

Introduction: Jewish Muslims?

Muslims are not Jewish.

This would normally go without saying, but perhaps it needs reinforcement lest someone misinterpret this book's title, *Jewish Muslims*, by reading it literally. Muslims do not self-identify as Jews, and self-identifying Jews do not regard Muslims as Jewish either. Jews and Muslims have interacted in a wide variety of ways across history, but even in the context of close relations it has been obvious to the participants and to outside observers alike that Jews are not Muslim and that Muslims are not Jewish. Although Judaism and Islam are similar in certain respects—both are monotheistic, forbid pork consumption, and revere common figures such as Abraham, to cite only the most familiar examples—these traditions ground their beliefs, practices, and foundational stories in different sets of sacred texts that refer to mutually exclusive conceptions of divine revelation. The Bible makes no reference to Muslims, because Islam postdates biblical texts by many centuries, and the Quran refers to the Jews as a group distinct from its own audience.

Premodern Christians fully understood that Muslims are not Jews. Precisely for this reason, many found it useful to allege that Muslims *are* Jewish—or, if you prefer, “Jew-ish”—as a means of defining Muslims and Islam as the enemies of Christians and Christianity. This intentionally counterfactual assertion of similarity bordering on identity, like the insult, “you’re a pig!,” is metaphorical: it adds value to rhetoric by

distorting reality. The metaphor “my love is a rose” illustrates this definition in a positive fashion. The person I love has neither petals nor thorns, but by associating that person with a rose I conjure up images and experiences of beauty, fragility, pain, and care that profoundly enrich my depiction of that person and our relationship. The assertion that Muslims are Jewish is also an intentional distortion that, many Christians believed, increases the value of their rhetoric by applying to Muslims familiar negative ideas about Jews.¹

Polemicists (the term for those who aggressively disparage their rivals) branded Muslims as Jewish in an effort to accomplish something that they otherwise would not achieve as readily. Examination of this rhetoric offers valuable insights not only into premodern Christian ideas about Muslims and Jews but also into the polemicists’ goals and techniques. Although polemicists today are unlikely to allege that Muslims are Jewish, they often employ the same techniques as their predecessors in pursuit of similar goals. For that reason, the study of premodern rhetoric about Jewish Muslims can help us to better understand contemporary as well as historical anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiments. (I use the term “premodern” to encompass late antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. The premodern period of Christian engagement with Muslims begins with the seventh-century rise of Islam and, for the purposes of this book, concludes in the early seventeenth century.)

“JUDAISM” AS GRIST FOR POLEMICAL METAPHORS

Muslims were not the only non-Jews to be tarred in derogatory fashion with the label “Jewish,” and that label often bears little resemblance to the beliefs and practices of actual Jews in any case. Recent historical scholarship demonstrates that this disconnect is commonplace in premodern Christian rhetoric about Judaism. As Jeremy Cohen explains, “the Christian idea of Jewish identity crystallized around the theological purpose the Jew served in Christendom; Christians perceived the Jews to be who they were *supposed* to be, not who they actually *were*.” Sara Lipton demonstrates that this dynamic characterizes artistic no less than literary sources. Daniel Boyarin takes this point further, emphasizing that, in premodern times, the very term *Judaism* consistently refers not to the religion that Jews observed but rather to beliefs and practices that Christians regarded as antithetical to Christianity. David Nirenberg shows that Western intellectuals used Judaism as a negative foil when thinking not only about matters of theology but also about “top-

ics as diverse as politics and painting, poetry and property rights,” even in contexts without any actual Jews. Nirenberg makes a powerful case that *anti-Judaism*, as he calls such thinking, constitutes a rhetorical tool with which Christians, Muslims, and others from antiquity to the present critique the world—and one another.²

Anti-Judaism does not merely define Jews as the Other. Rather, it promotes the cultivation of certain characteristics by virtue of their opposition to characteristics it associates with Judaism. In this respect, *anti-Jewish* resembles the current term *antiracist*, which refers not merely to those who oppose racism but more specifically to those who seek to promote racial equity while combatting policies and ideas that foster racial inequity.³ Unfortunately, many people in the past regarded Judaism (as they defined it) to be as harmful to society as we now know racism to be. Still more unfortunately, some today continue to hold this negative opinion of Judaism, continue to regard racism as beneficial, or both.

