

# Christendom and its discontents

*Exclusion, persecution, and rebellion, 1000–1500*

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## Introduction

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In April 1198, Innocent III likened the diverse heretical sects of the Languedoc to “little foxes having differing faces but tied together at the tail because they stem from the same source of vanity.”<sup>1</sup> The image of foxes destroying the vineyard of the Lord (taken from the Song of Songs 2.15) was widely used to denounce the potential destruction of Christendom threatened by heretics. This fear of the dissolution of social and religious order mounted in the second half of the Middle Ages, when not only heretics, but political rebels, Jews, Muslims, lepers, homosexuals, and women came under suspicion as threats to the authority of the Church and state. The conception of an alliance or conspiracy among these variously complexioned “foxes” remained quite strong through the later Middle Ages. The persistent accusation of an unholy plot by Jews and lepers to poison the wells of France in the early fourteenth century or the rumor that the Templars had allied themselves with the Saracens provide good examples of this phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Our purpose in this volume is to examine the commonalties among seemingly disparate expressions of discontent that so troubled Innocent and other medieval authorities, even if conspiratorial linkages existed more in their collective minds than among the suspected groups.

Latin Christendom had always encompassed great variety within its nominal unity of religious faith. The vision of a uniform Christendom under the leadership of a single Church barely concealed the heterogeneity of the peoples it embraced or the diversity of beliefs they held. The process of conversion by which Christianity spread through Europe left numerous cultural minorities incompletely assimilated to the faith and many others who found themselves in disagreement with the Church’s view of what was orthodox. The clergy’s early reaction to these minorities displayed a shifting range of emotions – curiosity, distrust, fear, and indulgence. It was typified by Gregory the Great’s response to St. Augustine’s questions about how Augustine should treat the pagan

<sup>1</sup> Innocent, Reg. 1/94. For a fuller discussion of this image, used for heretics at least since Bernard of Clairvaux’s time, see Oliver 1957: 180–3.

<sup>2</sup> For the nature of these conspiratorial rumors, see Ginzburg 1991: 33–62.

customs he found among the Anglo-Saxons: “For in these days the Church corrects some things strictly, and allows others out of leniency; others again she deliberately glosses over and tolerates and by so doing often succeeds in checking an evil of which she disapproves.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the delicacy and pragmatism of Gregory’s approach, the ecclesiastical hierarchy required the subordination, if not eradication, of dissident groups. Numerical minorities were not the only ones affected. Churchmen found what they considered good biological, biblical, as well as legal/historical reasons to distrust women and to deny them an authoritative place or voice in the institution. Nonetheless, early enforcement of this clerical hegemony varied considerably, from Charlemagne’s forced baptism of the Saxons to the frequent disregard for anti-Jewish legislation in his and other kingdoms.<sup>4</sup> Only after the millennium would churchmen seek consistent application of norms previously honored often in the breach.

The eleventh century thus proved to be a crucial turning point in the fortunes of various groups within Christendom. The tensions, apprehensions, and opportunities that accompanied the development of a new Christendom created the framework for persecution. In his essay “Heresy, repression, and social change in the age of Gregorian reform,” R. I. Moore highlights three features of that development to explain the rise of heresy and its suppression: the consolidation of seigneurial authority, the articulation of a literate, clerical culture, and the formation of new communities in response to the accelerating growth of population and economic activity.<sup>5</sup> It was a Europe in which the material and institutional landscape was undergoing massive restructuring. It was also a Europe that was adjusting its religious values, emphasizing Christ as a mediator with profoundly human characteristics especially manifested in his suffering.

Anxiety arising from the displacement of customary relationships in new social and economic circumstances could lead to suspicion of outsiders, leaving those who failed to conform, who refused to obey, or who broke their oaths extremely vulnerable. Authorities were more than ever willing to wield their newly refined institutions against the disobedient or those banished from the community. The process was perhaps clearest in the realm of faith, where the treatment of heretics, Jews, or Muslims offers sensational, recurring

<sup>3</sup> Gregory the Great, *Libellus responsionum*, quoted by Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 1.27 as translated in Sherley-Price 1968: 74–5.

<sup>4</sup> On the Saxons, see McKitterick 1983: 62; Bacharach 1977: 136–40 and *passim* argues forcefully that early medieval rulers rarely enforced the harsh anti-Jewish statutes they and the Church promulgated but often instead fostered Jewish communities in their realms. Wemple 1981: 160, notes that some abbesses in Merovingian Gaul heard confession and granted absolution to members of their monasteries, a practice imported from the Irish Church. (See p. 191 for a summary of her arguments.)

