented by Clovis' baptism as the promoter of the christianisation of the Occident (2.12), and finally sealed in Justinian's pentarchial structure (2.14).

The resulting line starts with Pope Gelasius I's revolutionary concept of *Translatio Imperii*, claiming that secular authorities did not have any right to interpose in

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[748] It is fair to add that the empire was so weakened that it would have collapsed sooner or later.

spiritual matters (2.12). Secondly, by making church property inalienable, Justinian contributed to the church's wealth and, by extension, her social domination (3.1).

The third dot is the rise of the Papal See to achieve absolute supremacy over political institutions, glorified in the statements formulated by Pope Gregory VII under the evocative name *Dictatus Papae* (3.5).

Together, the three dots expound Rome's supremacy over spiritual and temporal instances. It paved the way for the pyramidal structure of feudalism (3.5) and gave Rome *carte blanche* to abuse her authority. The result stimulated the practice of corruption, nepotism, and the theological drift away from the original message. Eventually, it led to the mistreatment of those who chose not to fall in line (3.6 & 3.7).

At that stage, I drew another triangle: the unbroken presence of "Apostolic" Christians as part of the pre-reformatory phenomenon; the arrival of early Germanic tribes who instigated the eventual collapse of the Imperium; and last, the Islamic conquests that brought Byzantium to its end.

12.6   Answer to the main research question and possible explanations for it

After having defined what constitutes the four corners of the frame placed around the main research question and the sub-questions, let us draw another constellation of dots. As a synthesis of my discoveries, I set them in the middle of the picture. It is the role of Islam in the course of the German Reformation. It brings us to the main research question:

Was the Ottoman importance for Protestantism real; and, if so, was it the product of a specific strategy, a range of reactions, or just coincidence? My answer to the previous sub-question is a mix of all three. However, given the evidence listed in chapter eleven and as examined in sub-question 9, it was not due to theological considerations. That is to me the most surprising finding; and several arguments can be advanced for it. First, the Islamic expansion was so hasty compared to the slow stabilization of adequate political and economic structures,that the soldiers did not have much time for theological subtleties. In the context of conquest, there is only room for what brings victory. The Muslim governance tried not to "change the winning team." It makes clear why, for example, they generally maintain local administrators in place, regardless of their religious orientation. In some cases, like in Bosnia, those leading positions were in the hands of "Apostolic" Christians, in most cases not. Wherever some suffered

discrimination under mainstream Christianity, giving them an influential position as a favour could weaken the quality of a well-functioning governance; more than that, it would fuel jealousy against "Apostolic" Christians and create discontent among the Muslim elite. This reflection applies to the Islamic advances and may justify Süleyman's pragmatic way of dealing with the Lutherans.

But what is the perception of Ottoman scholars? To answer this question, we need to understand that Islam generally defines Christianity as an apostate religion in the sense of *apostasía*, a drift from the truth. It matches my view of mainstream medieval Christianity (2.1). Yet, Islam today seems to ignore the existence of non-apostate People of the Book. Could it be that Islamic exegesis is blocked on the axiomatic presumption of the corruption of the divine precepts as the basis on which Allah sent the "upgrade" called Al-Qur'ān? In that case, Christians who stick to the apostolic *Sola Scriptura* reject *Sola corrupta Scriptura*. But as long as Christians do not accept the higher revelation found in Muḥammad's prophethood, they can never reach the full approval of Muslims. Since its theology stems from a corrupted revelation and does not accept the (quranic) upgrade, Christianity can never be a viable option for Muslims, no matter how consequently Jesus' disciples would heed their apostolic faith. In other words, Islam, as the most perfect and sole truth, will not care so much whether Christians are apostates or not.

In that regard, my research has displayed a different *raison d'être* of Islam (quranic view on Christian apostasy in 2.2, Christians being near to the Muslims in 4.2, quranic Christology in 5.6, Islam as a state of mind that may include Christians 5.7, the validity of the Bible in 7.14). Muslims have a hard time accepting this, and the theologians that counselled Süleyman must have had the same difficulty. First, because my analysis rests on the Qur'ān only, let us call my method a *Solus Coranus* principle, i.e., without the filters of the *aḥādīth* and the *mufassirūn*. One example is the application of "those who are not alike" (3:113) to "certain Jews who converted to Islam" (Reynolds 2018:136) in the time of Muḥammad. I have demonstrated that the text does refer to those Christians who had remained affectionate to their apostolic calling.

Another exegetical problem is the theology of abrogation. According to it, a more recent quranic text invalidates an older one (see Romain 1975:16-17). There has yet to be an official list of abrogated texts. Accepting the validity of one āyah and disregarding the authority of another is an arbitrary matter that allows selective reading and all kinds of wishful thinking.

The last possible explanation is the way of defining "peculiar Christians." It may be a theological evaluation or an assessment of their behaviour. In the European mindset, the better people are those who are right (who are closer to the truth), what I call salvation by knowledge. Think of the concept of "Orthodoxy", a union of Greek *orthōs* ("correct") and *dóxa* with the dual sense "glory" and "judgment" (7.2). Even if the Ottomans thought along those lines, we might wonder whether their dogmatical alignment with Christians crying for reformation in areas like the strict rejection of pictures, the absence of priests ,and celibacy, was sufficient to compensate for the differences. The fact is that we do not know what Süleyman knew about Lutheranism.

The ultimate question is whether the reformatory movements within Christianity were really "the better ones". After all, did not Luther decline Süleyman's offer of support? Did not the reformer write against Islam? Could it be that his strong personality hindered the sultan in his enthusiastic projects?