The ideas that underpin anti-Judaism often have nothing to do with actual Jews, and the targets of this rhetoric often do not self-identify as Jews either. Premodern polemicists routinely labeled fellow Christians as “Jews” in the course of alleging that these rivals display negative characteristics that the polemicists ascribed to Judaism. Anti-Jewish assertions of this nature, like those that label disliked individuals as “pigs,” are inherently metaphorical because they disparage their targets through intentional, derogatory, and even shocking misrepresentation—in this case by calling a Christian a Jew. This distortion of reality enhances the perceived value of the accompanying rhetoric: to call someone a pig, after all, is far more impactful than to state, for example, that this person behaves in an uncivilized manner. Calling someone a pig implies that the target’s behavior is inhuman and, in the process, powerfully reinforces certain ideas about what constitutes proper human behavior. Similarly, rhetoric that employs Judaism as a negative foil forcefully disparages its target as un-Christian and, in doing so, promotes contrasting characteristics as authentically Christian.

Anti-Jewish statements, although diverse and occasionally contradictory, collectively constitute an influential discourse, a body of interrelated rhetoric powerful enough to shape popular attitudes and behaviors as well as governmental policies. The discourse of anti-Judaism brands as “Jewish” specific characteristics (beliefs, practices, traits, etc.) that non-Jews also display in order to critique as deviant those characteristics and their bearers, whoever they might be. Christian anti-Judaism reflects deep anxiety over the ease with which Christians themselves can become

Jewish, metaphorically speaking, by straying from normative beliefs and practices.

Anti-Judaism, as defined here, differs in several crucial respects from its more familiar cousin, antisemitism. Most fundamentally, the discourse of antisemitism asserts that Jews are inherently different from non-Jews in negative ways, while the discourse of anti-Judaism urges audiences to *differentiate themselves* from Jews precisely because it recognizes that the characteristics of Jews and non-Jews are often not so different after all. The simplest current definition states that “Antisemitism is discrimination, prejudice, hostility, or violence against Jews as Jews (or Jewish institutions as Jewish).”⁴ Anti-Judaism, in contrast, seeks to motivate self-improvement through the cultivation of beliefs and practices opposed to those that the polemicist brands as Jewish. Antisemitic rhetoric specifically targets Jews; anti-Jewish rhetoric instead targets all who bear purportedly Jewish characteristics, especially non-Jews. Although antisemitism and anti-Judaism both seek to minimize the influence of Jewishness within society, antisemitism condemns *what Jews are* while anti-Judaism condemns *what certain people do or think*.

This distinction between antisemitism and anti-Judaism reflects the fundamental difference between the essentialism of racist logic and the presumption of choice that underpins not only moral exhortation but also the very process of asserting one’s own identity. As theorist of religion Tim Murphy observes, the differentiation associated with anti-Judaism “*constitutes* identity” in asymmetrical terms: “Religious differentiation does not merely say ‘I differ from you,’ it says ‘I differ from you’ so that it may also say ‘I am *better* than you.’”⁵ The prominence of anti-Judaism within the long history of Christian rhetoric reflects the fact that many Christians defined what it means to be Christian in terms of differentiation from that which they denigrated as Jewish.

