Neighboring Faiths

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Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today

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INTRODUCTION

Neighboring Faiths

"The neighbor of a Jew will never be a good Christian." The words are those of a medieval holy man, Saint Vincent Ferrer, whose massive campaign of religious segregation and conversion in the early fifteenth century forever altered the confessional landscape of Europe. They express a powerful view of the world, simultaneously sociological and theological: right faith requires distance from wrong faith, which otherwise threatens the believer.

Saint Vincent was a brilliant impresario of this view—just how brilliant we will see in chapter 5 of this book—but he certainly did not invent it. Neighboring peoples and faiths occupy a place at the heart of each of the very diverse religious traditions we call Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The scriptures of each of these faiths contain many, sometimes quite contradictory, teachings about both the dangers and the virtues of "neighborliness."

The Hebrew Bible, for example, enjoined the extirpation of the "seven nations" living in the "Promised Land," lest their presence lead to intermarriage and idolatry (Deut. 7:1–5). But it also decreed "the stranger that dwells with you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Lev. 19:34, Deut. 10:19). It frequently condemned certain kinds of intermarriage but did not hesitate to start the messianic line of King David with the union of a Moabite woman and a Hebrew man (on which see the Book of Ruth). And it can in one and the same prophecy envision an apocalypse in which Israel's mighty and ag-

gressive neighbors are utterly and vengefully destroyed and one in which they are saved and sanctified: "Blessed be my people Egypt, Assyria my creation, and Israel my heritage" (Isa. 19:25).

The New Testament, too, contains many passages that could be and have been read as commanding love of the neighbor, the stranger, and even the enemy, such as Luke 10:27, Matthew 5:43, and Hebrews 13:1. But it also preserves some that have been understood to enjoin quite the opposite. "He that is not with me is against me"; "Do you suppose that I am here to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division"; "As for my enemies who did not want me for their king, bring them here and execute them in my presence" (Luke 11:23, 12:51, 19:27).

Similarly in the Qur'an, we can find many different injunctions about how to treat neighbors of other faiths. Some seem to encourage extermination: "Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, lie in wait for them with every stratagem of war" (Surah 9:5). Others might trend toward tolerance: "It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them [Unbelievers]. If you were severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you: so pass over [their faults], and ask for [Allah's] forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs" (Surah 3:159).[1] Still others suggest that some pluralism is possible but segregation necessary: "O you who believe, take not Jews and Christians as friends. . . . Who of you takes them as friends is one of them"; "O believers, do not accept into your intimacy those outside your ranks: they will not fail to corrupt you" (Surah 5:56, 3:118).[2]

This is not a book about the scriptures of the three religions that claim descent from Abraham. It is a book about how Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived with and thought about each other in the Middle Ages and about what that medieval past can tell us about how they do so today. But we must start with scripture, because all later periods, including our own, often look to it for instruction about the sorts of neighborliness God has in mind. It is through their reading and rereading of its pages that later Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike debated how (in the words of the greatest medieval rabbi) "the Omnipresent one has sanctified us and separated us from the heathens."[3] So it is crucial to acknowledge from the outset of our studies that the scriptures upon which all three religions are founded can themselves sustain any number of potential attitudes toward "neighbors," ranging from love and toleration to total extermination.

Even this sharp distinction between love and extermination is a bit misleading: many communities of believers have read their scriptures in ways that iden-

tify and equate the two. In medieval Catholic canon law, for example, crusading could be considered an act of love toward the Muslim enemy, for whom an early death was considered more charitable than a long life spent in mortal sin. And as late as the mid-twentieth century, the Vatican's lawyers underwent what might seem to us considerable contortions in order to classify the Nazi embargo and segregation of Jews in Germany as legitimate expressions of love of neighbor.[4]

One may choose, from one's own time and perspective, to disagree with these previous interpretations of God's will, and indeed it is important that we do so. Critical scholars of a given scripture, for example, can argue that the authors of the text could not have intended a given interpretation at the time in which it was written. Believers can cleave to the interpretations of their own particular religious community, rather than paying attention or lending credence to those of others. But as historians, at least, we have to concede that for millions of believers in other times and places, these cruel loves and "sharp mercies" (the phrase is Martin Luther's) could be perfectly consonant with God's written word, even demanded by it. Among the many potential truths that scripture teaches on the subject of neighbors, the interpretations that moved these believers must count every bit as much as our own.[5]

That concession alone can protect us from two forms of fantasy as prevalent in our age as in any other. The first is that *my* scripture is loving while that of the other is cruel; that *my* faith community is capable of tolerance and neighborliness while that of the other is not. (Chap. 9 will focus on a few modern manifestations of this type of fantasy.) And the second is that we have scripture right: that our interpretations have recovered its original and true intent, and that all other interpretations are misreadings whose study can provide, at best, only a history of error.