<sup>5</sup> For a recent account of these changes, see Bournazel and Poly 1991.

examples of repression. It occurred in the secular realm as well with the identification and banishment of outlaws, felons, and traitors. The expansion of the crusading ideal to embrace warfare against heretics or political opponents is symptomatic of this willingness to resort to force and to use claims of deviance to justify it. Similar motivations led to the sharpening of ethnic differences all around the geographic fringes of Europe where expansion took place at the expense of native inhabitants, now brought under the domination of Christian Europeans and classified as inferior – at first on religious rather than ethnic or racial grounds – if only to justify conquest.<sup>6</sup> The anxiety produced on the intellectual and geographic frontiers thus manifested itself in the widespread tendency to lump outsiders, aliens, or opponents together through common identifying characteristics and then eradicate them.

Yet the changes sometimes produced contradictory effects. For example, the renewed emphasis on Christ's humanity, as both Robert Chazan and Gavin I. Langmuir remind us in their essays in this volume, highlighted his suffering and death, making Christians more receptive to the stereotyping of Jews as his murderers and making the crime all the more horrible in their eyes. For Jews, popular enthusiasm roused by Christ's suffering, particularly as manifested in the Eucharist, could have deadly consequences. In contrast, Caroline Bynum has argued that Christ's accessibility and role as mediator empowered women excluded from the male clerical culture to find religious voice and authority through mysticism.<sup>7</sup> In the face of an exclusionist culture, women and heretics formulated alternative approaches to religious sensibility, even if their formulations sometimes drew them into conflict with religious authority.

The consolidation of ecclesiastical authority from the eleventh century onward demanded a more rigorous examination of all that was suspect. As the Church asserted its view of orthodox religious belief, a gulf necessarily opened up between what Gavin Langmuir has termed "religion" and "religiosity," that is, between institutional demands for uniformity and personal conviction.<sup>8</sup> One may draw a broad analogy to Freud's essay, *Civilization and its Discontents*, to which the title of this volume alludes. Freud argued that the constraints on individual behavior required for the functioning of a civilized society inevitably produced neuroses and unresolved conflicts among individuals in that society.<sup>9</sup> While not advocating a Freudian approach to interpreting medieval history, we would say that the increasingly powerful claims of the Church and secular authority to universality and uniformity in Christendom provoked inevitable conflicts between individuals' religious practices and aspirations and the Church's claims to obedience. Peter Damiani underscored the goal when he stated that "the sacred canons brand as heretics those who do

<sup>6</sup> Bartlett 1993; Davies 1990.      <sup>7</sup> Bynum 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Langmuir 1990: 135–7.      <sup>9</sup> Freud 1961.

not agree with the Roman Church.”<sup>10</sup> If obedience becomes a litmus test of orthodoxy, then disobedience places one outside the Church, in league with Satan and subject to “righteous persecution” by the Church. The stakes have suddenly increased. No longer do glaring heterodoxies alone raise suspicions capable of bringing the full weight of the institution to bear on a group or individual. Innocent III showed that a skeptical institution was prone to see the seemingly innocuous opinions of marginalized groups as manifestations of a single conspiracy of vulpine guile. Any deviation, however slight or ostensibly benign, became all the more hazardous.

These are the tensions and contradictions that the essays in this volume seek to understand. The “discontent” in our title threaded its way throughout religious encounters from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries: doctrinal discontent manifested itself in challenges, sometimes subtle, sometimes overt, to the prevailing orthodoxy; religious discontent drove women and men to find different forms of pious expression than those routinely offered by the Church; while social and economic discontent could impel the Church to violent repression of those who tested its authority.

These confrontations have generated two overlapping trends in medieval scholarship. One has been to reassess the motives and methods that underlay the pursuit of obedience. R. I. Moore, for example, has recast the problem of heresy into a deeper analysis of Christendom’s reaction to outsiders and the violence of its reaction to diversity. He has argued that the systematic condemnation of heretics, lepers, Jews, male homosexuals, and female prostitutes after 1100 is best ascribed not to any realistic threat that they posed to Christendom, particularly since authorities attributed to them common characteristics, but rather to the anxieties and fears of the dominant culture.<sup>11</sup> In a landmark study of that reaction, John Boswell has shown that the Church’s treatment of homosexuality changed from tolerance to aggressive hostility during this period.<sup>12</sup> The policies of ecclesiastical and secular authorities toward the Jews similarly worsened after 1100, a transformation that has been the subject of several studies.<sup>13</sup> Like many of these writers, Brian Stock, in his exploration of the spread of literacy after 1000, has tried to understand medieval discontent from the standpoint of both authorities and dissidents. What he has termed “textual communities” developed among preachers, heretics, and reformers alike. In each case, written texts provided a means of communication and group cohesion, but more importantly shaped the group’s

<sup>10</sup> Peter Damiani, *Epistolae* 1.20, as quoted by Robinson 1988: 275.