Many prior scholars distinguish anti-Judaism from antisemitism on different grounds—for example, by associating anti-Judaism with theological beliefs and antisemitism with racist beliefs or, relatedly, by stating that the former discourse aims to convert Jews to Christianity while the latter seeks to eliminate Jews.⁶ David Nirenberg, however, shows that the discourse of anti-Judaism is not always theological and often does not aim to convert Jews. His banner example is Karl Marx’s polemical association of capitalism with Judaism.⁷ Marx condemns all capitalists, most of whom are not Jews, and his proposed solution (socialism) would likewise affect everyone in society, not just Jews. Why, then, does Marx allege that capitalism is Jewish? Because this derogatory metaphor

increases the persuasiveness of his anti-capitalist rhetoric: Marx taps into his audience's existing disdain for Judaism and channels that disdain toward capitalists, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity. If capitalism itself is Jewish, then those who want to differentiate themselves from Jews should embrace the inverse of capitalism—namely, socialism. Marx's anti-Jewish rhetoric differs sharply from that of antisemites, who employ allegations about the malicious activities of Jewish capitalists to promote discriminatory policies that target Jews alone.

The discourses of antisemitism and anti-Judaism often function in tandem as distinct but mutually reinforcing forms of a broader phenomenon that one might call Judeophobia. The contemporary white nationalist rallying cry, "Jews will not replace us!," exemplifies the overlap. This rhetoric does not merely promote discrimination and violence against Jews: more fundamentally, it seeks to motivate fellow whites to oppose policies that foster immigration or promote diversity as a societal value by branding these policies and their proponents as Jewish. Through such opposition, these whites differentiate themselves from all who value diversity and racial equity just as Marx's followers differentiate themselves from all capitalists.⁸

This book devotes hardly any attention to antisemitism: antisemitic rhetoric emphasizes purported differences between Jews and others, but this study focuses on rhetoric that emphasizes purported similarities between Muslims and Jews. Muslims, according to this rhetoric, are Jewish because they bear negative characteristics that Christians associated with Judaism. These allegations, we will see, advance the goal of promoting opposing characteristics: Christians should differentiate themselves from Muslims just as they differentiate themselves from Jews because Muslims, too, are Jewish, metaphorically speaking.

Christians who condemn Muslims for their purported Jewish characteristics employ the discourse of anti-Judaism while contributing to the anti-Muslim discourse commonly known today as Islamophobia.⁹ *Jewish Muslims* examines how and why premodern polemicists selectively fused these discourses. In doing so, this study further demonstrates the lesson that literary critic Edward Said derives from the modern discourse of Orientalism: "discourses construct what they purport to describe." Premodern Christian discourse constructed Jewish Muslims that do not exist in the real world.¹⁰

Most anti-Jewish rhetoric, of course, does not target Muslims. Similarly, most premodern anti-Muslim rhetoric does not draw on

anti-Judaism but rather on early Christian discourses about pagans and heretics or ancient Greek discourses about Africans and “Orientals” (that is, people from the region now known as the Middle East).¹¹ Although relatively uncommon, rhetoric alleging that Muslims are Jewish offers especially valuable insights into the premodern discourse of Islamophobia as a whole precisely because the metaphorical nature of this rhetoric is readily apparent. Many Muslims, after all, were in fact from Africa or the East, and prior generations of scholars assumed that Christians genuinely mistook Muslims for pagans or heretics: these scholars misinterpreted metaphorical assertions, such as “Muslims are pagan,” by reading them literally. Because the parallel statement “Muslims are Jewish” is clearly not literal, we can more easily recognize the ways in which this claim and others like it intentionally distort reality, and we can more readily deduce the reasons why those who make these counterfactual claims find value in employing metaphorical language.

Premodern polemicists construct comparisons that emphasize purported similarities between Muslims and Jews (or pagans, or heretics) for three related purposes:

1. to explain Muslims in biblical terms;
2. to justify military and political assaults against Muslims on theological grounds; and, especially,
3. to motivate self-differentiation through the cultivation of proper Christian characteristics.

These purposes build on one another: polemicists explain Muslims in biblical terms in order to justify assaults and motivate self-differentiation, and rhetoric justifying assaults against Muslims defines such discriminatory behavior as proper. Most rhetoric about Jewish Muslims, however, motivates Christians to cultivate behaviors that have no direct impact on either Muslims or Jews: the primary thrust of this rhetoric, like that of anti-Judaism more broadly, is self-differentiation rather than discrimination.