The book before you is premised on a very different conviction. It pays close attention to how Muslim, Jewish, and Christian neighbors loved, tolerated, massacred, and expelled each other—all in the name of God—in periods and places both long ago and far away. And it insists that, no matter how wrongheaded or bizarre these ways of a distant past may seem, they have something to teach us about how we think and act today. "Teach" not by way of example, whether positive or negative: I am not proposing that the past serve us as a model to emulate or avoid. I mean teach rather in the sense of cultivating within us a sensibility that can discover in the past a stimulus to critical awareness about the workings of our own assumptions, hopes, and habits of thought.

Among those habits is the conviction that our religious traditions are independent of one another, that they are stable, and that one contains the capac-

ity for truth and tolerance while the others do not. And among the hopes is the sense that greater knowledge of the neighbor leads to greater tolerance, that if only we understood better the history of our faiths, we would succeed in separating love from violence, choosing proximity over distance, and becoming better neighbors. As a stimulus to critique of these convictions, this book proposes a world in which the three religions are interdependent, constantly transforming themselves by thinking about each other in a fundamentally ambivalent form of neighborliness.

Again, this is not a book about scripture, but we do need to remember that this ambivalent neighborliness, with all its power to produce both proximity and distance, is encoded in the scriptures themselves. Consider just this one example from the Qur'an, a verse focused on the founding moment of scriptural revelation itself:

> And remember we took your covenant and we raised above you (the towering height) of Mount (Sinai) (saying): 'Hold firmly to what we have given you and hearken (to the Law)!' They said: 'We hear, and we disobey.' And they had to drink into their hearts (of the taint) of the calf because of their faithlessness. (2:93; cf. 2.60, 4.153)

In this passage we see the Prophet and his community of believers creating their place in sacred history by looking toward the Hebrew Bible and the people to whom the earlier prophecies were given. They do so in ways that suggest deep familiarity not just with those earlier scriptures (the Hebrew Bible), but also with the religious culture of their contemporary neighbors, the Jews of the Arabian Peninsula circa 600 CE.

That familiarity surfaces even in the geographic vocabulary of the Qur'an, which names the mount of revelation not in Arabic but in Aramaic, the language of the Jews: *Ṭūr Sīnīn*.[6] Even more remarkable is the cultural interplay that emerges in the strange citation with which the verse begins: "We raised above you the towering height of Mount Sinai." The passage is not a citation from the Hebrew Bible, but rather from the Talmud, the "oral Torah" of the rabbis. Commenting on Exodus 19:17, the Talmud's tractate Shabbat reports the following discussion:

> "And they stood beneath the mount": Rabbi Abdimi the son of Hama son of Hasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be he, overturned the mountain upon them like an inverted cask, and said to them, "If

you take upon yourselves the Law, good. If not, here you will find your grave."[7]

The stunning familiarity of the early Muslim community with their Jewish neighbors does not end there. Even the devastating line "we hear and we disobey" is an example of multicultural play. In Deuteronomy 5:24 the Israelites declare to Moses, "We hear, and obey." (Compare Exod. 24:7.) The Qur'an's transformation of that phrase is a multilingual pun, playing on the homophony between Hebrew *shama'nu v-'asinu* (we heard and obeyed/we will hear and obey) and Arabic *sami'ināwa-'aṣaynā* (we hear and disobey).[8] The play on words reveals a shared scriptural and linguistic space of neighborliness at the same time that it shatters it.

In this particular example we can see how familiarity with the Jewish neighbor is deployed in early Islam in order to claim continuity with that neighbor's religious tradition (the teachings of the Hebrew prophets) and appropriate its authority while simultaneously distancing the believers from the truth claims of those neighbors themselves (that is, the Jewish people and children of Israel).[9] I take the ambivalence of this gesture to be constitutional of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scriptural communities, which take shape through a process of simultaneous identification and dis-identification with their rival "siblings" and neighbors.