<sup>11</sup> Moore 1987. The literature on heresy and related topics has become quite vast, as can be seen in the notes to the essays in this volume. For a summary and brief bibliography of the current literature, see Russell 1992.

<sup>12</sup> Boswell 1980.

<sup>13</sup> Bachrach 1977; Cohen 1982; Chazan 1988, 1989; Jordan 1989; Langmuir 1990.

internal identity and its identity in the minds of others.<sup>14</sup> It is this problem of understanding the nature of dissident or minority groups themselves, as well as their motives and beliefs, that forms a second scholarly path, which has as its source the recent upsurge of interest in popular culture and popular religion.<sup>15</sup> *Montaillou* provides one model of the microscopic imaging of a heretic community in the Middle Ages and the problems that confront such a study.<sup>16</sup> Other scholars, directing their gaze toward Christian beliefs and practices, have discovered many different streams of piety, especially among women, which at once enriched the Christian religion and aroused suspicion, if not hostility, within the Church hierarchy.<sup>17</sup> Studies of magic and witchcraft have similarly demonstrated the existence of myriad beliefs and practices at all levels of medieval society, and religious authorities did not react consistently when confronted with evidence of behavior which seemed to challenge their own dogma.<sup>18</sup> Analysis of these intellectual and spiritual strata as well as the struggle between tolerance and repression in the Middle Ages has led to a renewed appreciation of the diversity of medieval society, thought, and religious sensibility. As Carlo Ginzburg and others have noted, until recently, European historical traditions largely dismissed evidence of the heterogeneity of cultural practices as interesting epiphenomena or reflections of elite neuroses.<sup>19</sup> Yet the study of heretics, Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, prostitutes, witches, and other minorities in medieval Europe has revealed a highly variegated social and intellectual landscape. Simple models of conspiracy or opposition between well-defined and organized opponents have to be replaced with a more nuanced interpretation of the interchange between different cultures.

The essays presented here thus explore how religious faith shaped cultural and personal identity within Christendom by including or excluding certain individuals and groups. Moore sets the stage in "Heresy, repression, and social change in the age of Gregorian reform" by seeking to account for the rise of heresy after the eleventh century. Material explanations, whether Marxist or Weberian, he argues, have been as unsuccessful as either conspiratorial theories of a unified heretical movement or cultural explanations based on changes in spirituality in explaining why heresy arose and why authorities reacted to it as strongly as they did. For Moore, the explanation lies in the changing relationship between dissenters and seigneurial and ecclesiastical authorities, who were refining their techniques of power to demand stricter obedience to their rule. Focusing on the Peace of God movement in trying to

<sup>14</sup> Stock 1983.      <sup>15</sup> Ginzburg 1980, 1974; Sabeian 1984.

<sup>16</sup> Le Roy Ladurie 1979.

<sup>17</sup> Schmitt 1984, 1994; Christian 1981; Head 1990; Newman 1987; Bynum 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Ginzburg 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Ginzburg 1991.

disentangle the fear of heresy and the actual practice of heresy, Moore shows how secular and clerical authorities were eager to demarcate their zones of power, leaving dissidents vulnerable to accusation and attack: "The identification of heresy is by definition a political act, requiring both that obedience be demanded and that it be refused."

In this context, if medieval Christendom was, to use Benedict Anderson's term, an "imagined community," mediated through the images and rituals of the Church, it is crucial to understand how authorities as well as those on whose allegiance they depended conceived the boundaries of their community and how the give and take between them could redraw those borders where obedience became the prime test of membership. The effective power to set and enforce limits depended ultimately not just on the fiat of popes and emperors but on the willingness or unwillingness of those under them to accept and enforce the boundaries set by authorities. It was along the margins that the question of religious or cultural identity became most acute and troublesome; where confrontations between alternative interpretations of the "true" faith or with another faith altogether created anxiety and uneasiness. Since the Christian community was defined by faith and its borders were mental as well as geographic, the drama of interchange was played out all across Europe, subject to the exigencies and interests of each local society.