In *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*, cultural theorist Gil Anidjar contends that the very identity of Christian Europe, past and present, rests on its self-differentiation from both Jews and Muslims, imagined as distinct but indissociable. Anidjar simultaneously emphasizes the distinct but indissociable roles that religion and politics play in structuring European ideas about self and other. In his reading, however, the enmity ascribed to Jews is theological in nature, rooted in the

Bible and Christian doctrine, while that of the Muslims is entirely political, enacted through warfare and other forms of state-sanctioned violence. (For this reason, Anidjar employs the ethnic term *Arab* instead of *Muslim*, which refers to a person's religious identity.) The present book, in contrast, demonstrates that premodern Europeans regularly ascribed theological enmity to Muslims, either by branding them as Jews or by employing other means of reading Muslims into the Bible. Christians, in other words, defined their enmity toward Muslims not only in political terms but also in theological terms, thanks in part to rhetoric about Jewish Muslims. The association of Muslims with Jews renders both groups alike as anti-Christians: the timeless enemies—even, as Anidjar demonstrates, the singular enemy—not only of Christendom, the collective body of Christians, but also of Christ and Christianity. In the process, this rhetoric reinforces specific conceptions of Christianity and, by extension, of Europe (and America, one might add).¹²

Representations of Jewish Muslims, we will see, draw on distinctly Christian ideas, address exclusively Christian audiences, advance explicitly Christian objectives, and employ specifically Christian forms of rhetoric. To the extent that this is true more broadly, Islamophobia is not really about Muslims at all, even as Muslims suffer its consequences: it is about how to be a proper Christian and, today, a proper European or American. As such, this discourse functions in the same way as the discourse of anti-Judaism, which is also not really about Jews or even directed toward Jews, although it often affects Jews in terrible ways through the antisemitic acts it inspires. Anti-Judaism and certain forms of Islamophobia construct foils against which to define Christianity and with which to promote specific normative beliefs and practices.¹³

Jewish Muslims, in short, is about neither Muslims nor Jews. This is a book about Christians who intentionally misrepresented Muslims as Jewish because they believed that such rhetoric would spur their audiences to become better Christians. It shows how these Christians employed metaphors and other forms of comparison to define Muslims and Jews alike as hostile to Christ, Christianity, and Christendom. Contemporary polemicists also frequently portray Muslims, Jews, and other outgroups in derogatory fashion for the purpose of promoting self-differentiation: these polemicists seek to motivate members of their own community to adopt specific characteristics by warning that they would otherwise resemble disfavored outsiders. By explaining premodern rhetoric, I hope to help readers more fully appreciate the goals of moral exhortation and self-identification that underpin rhetoric we encounter

within our own societies, including Islamophobic and anti-Jewish rhetoric often perceived solely in terms of discrimination.

This book focuses primarily on two sets of premodern polemicists: those who lived in the region now known as the Middle East during the seventh through ninth centuries, primarily under Muslim rule, and those who lived in Christian-dominated Western and Central Europe during the seventh through early seventeenth centuries. (In the process, regrettably, I largely overlook Christians from other regions, as well as Eastern Christians who lived during and after the tenth century.) We will see that Eastern Christians and European Christians alike find value in branding Muslims as Jewish but that these polemicists do so in different ways, often in pursuit of distinct objectives. I use the term *polemicists* broadly, including all who employ aggressively disparaging rhetoric even if they do not produce works whose primary focus is polemical. Unless there is clear evidence otherwise, I do not presume that these polemicists are familiar with one another's rhetoric, just as I do not presume that contemporary polemicists are familiar with these premodern works: the patterns I highlight in their rhetoric reflect similar goals as well as reliance on shared foundational sources and frames of reference. To compile my dataset, I explored an intentionally broad range of literary and artistic genres in search of rhetoric that seems to associate Muslims with Jews; I refer in this study only to sources in which this association is demonstrable. Because Christian allegations regarding Jewish Muslims have very little to do with the beliefs and practices of actual Jews or Muslims, this book devotes minimal attention to Judaism and Islam on their own terms.