We might call this process, in all of its ambivalence, the "coproduction" of religious communities.[10] That coproduction does not end with its codification in scripture: on the contrary, precisely because it is modeled in scripture, it continues to shape communities to come. And conversely, each and all of these later communities bring their own experiences and worries of neighborliness to bear upon their interpretation of scripture, transforming how that scripture can be read in the future. The dynamic ambivalence of this process cannot be purged: it lies at the foundations of all of our scriptural communities.

But the study of this process nevertheless offers us its own principle of hope. That principle is different from the dangerous fantasy that if only all converted to the truth we could live together in peace. Nor is it the blandly liberal (and demonstrably false) hope that if only we all knew more about each other we would love each other more. The principle on offer here is much more modest, but perhaps much more realistic. It is the hope that we can become a bit more self-aware, more critical of the ways in which we have learned to think with and about our neighbors, and that this critical awareness can have an impact on how we then act in the world.

One necessary step toward greater self-consciousness of how our thinking about neighbors shapes our world is the realization that "neighborliness" between the three religions can take many different forms. Among them is our everyday sense of the word: at some times and in some places, Muslims, Jews, and Christians occupied houses next to each other. Those times and places were relatively rare. The lands of Islam contained large populations of Christians and Jews throughout much of their history, yet it remains the case that, in the later medieval as in the modern period, most Muslims living in those lands probably never met a living Christian or a Jew. All the more so in medieval western Europe, which was—with the exception of the Iberian Peninsula—the least religiously diverse of the regions clustered around the Mediterranean, harboring vanishingly small communities of Jews and Muslims.

Many of the pages in this book focus on the lands we now call Spain: the one extraordinary region of western Europe in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews did indeed live in close proximity.[11] But we will also dwell on less local types of neighborliness, with their attendant anxieties. After all, the entire Mediterranean can be thought of metaphorically as a neighborhood, as when Plato wrote of the many peoples inhabiting the shores of that sea that they lived "like ants or frogs about a pond" (*Phaedo* 109b). Even at a global level, the geopolitical "proximity" of the three religions could generate a great deal of power. A priest in twelfth-century Paris did not have to meet any Muslims in order to preach about the relationship of "Christendom" to Islam, any more than it is today necessary for a citizen of the Islamic Republic of Iran to know an inhabitant of Tel Aviv, or a voter in Boston a resident of Baghdad, in order for them to learn to think of the perils and opportunities of their world in terms of the interactions between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Finally, the book introduces yet another kind of neighborliness between the three religions: not in space and time but in thought. This sense of neighborliness is less obvious than the others but perhaps more expandable, and so it deserves some explanation. By neighbors in thought I mean that believers in all three faiths defined (and define) themselves and their place in this world and the one to come by thinking in terms of the other faiths.

Another scriptural example might help to clarify this fundamental point. We all know that the early followers of Jesus emerged within or in close proximity to various types of Judaism and that for them determining the appropriate relationship between these communities became an urgent question. There were many different answers to that question, some of which are

preserved in the New Testament scriptures that became canonical. Consider, for example, just one sentence from Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, one of the earliest writings produced by a follower of Jesus, circa 50 CE. In chapter 2, verse 14, Paul upbraids Peter for refusing to eat with Gentile converts who do not observe Jewish dietary laws, and he does so in striking terms: "Since you, though you are a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how can you compel the gentiles to Judaize?"

Early Christians were shocked by Paul's harsh criticism of Peter (in 2:13, he even used the word "hypocrisy"). But for us what is more noteworthy is the logic encoded in this (previously rare) verb "to Judaize." The verb is applied to Gentiles, not Jews. Neither a Jew nor a Jewish follower of Jesus "Judaized" by observing dietary laws or being circumcised. For Paul, "Judaizing" designated the damning displacement of a *Gentile* believer's attention away from Jesus's spiritual message and toward the literal commandments of the Jewish tradition within which Jesus was born and taught. By analogy it came to signify the Christian's erroneous orientation of attention away from the spirit and toward the flesh, the letter of scripture, and the material things of this world: all things that came to be associated with Judaism in Christian thought.[12]

Over time, the repeated application of this type of analogy turned thinking about Judaism and Judaizing into a basic resource for Christian self-definition and self-critique, an important part of the conceptual tool kit with which Christians could make sense of their world, and this even in times and places where there were no "real" Jews to be found. In this sense, the "neighborliness" between Christian and Jew is not simply spatial. A potential "Jew" exists within every Christian no matter how "Gentile," for "Judaism" threatens all of us as we pick our hesitant way through this transitory world of flesh.