Ecclesiastical authority thus had to operate within the mechanisms of local power. James Given and Peter Diehl provide case studies of how the Church's drive for conformity, if it was to be successful, had to accommodate itself to these local power structures and patterns of social conflict. Studying the work of inquisitors in later thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Languedoc, Given offers the salutary warning that the vision from the top, where the drive for uniformity and the appearance of administrative competence were strongest, is not necessarily accurate at all times. His concern is to demonstrate the actual mechanisms by which authorities could secure compliance, and he concludes that the inquisitors were successful because they exploited fractures in local society to isolate and punish individuals. Similarly, Diehl's essay "Overcoming reluctance to prosecute heresy in thirteenth-century Italy" shows how ambivalence about the prosecution of heresy, arising out of doubts about the validity of condemnation as well as about the relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, created a reluctance within thirteenth-century Italian cities to enforce the laws against heresy urged on them by the emperor and papacy. Both studies show that through astute maneuvering, the Church could successfully induce local collaboration with its policies, especially by enlisting the help of preachers, and that such collaboration was necessary for the exercise of central authority.

Moore, Diehl, and Given work toward a sociology of heresy and repression, seeking to understand how the local dynamics of authority and conflict

reconfigured the broader dispute between Church and dissidents. Decisions to segregate, condemn, and repress had to be made over and over again in the centuries after 1000 in many different contexts. That the impulse to simplify the problem and eliminate any deviancy increased dramatically in those centuries there can be little doubt. How that impulse worked itself out in particular instances is not always so clear. Local circumstances could impinge upon the process in various ways and sometimes produce different results. Compliance by local powers was not axiomatic; and repression did not proceed directly, channeled instead through the fault lines of local antagonisms.

Another practical problem for authorities was the identification of heretical ideas; intellectual exclusion and condemnation were not necessarily predictable. As Clifford Backman traces the idiosyncratic intellectual career of Arnau de Vilanova in "The reception of Arnau de Vilanova's religious ideas," it becomes clear that the determination of orthodoxy could be influenced by many forces. Indeed, a sub-theme running throughout all of the essays, and brought to light in Arnau's case, is the way in which pragmatic considerations impinged on ecclesiastical or theological judgments. Arnau trod a fine line on the borders of intellectual propriety but escaped censure because in other respects, whether social, medical, or ideological, he found support in the papal curia. The identification of dissent, like its repression, functioned through, rather than in place of, the traditional avenues of power and politics.

The identification and repression of heresy were the most dramatic aspects of the relationship between religious authority and its potential challengers. Both sides also wanted to disseminate their opinions, and the prime tool for publicizing doctrine, for orthodox and heterodox alike, was preaching. Indeed, the rise of heresy is intimately connected with the spread of preaching as a medium of instruction and propaganda. The sermon, to paraphrase Anne Hudson, was at the core of the heretics' efforts to win converts as well as the Church's efforts to combat heresy. In its battle with forces seeking to seduce Christians away from the true faith, the Church needed arguments and inducements to convince them to stay within the fold. The tension between the offensive and defensive stance of the Church is evident, as Moore has pointed out, in the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council.<sup>20</sup> If, on the one hand, the council sought explicitly to define, identify, and condemn heretics, it also tried to clarify the tenets of the true faith, improve the quality of the priesthood charged with overseeing the faith, and urge mechanisms such as synods and confession which would strengthen the faith.

How preaching, the instrument of public debate, developed is therefore of the greatest concern in conceiving how the boundaries between what was proper and improper were set and defended. Mary A. Rouse and Richard A.

<sup>20</sup> Moore 1987: 6–11.

Rouse provide important insight by exploring a hitherto unknown work of Durand of Huesca in "The schools and the Waldensians." They show how sermon models were disseminated from the intellectual centers of northern Europe through the channels of personal acquaintance, in this case through relations among Durand of Huesca, Peter of Capua, and Bernard of Pavia. That Durand had experience in the worlds both of heresy and of orthodoxy makes the connections even more compelling. Durand worked at the dawn of the great age of preaching, but at the other end, in the era of the Lollards, sermons remained the prime medium for gaining adherents. Anne Hudson's paper on Lollard sermons not only demonstrates the centrality of preaching to the Lollard movement but brings to life the experience of sermons, providing an understanding of content, audience, and impact that is usually lacking for earlier heretical groups. Little wonder, then, that the control of preaching, the licensing of teaching by Church authorities, remained contentious throughout the Middle Ages.