HOW TO ANALYZE POLEMICAL COMPARISONS

My love is not really a rose, Muslims are not really Jews, and those who make such associations know that metaphorical claims like these are literally false. The very dissimilarity of a metaphor's elements—a person and a plant, a Muslim and a Jew—underpins its rhetorical effectiveness. As theologian and philosopher Janet Martin Soskice observes, “the good metaphor does not merely compare two antecedently similar entities, but enables one to see similarities in what previously had been regarded as dissimilar.”¹⁴ When analyzing metaphors and other forms of comparison, we need to pay careful attention to the objectives of the people who create them and the reasons they regard their comparisons as useful.

Premodern Christians selectively associated Muslims with Jews, pagans, and heretics notwithstanding the real and recognized differences among these groups. These comparisons are inherently polemical, as they disparage Muslims by emphasizing alleged similarities with an already reviled group. Although the creators of premodern Christian polemical comparisons did not represent either the ruling class or the masses, they sought to influence rulers, commoners, and future generations—and, in many cases, they succeeded.¹⁵

Polemical comparisons contain six elements. Imagine, for example, a candidate for elected office who declares, “My opponent is a pig!” The comparison itself contains not only a *target* (the opponent) and a *reference* (pigs), but also an implicit *criterion of comparison* according to which the target allegedly resembles the reference. The statement’s immediate context is also crucial: the *polemicist* (the candidate) addresses an *audience* (voters) in pursuit of an *objective* (winning the election). This book demonstrates that a wide variety of premodern Christians (polemicists) employ biblically grounded truth claims (criteria) to associate Muslims (targets) with Jews (reference) in an effort to motivate coreligionists (audience) to think and act in accordance with specific Christian norms (objective). To fully understand their polemical comparisons, we need to consider all six elements. Part 1 of this book introduces the range of Christian polemicists who branded Muslims as Jewish and examines the criteria of comparison they employ. Part 2 focuses on the audiences and objectives of these polemicists. Part 3 emphasizes the ways in which these polemicists represent their targets and their reference.

Jewish Muslims foregrounds recurring themes and patterns; dynamics of change over time, although quite important, are of secondary significance to the overarching argument. For that reason, I have organized this book thematically, not chronologically. I employ three tools to help readers keep track of when premodern polemicists lived: I include dates when introducing each author and work; I label the primary time period covered by each chapter in its title; and I provide a comprehensive chronology that appears just prior to the endnotes.

Part 1, “Biblical Muslims,” demonstrates that the criteria by which Christians compare Muslims with Jews derive from the Bible and the discourse of anti-Judaism that crystallized during the first Christian centuries. Chapters 1–3 examine Christian rhetoric about the spiritual heirs of Hagar, the slave of Abraham’s wife Sarah, in three distinct periods: pre-Islamic times, the early years of Muslim domination over Eastern Christians, and the medieval period of European Christian expansionism. Paul,

in the New Testament's Letter to the Galatians, establishes a black-and-white contrast between his allegedly Hagar-like rivals and the adherents of his own teachings, whom Paul associates with Sarah. Later interpreters, who appreciated the motivational force of this comparative rhetoric, customarily identified Jews as the spiritual heirs of Hagar from whom Christians should differentiate themselves, but polemicists also applied Paul's allegory to Muslims. Eastern Christians portrayed Muslims as quasi-Jewish heirs of Hagar in order to explain their own subjugation in biblical terms, while Europeans used Paul's allegory to provide theological justifications for campaigns of conquest and expulsion.

Chapter 4, which examines associations of Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock with the Jewish Temple that once stood on the same site, demonstrates additional ways in which authors and artists imagined Muslims in terms of biblical texts and traditional Christian worldviews. The representation of Muslims as biblical enemies of God's true followers enables Christians to derive actionable lessons related to contemporary Muslims from the Bible itself. Because biblical and early Christian sources provide the criteria that shape anti-Muslim rhetoric while information about actual Muslims plays a relatively minor role, one might say that Christian ideas about Muslims predate the seventh-century rise of Islam.