Over the course of this book we will see how variants of this Pauline logic were put to work in various Christian societies, work that transformed the possibilities of existence for Christians, Muslims, and Jews alike. But this "neighborliness in thought" is an Islamic and Jewish phenomenon as much as a Christian one. Like Christianity, Islam faced questions about its relations to previous prophetic traditions, questions not so different from the ones Paul and Peter had been trying to address.

In Islam, as in Christianity, this process of coproduction did not end with the establishment of the new religion. According to tradition, Muhammad himself predicted its ongoing power: "Those who were before you of the People of the Book [i.e., Christians and Jews] became divided into 72 sects,

and this community will be divided into 73: 72 in Hell, and one in Paradise." Across the Islamic centuries charges of "Judaizing" helped to drive this sectarian productivity. It would be difficult to find a medieval Muslim sectarian community that was not at some time or other accused of being "Jewish" by its opponents ("the Shi'is are the Jews of our community," as an ancient Sunni saying has it). [13] As in Christianity, "Jewishness" became a danger to which every Muslim was potentially subject, and excessive proximity exacerbated the danger.[14]

For a good example we can turn to the eleventh-century Iberian poet, polemicist, politician and scholar Ibn Ḥazm, one of the most prolific and original pens of the Islamic Middle Ages:

> God will treat those who befriend the Jews and take them into their confidence as He treated the Jews themselves. For whosoever amongst Muslim princes has listened to all this and still continues to befriend Jews . . . well deserves to be overtaken by the same humiliation and to suffer in this world the same griefs which God has meted out to the Jews. . . . Let any prince upon whom God has bestowed some of his bounty take heed . . . let him get away from this filthy, stinking, dirty crew beset with God's anger and malediction, with humiliation and wretchedness, misfortune, filth and dirt, as no other people has ever been. Let him know that the garments in which God has enwrapped them are more obnoxious than war, and more contagious than elephantiasis.[15]

Following a logic and a diction very similar to that of Surah 5:56 ("Who of you takes them as friends is one of them") or 3:118 ("they will not fail to corrupt you"), Ibn Ḥazm produces the "Judaism" of Muslim princes. Perhaps we could speak of a similar "coproduction" in modern Islamic political discourse, with its tendency to criticize Muslim politicians as "Jewish" hypocrites, materialists, and agents of Zionism.

What was true of medieval Muslims and Christians was true of Jews as well: the rabbis, too, understood godliness as produced and maintained in interaction with and distinction from one's neighbors, both real and imagined. A rabbinic text called Lamentations Rabbah, dating roughly to the fifth century CE, provides a parable on the subject:

> It is like a king who married a woman and wrote her a large marriage settlement [ketubbah]. . . . Then he left her for many years and journeyed to

> the provinces. Her neighbors used to taunt her and say to her: hasn't your husband abandoned you? Go! Marry another man! She would weep and sigh, and afterward she would enter her bridal chamber and read her marriage settlement and sigh [with relief]. Many years and days later the king returned. He said to her: I am amazed that you have waited for me all these years! She replied: my master the king, if not for the large wedding settlement you wrote me, my neighbors would long ago have led me astray.[16]

Parables permit play, so I will interpret this one provocatively, as recognition of the "neighborly coproductions" I am attempting to describe. Jews in the Diaspora, whether in pagan, Christian, or later in Islamic lands, lived in societies deeply structured by cosmologies and theologies different from their own. Often they adopted aspects of their neighbors' cultures. The study of those adoptions and adaptations has of late become an important field in Jewish studies. The influence of Arabic grammar and verse on Hebrew; of Islamic law on Karaite thought or on the redaction of the Talmud; of Christian mysticism and Neoplatonism on Jewish Kabbalah: these are just a few of the countless coproductions that scholars of Jewish culture have explored.