12.7 Limitations and recommendations

My research has been a quest for new connecting lines between dots of a historical nature rather than a comprehensive presentation. My inquiry stops at the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, sealing the success of Protestantism and ending the Turkish threat. Understanding *why* the Reformation had to take place and *how* it took place required a timeline that involved every aspect of the reformatory process, including previous agents of transformation. It is why my work has incorporated an overview of existing pre-reformatory movements well before Wittenberg's events and the position of Islam in their presence.

Moreover, I have identified several areas open for further research:

- Why did Cyril and Methodius' intention to propagate the Bible in Cyrillic script fail to bring a reformation to the Slavic countries?
- How does the *translatio imperii* affect the governance of the Holy See until today?
- The significance of Mehmed's pretention to replace the pope in Rome in relationship with his protection of the Bogomils. Did he look for their support to destabilise the papacy?
- Between *foederatus* and *Willkommenskultu*r – Will the recent migration movements repeat the past?

- If "the Turk is the Lutheran's luck", how much of a historical debt does Germany owe to Turkey?

- To what extent can Islamic participation in the success of the German Reformation help Christian believers revitalize Christianity in today's secularized world?

- Can the Qur'āniyūn movement (Muslim proponents of a *Solus Coranus* alternative) be defined as "Islamic Protestantism" *(*Turner 1994:93)?

- Do Muslims need a reformation, and can Christians be of use in helping them reaching that goal, maybe framing it as a way to repay a historic debt?

- What can Catholics learn from their history?

- 500 years of Reformation – What have Protestants learned from the past?

- Does the historicist exegesis of the Seven Trumpets of Revelation 8 and 9 contain a message for today?

A last question of interest could be to explore what came after Luther and Süleyman in terms of Christian-Muslim relationships, focusing on the sixteenth and the seventeenth. Items of interest could be,

- Turco-Calvinism,

- Islam and the Dutch Revolt (1566–1648),

- The alliance of French Huguenots with Moriscos against Spain (1570-1575),

- The Anglo-Moroccan Alliance (16th century and early 17th century),

- The status of the Protestants in the Ottoman Empire until his dissolution in 1922, and in the aftermath, particularly as it relates to the *dhimmī.*

12.8   Final conclusion

Even though every overview may be deemed a simplistic revisionist view, we can maintain that the German Reformation brought enormous relief of a theological and social nature and many positive developments in almost every sphere of human achievements. Second, the presence of Islam has oriented European destiny to the point of changing its course: by making the Reformation possible.

In closing, I have found some parallels reconciling the three religions, which could provide several starting points for an exciting exercise in the interfaith dialogue going beyond the typical classical stumbling stones, like the question of Jesus' divinity versus Muḥammadʻs prophethood.

The first parallelism is the appellation "Protestant" itself. It was given to the six princes of the Holy Roman Empire and the elite of fourteen Imperial Free Cities who brought a letter of protest in front of the Second Imperial Diet of Speyer (1529)[749]. The Latin verb *protestari* means, "to testify publicly". It is the same word employed when someone converts to Islam. The *Shahada* ("Testimony") needs to be testified publicly. It starts with *Ašhadu* ("I bear witness that …)". In that sense, Protestants *are* "Muslims", and Muslims *are* "Pro – test – ants."

The second alignment lies in the concept of *Sola Gratia.* Martin Luther's longing for the *gnädigen Gott*, the "compassionate God" was enough stimulus to give up his career and enter the monastery of the Augustine eremites (8.7). In Islam, (submission to Allah), everything starts "in the name of the compassionate God" (*Bi-'smi-llahir-raḥmāni-r-raḥīmi*). Again, Muslims and Protestants have a similar point of departure that could be another opening for interfaith discussions.

The third analogy is the name "Bogomil". If the leading early bearers of the apostolic flame bore the name *Bog* "God" and *mil'*, "dear" or *milost*, "favour". Put together, it qualifies "those under God's favour"; and this is the same expression used for "those who have not apostasised". Sūrat al-Fātiḥah invites to implore God (Āyāt 6-7):

> "Guide us into the Right Path – the path of those under your favour (*alladhīna an'amta ʿalayhim*); not those who have earned wrath on themselves, not those who have drifted away (apostasised)."

"Those who have gone astray" (the equivalent of *apostasía*) is generally regarded as a reference to apostate Christians. But no one should ignore the definition of "those under God's favour" as given in the Qur'ān itself (Maryam 19:58):

> "Those under God's favour (*alladhīna an'ama l-lahu ʿalayhim*) are among the prophets and out of Adam's seed. There are those We carried with Noah, the seed of Abraham and Israel, and those whom We guided and chose."

Those under God's favour originate from "Israel's seed." They must be Jews or Christians. The "Bogomils" – those under God's favour – fit into this description.

One of the central premises of my dissertation is to analyse, in the "light" of the "Dark" Ages, why a reformation had to occur. In a concluding word, I want to contrast between what made the Dark Ages so dark and what we can do to contribute to a

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[749] The Second Diet (1529) condemned the results of the first (1526) and prohibited the Reformation.

brighter world. Even though she was charged with the proclamation of the message of Jesus, the established church became the promoter of obscurantism – from the Latin word *obscuritas*, "darkness". Here is an earnest warning for "those who cannot remember the past [and] are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana 1920: 284).[750] I invite you to stand up and enter the line of light bearers by spreading the Gospel, in which is "Guidance and Light" (al-Mā'idah 5:46), and the one who *is* „the light" (John 8:2). By doing so, we shall fulfil the calling addressed by the Messiah to men and women of goodwill: to kindle a light in the darkness.

Ὑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.
You are the light of the world.
(Jesus, Matthew 5:14)

Soli Deo Gloria!   الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ!

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[750] Quoted above the entrance gate of the Dachau Nazi Concentration Camp Memorial Site, Dachau, Germany).

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