Premodern Christian pedagogy frequently involves Jewish foils who model the opposite of what good Christians should think and do. Part 2, "Judaizing Muslims," demonstrates that rhetoric about Muslims who purportedly behave like Jews also addresses Christian audiences and often advances the same goal: to motivate self-differentiation through the adoption of specific beliefs, behaviors, and understandings of the Bible. By misrepresenting Muslims as Jewish, Christians gain the ability to promote more effectively their conceptions of proper Christianity and their visions of a proper Christian society.

The first three chapters of Part 2 analyze rhetoric about Islam's purported Jewishness from the late seventh through the early seventeenth century. Chapter 5 examines Eastern works that defend Christian truth claims, chapter 6 traces the evolution of stories about Muhammad's Jewish associates from their Eastern origins into medieval Europe, and chapter 7 focuses on medieval and early modern European works that depict Muhammad's teachings and even Muhammad himself as Jewish. The distinction between Eastern and European Christians is of fundamental importance to understanding rhetoric about Jewish Muslims because most Eastern Christians lived under Muslim rule while most European Christians did not. Eastern Christian authors, we will see,

craft their anti-Muslim rhetoric in a manner that acknowledges and capitalizes on their audience's familiarity with Islam. These relatively powerless polemicists motivate Christians to differentiate themselves from the dominant members of their own society lest, through assimilation, they become quasi-Jewish themselves. European authors, who did not have such concerns, take advantage of their audience's ignorance of Islam by employing wildly inaccurate rhetoric about judaizing Muslims to reinforce specific notions about what it means for a society to be Christian. In all cases, however, polemicists seek to craft tales that are both plausible and useful: plausible because they reinforce their audience's preconceptions and useful because these polemicists regarded rhetoric about Jewish Muslims as more compelling than rhetoric that focuses on Jews, Muslims, or other targets independently.

Chapter 8 shows how European Christians in positions of dominance over Muslims used the allegation that these Muslims bear Jewish characteristics to justify subjecting them to discriminatory legislation and persecution that originally targeted Jews alone. This chapter examines the process of textual interpretation through which Roman Catholic authorities defined Muslims as legally equivalent to Jews during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as well as the consequences of this definition for Spanish Muslims and their baptized descendants during the late fifteenth through early seventeenth centuries. Christians imagined Muslims as Jewish for the benefit of fellow Christians, whom they sought to safeguard from exposure to purportedly Jewish beliefs, practices, and interpretations of the Bible. Anti-Jewish rhetoric like this, however, generated terrible suffering for actual Jews and Muslims. Power, after all, shapes not only the ways in which Christians interpret texts but also their ability to act on those interpretations.

Part 3, "Anti-Christian Muslims," analyzes the ways in which European polemicists apply ideas about Jews as biblical enemies of Christ to contemporary Muslim enemies. By misrepresenting Muslims as Jews, Christians gain the ability to ascribe theological significance to their political conflicts with Muslims. This fusion of theological and political enmity, which rests on the ability to derive actionable lessons about contemporary Muslims from the Bible itself, generates explosive rhetorical energy that powerfully advances the objective of promoting proper Christian beliefs and practices. The chapters in this part affirm and refine Gil Anidjar's assertion that "in Europe, in 'Christian Europe,' they—the Jew, the Arab on the one hand, religion and politics on the other—are distinct, but indissociable."¹⁶

Chapters 9 and 10 explore themes in European rhetoric about Jewish Muslims that emerge in the eleventh century and persist into late medieval and early modern times. The first of these chapters examines associations of Muslims with Jewish Christ-killers, while the second considers allegations that Muslim rulers collaborate with Jews in their efforts to undermine Christianity and conquer Christian kingdoms. Jewish antipathy toward Christ constitutes the motive behind these alleged assaults on Christendom, while Muslim power provides the means. In both sets of cases, Christians frame the danger they ascribe to Muslims in terms of Judaism rather than Islam—in fact, these polemicists devote no attention at all to Islamic beliefs or practices. We will see in chapter 9 how rhetoric of this nature can inspire violence against Muslims and, in chapter 10, that polemicists can also employ such rhetoric to justify violence against local Jews.