Each of these borrowings and adaptations could be (and was) attacked from within Judaism as illegitimate, as idolatrous, "Christianizing," or "Islamizing." The Kabbalah, for example, seemed to many medieval (and modern) Jewish critics a Christianizing turn away from the unitary God of Israel. But to continue with my interpretation of the parable, each of these borrowings and transformations could also be authorized (as occurred in the case of the Kabbalah) by returning to the bridal chamber and rereading the "founding contract" in such a way that the new is discovered already within it and appears eternal.[17]

The parable's authors may well have believed in the impermeability of their scriptural interpretations and religious practices, as well as in the stability and continuity of those interpretations and practices across space and time. But I prefer to understand it as pointing toward a more dynamic interaction between authoritative scripture and the many contexts of its reading. In my reading, the marriage contract—that is, scripture—appears both as a historical record of neighborliness and as a living one.

Scripture is a historical record, in that the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, the Islamic Qur'an and Sunnah, and the writings of the Rabbis all provide us with a window into how the communities that came to be called Christian, Muslim, and Jewish produced themselves with and through each other. But these scriptures are also a living record, in that they have been (and con-

tinue to be) read and interpreted by believers in all times and places. They provided (and continue to provide) later communities with an archive of ancient worries about neighborliness. The authority of that archive shaped (and continues to shape) some of the ways in which these communities created their own possibilities of neighborliness, reimagining themselves by thinking about their proximity to and distance from the others, and authorizing their fresh visions of the world in the name of God.

How Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities have imagined and reimagined themselves by thinking about and (sometimes) living with each other: that is the subject of this book. The topic is important to our understanding of the past, but it is also vital to the present, for we too are engaged in similar coproductions, making sense of our own world by thinking about ourselves and our neighbors. Indeed very often, the study of past interactions between these three faiths is undertaken with an eye on the present, in the hope that history might provide us council and comfort for the future.

The resulting advice is diverse and often contradictory. For some, the history of neighborliness between the three faiths is one of inevitable conflict. The political scientist Samuel Huntington provided an influential synthesis of this view in his essay and later book "The Clash of Civilizations," where he argued that contemporary geopolitical conflict is structured along the fault lines between competing civilizational blocks. The cohesion of these blocks is determined by a shared religious and cultural history (Buddhist China, Western Civilization, and the Islamic World were his main categories) that puts them at odds with their neighbors. According to Huntington, the most aggressive of these blocks is Islam (in his words: "Islam has bloody borders").[18]

Huntington's vision of an asymmetrically violent neighborliness may well have influenced U.S. foreign policy, but more irenic views have had their geopolitical influence as well. There are, for example, those who believe that the long history of neighborliness shared by the three "Abrahamic" religions provides an exemplary paradigm for the pursuit of peace and mutual prosperity. This is the historical logic behind political initiatives such as the United Nation's "Secretariat for the Alliance of Civilizations" (established in 2005 upon the initiative of the prime ministers of Spain and Turkey) and the "Union for the Mediterranean," championed by French President Nikolas Sarkozy. Sarkozy's "Union" was based on a geographic definition of neighborhood: it was meant as an alliance of all nations—whether Christian, Jewish, or Muslim—whose shores are lapped by the Mediterranean's waters, including both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. (By the time *The Joint*

Declaration of the Union for the Mediterranean was signed on July 13, 2008, it included the entire European Union and Arab League, embracing such "Mediterranean neighbors" as Iceland and Yemen.)[19]

The last chapter of this book will explore some of these contemporary imaginings, interrogating their invocations of historical examples of neighborliness in order to expose the fantastic underpinnings of their resulting visions of current Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations. Here I'd like merely to reiterate the more general point: our communities continue to constitute themselves by thinking about the long history of relations with their neighbors. The resulting representations of the world are "coproductions" not only of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam but also of past and present. Visions of the past are deployed to do work in the present, and visions of the present transform how we interpret the past.

This interdependence of what-has-been and what-may-yet-be means that history and historians may have a role in shaping the possibilities for how we relate to others in our world. But what should that role be? The question is important, because the pressure of present politics is great. Today even the most technical arguments about, for example, the role of Arabic manuscripts in the medieval transmission history of Aristotle can become touchstones in bitter battles over Muslim immigration to France or the entrance of Turkey into the European Union.[20] How should we write history, knowing that the possibilities for life in the present may be affected by the ways in which we choose to reconstruct the past? And in making these choices, what responsibility do we as self-identified historians (rather than, say, novelists or politicians)[21] owe to the past and its inhabitants? Are we free to work over the past until it resembles our hopes or fears for the future? If not, what commitments should discipline or limit the historian's interpretive freedom?

The chapters that follow approach these questions in different ways, but they all share the goal of demonstrating that the questions themselves are difficult and do not admit any one answer. That modest goal is more ambitious and important than it may seem, for every present tends to seize upon "the manifestations of past or distant spiritual worlds, in order to take possession of them and unfeelingly incorporate them into its own self-absorbed fantasizing."[22] If the past is to provide us with a perspective from which to criticize our dearest certainties, we need to develop strategies for distinguishing between the fantastic and the critical.

Careful attention to the available sources, knowledge of the necessary languages, deployment of relevant methodologies, recognition of divergent

interpretations: these are all necessary, but not sufficient protections against self-absorption. After all, the categories of thought through which we approach the past, the methodologies we bring to it, the types of information we recognize as meaningful and significant: these are not independent of our experience in our own time and place. Similarly, the questions about the past that strike us as urgent in the present have a great deal to do with our own fears for the future and with our own sense of what that future should be.

This means that historians must be both critics and prophets if they wish, without impiety or disrespect, to make the dead instructive for the living: critics so as to become conscious of the many gaps and frictions that exist between their own thought-worlds and those of the shades they invoke; and prophets in order to divine the best future in whose service this friction between past and present should be put to work.[23]

Like most historians, I am a poor prophet. So although my account of the past is animated by a sense of what is to come, I've attempted as best I can to keep these chapters free of a particular politics or vision of a future. My goal in them is simply to convince you that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism have never been independent of each other: that it is as neighbors, in close relation to one another, that they have constantly transformed themselves, reinterpreting both their scriptures and their histories. Their pasts are not discrete, independent, or stable, and neither are their presents or their futures.

The Qur'an speaks hauntingly of its own inexhaustible capacity to generate meaning: "If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord" (18:109).[24] What is true of prophecy is also true of history. The countless ways in which previous communities have reenvisioned the world through their neighbors constitute an endless archive that future communities will draw upon to imagine, legitimate, and contest untold potential futures. Perhaps it is by making the workings of this process more visible that historians can best serve those communities to come, showing them how their ancestors, too, discovered in the past the seeming eternity of their now long vanished convictions.

Though many a place or period could serve the purpose for this pedagogy, the chapters of this book will almost all focus on medieval and early modern Spain, sometimes called the "land of the three religions." (The exceptions are the first chapter, on how medieval "Christendom" defined itself against "Islam," and the last, on similar strategies today.) In that land we can witness Jews, Muslims, and Christians interacting not only as abstractions or catego-

ries in each other's theologies and ideologies but also as neighbors forced to jostle together on narrow streets, figures of thought elbowing figures of flesh and in the process transforming both.

We will, for example, watch them simultaneously theorizing the dangerous attractions of their neighbors and also embracing those neighbors in full carnality, not only in the whorehouse but also in the household, and even in the marriage bed (chaps. 2, 3, and 5). We will explore how the interaction of the two—of thought and of flesh, to hold onto our admittedly inadequate metaphor—produced radically new ways of thinking about the nature of inter-religious relations, some of them horrifically violent, even exterminatory (chap. 4), others segregationist (chap. 5); some playful and poetic (chap. 6), still others (chaps. 7 and 8) giving rise to new theories and vocabularies of what we have learned to call race (from the Spanish word *raza*). And we will see how each of these new ways of thinking about world and neighbor rewrote the ways in which people read their scriptures and their history, so that the new and the particular could be understood as universal and eternal.

These chapters offer new ways of explaining the religious pluralism, massacre and mass conversion, assimilation, segregation, and expulsion that marked the extraordinarily rich history of interaction between the three religions in the medieval Iberian Peninsula. But in their insistence on the dynamic and interdependent ways in which religious communities constantly re-create their reality and their history, they offer us something more. The past of this "land of the three religions" is too often mined for exemplary histories, for models of tolerance or of persecution, Golden Ages or Black Legends. I offer instead a history that resists the exemplarity and stability of the past, in the hope that it might serve as a stimulus to reflection about the ways in which Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and their many heirs continue to coproduce the realities of the world today.