Chapter 11 examines the impact on anti-Muslim rhetoric of an important development in Christian ideas about Judaism. Beginning in the thirteenth century, European polemicists alleged that Jews past and present do not merely misunderstand God as revealed in scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ but rather knowingly and willfully reject God. As a result of this shift, Christians increasingly portrayed Jews and Muslims alike as anti-Christians who worship not God but rather the false deity named Muhammad. Martin Luther, whose polemics are the subject of chapter 12, takes this rhetoric a step further by including Catholics and rival Protestants within the broad category of anti-Christians who fail to worship God. Luther's polemics vividly illustrate the ways in which premodern Christians more broadly employed biblically grounded rhetoric about Jews and Muslims to promote specific ideas about how to be a good Christian.

Luther also introduced an innovation that contributed to the subsequent decline of Christian rhetoric about Jewish Muslims: he alleged that Paul's letters and other biblical texts directly condemn Islam no less than Judaism. In so doing, Luther ascribed theological significance to Islam itself—or, rather, to the set of negative ideas, practices, traits, and so on that Luther associated with Islam. Luther and his predecessors alike found great value in the discourse of anti-Judaism because it motivates Christians to cultivate characteristics that allegedly differentiate them from Jews and, likewise, from Muslims who purportedly bear Jewish characteristics. Luther inaugurated a parallel discourse, equally grounded in the Bible and, more specifically, in Paul's binary rhetoric, that condemns purportedly Islamic characteristics on their own terms.

This discourse, which I call *anti-Islam*, differs from other forms of Islamophobia just as anti-Judaism differs from antisemitism: it serves to motivate self-improvement through the cultivation of characteristics opposed to those that the polemicist brands as Islamic.

Like the hybrid monsters who populate medieval art and literature, Jewish Muslims have become extinct, even as a rhetorical trope. This is not, however, because the conflation of Jews and Muslims is inherently unnatural: as Jonathan Z. Smith observes, “there is nothing ‘natural’ about the enterprise of comparison.”¹⁷ The portrayal of Muslims as Jewish has become less useful because the discourse of anti-Islam renders this metaphorical depiction unnecessary; at the same time, this portrayal has also become less plausible because ideas about Judaism and Islam evolved in very different ways during modern times. Many, however, continue to employ Islamophobic and Judeophobic rhetoric not only to justify assaults on Muslims or Jews but also, and especially, to motivate American and European audiences to cultivate beliefs and behaviors that purportedly differentiate them from rivals who are neither Muslim nor Jewish. Analyses of this rhetoric that focus solely on discrimination overlook crucial dimensions of their subject matter. The afterword offers a few examples to illustrate how contemporary rhetoric about Muslims and Jews seeks to promote specific and hotly contested ideas about what it means to be a good American, just as premodern rhetoric about Jewish Muslims promotes specific conceptions of what it means to be a good Christian. Scholars of other places, time periods, and religious traditions can no doubt provide additional examples of polemical rhetoric whose primary objective is self-differentiation rather than discrimination.

Comparison, we will see, can be a powerfully destructive polemical weapon. The same tool, however, can also yield especially valuable insights when used for the purpose of understanding rather than misrepresenting similarities and differences. For that reason, I not only analyze comparisons constructed by premodern Christians but also employ comparison as a principal method for understanding the ways in which these Christians perceive themselves in relation to their rivals. *Jewish Muslims* examines premodern texts and images produced over the course of sixteen centuries in places as distant as Britain and Baghdad not only in their own historical and regional contexts but also in relation to one another. Existing scholarship refers, at least in passing, to most primary sources that we will examine, but the juxtaposition of these sources is original. These juxtapositions generate new insights not only into specific sources whose features might not otherwise seem significant

but also into the general nature and function of anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim discourses. In many cases, the comparisons I construct take the form of taxonomies: by recognizing patterns, common features, and changes over time, we gain a deeper understanding of how Christians used ideas about Jews to think about Muslims and why they found value in doing so. This study also draws on knowledge of one thing to propose ways of better understanding something else in light of the similarities and differences between those two things. Used in this illuminative mode, comparison generates ideas that can be tested directly on the subject matter we seek to understand.¹⁸

NOTES ON NAMES, PRONOUNS, TRANSLATIONS, AND TRANSLITERATIONS

I wrote this book for the benefit of all who seek to understand past and present rhetoric about Jews and Muslims, specialists and nonspecialists alike, and for that reason made every effort to write in an accessible and inclusive manner. These efforts include the following practices:

I consistently refer to the prophet of Islam as “Muhammad,” reflecting the proper and increasingly familiar pronunciation of his name and in keeping with my general practice of referring to premodern individuals by names that will be most recognizable to contemporary readers. This practice departs from that of scholars such as John Tolan, who reserves the name “Muhammad” for the historical person who lived in the early seventh century and for Islamic portrayals of him. Tolan explains that his book, *Faces of Muhammad*, “is not about Muhammad, prophet of Islam, but about ‘Mahomet,’ the figure imagined and brought to life by European authors.” To mark this distinction, Tolan makes a point of reproducing the names that European authors employ: “Machomet, Mathome, Mafometus, Mouamed, Mahoma, and above all Mahomet.”¹⁹ There are in fact many more European variations on Muhammad’s name than these, and the use of diverse names for the same person can generate confusion. More fundamentally, Christians speak of the same figure as Muslims do even when they imagine Muhammad in fundamentally different—and, oftentimes, historically inaccurate—ways. Premodern Christians likewise misrepresent a wide range of other figures, as well as Muslims and Jews collectively, yet they speak of familiar figures and communities. Some of their ideas, in fact, underpin contemporary stereotypes about Muhammad, Muslims, and Jews. I believe it is important to confront these hostile representations rather than obscure them by means of antiquated or for-

eign names. There is, however, one partial exception: because the terms that premodern Christians used for Muslims—such as Ishmaelites, Saracens, and Turks—carry distinctive meanings, I explain those terms and employ them as synonyms for “Muslims” when speaking of the targets of premodern Christian rhetoric.

As readers may already have noticed, I use the first-person singular when speaking of myself as the author and the plural “we” in reference to myself and my readers. In this book as in my classroom, I seek not to be a tour guide (“If you look over there, you will see . . .”) but rather a co-participant in a process through which we all learn together, albeit with different roles and degrees of expertise. I avoid gendered pronouns for God as well as for people whose gender is irrelevant, such as the imaginary candidate discussed above.

I often employ translations prepared by other scholars, revising them as necessary based on my own understanding of the original text. (I personally consulted the originals of all sources except those written in Armenian, for which I relied on the linguistic expertise of a colleague.) I note the presence of substantive revisions but do not indicate simple emendations, such as “Muhammad” in place of “Mahomet.” Unless otherwise indicated, biblical translations in this book follow the New Revised Standard Version, sometimes revised in light of the Hebrew or Greek original. Unattributed translations of postbiblical texts are original. Whenever possible, I limit citations of secondary sources to the most relevant English-language works, trusting that fellow scholars will take advantage of the more comprehensive bibliographies that those works provide.

I do not presume that readers of this book know how to interpret diacritics, the dots and lines that scholars place above or below letters to indicate how foreign words are spelled in their original alphabets. For that reason, I generally avoid the use of diacritics and refer, for example, to the Eastern Christian monastery of *Bet Halé* instead of *Bēt Ḥālē*. (The lines indicate long vowels in Syriac, while the dot under the *H* indicates a guttural sound absent from English but common in Semitic languages as well as in Spanish words like Guadalajara.)