Another area of contention, filled with ambiguities and ambivalence, was the role of women in the Church. Ecclesiastical authority had been built, in part, on a powerful misogyny which not only denied women a public role in ecclesiastical institutions as well as in the state and local community but also cast doubt on the validity of their religious ideas. Despite that inhospitable environment, women had laid the foundations of a vigorous religious and intellectual tradition, beginning with their work in convents and double monasteries. The flowering of a new religious sensibility after 1000 brought with it new expressions of women's spirituality, often based on the incorporation of routine elements of their daily lives into religious symbolism. The presence of women becomes a notable feature of religious life after the twelfth century, whether as mystics, pilgrims, nuns, or heretics. The yearning for spiritual expression within the context of secular life, especially among the growing urban population, led to the proliferation of new forms of communal organization, such as the beguine and tertiary movements. The increasing number of female saints in the later Middle Ages testifies to the strength of this religious activity and spiritual engagement. Yet the increased visibility of religious women also rekindled clerical misgivings about the propriety of women's role in spiritual matters.

Anne Clark takes as her theme this dialectic between the ideology of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and women's religious aspirations, arguing that the relationship itself helped to contour medieval Christendom. In exploring the association between Elisabeth and Ekbert of Schönau, Clark wants to move away from a view of repression as a static, unchanging fact, toward an appreciation of the shifting nature of domination and subordination in which men and women could both exercise a kind of intellectual opportunism, enlarging, to some extent, their range of religious expression. E. Ann Matter

raises similar issues in the realm of religious patronage through her exploration of the relationship between a female mystic, Lucia Brocadelli da Narni, and her patron Ercole d'Este, the duke of Ferrara. Like Clark, she finds that an asymmetrical relationship in terms of power could produce a profound spiritual interdependence. Moving from the context of individual religious women to organized groups, Katherine Gill comes to a similar conclusion. Her study of women's religious communities in late medieval Italy shows that the relationship between Church authorities and communities was quite variable through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and that the expression of women's religious aspirations flourished through many different institutional forms. Nor did male authorities always respond to this diversity with strict conformity to the regulations. Through petitioning and appeals, women managed to fashion environments that were most nearly conducive to their spiritual needs, and, until the late sixteenth century, they were often successful.

In contrast to the ambiguities of the relationship between the Church and religious women, the boundary between Christendom and non-Christians would seem to be more concrete, though even there, Christian reaction to Jews and Muslims was sometimes ambivalent and certainly changed over time. The Mediterranean region and Spain in particular provide an important laboratory for testing these ideas, for it was here that three great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – overlapped, forcing some form of accommodation. Military cooperation between peoples of a different faith or the assimilation of conquered Muslims as well as Jews challenged the Christian hierarchy to find pragmatic solutions to problems of intolerance and mutual exclusivity. The religious frontier had to be defended at the level of personal relations, where daily contact might lead to a blurring of differences.

These problems, however, were rooted in the origins of Christianity and its expansion as an international institution. In "The conversion of Minorcan Jews (417–418): an experiment in history of historiography," Carlo Ginzburg uses an episode in the discovery of the relics of St. Stephen in the early fifth century and their translation to Africa, Spain, and Minorca on the one hand to explore the ambivalence towards Jews which accompanied the development of the cult of the saints, and on the other to caution how modern historians' choice of language can diminish or repress the anti-Jewish attitudes of early Christians. The violence that marked relations between the Jewish and Christian communities in the early fifth century presaged (and should eliminate any misplaced surprise about) the systematic use of force against the Jews that would become the norm later in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, Jews through the early Middle Ages in Europe enjoyed a stable though precarious existence under the protection of kings and lords. Their position, however, deteriorated rapidly from the twelfth century onward. Accused of murdering Christ, of ritual murders, and of defaming the Eucharist, Jews became the focus of hatred

and violence. Efforts at conversion, which had been aired before but never systematically pursued, were stepped up, and those Jews who refused became subject to slavery, expulsion, or execution. Robert Chazan's goal is to explain the complex set of changes within Christendom that led to the unreasonable perception of the Jewish community as a threat to the predominant culture, at a time when Jews hardly constituted any threat at all. He finds in twelfth-century Christendom a combination of positive changes – a new emphasis on reason and the humanity of Christ – and rising anxieties – brought on by external threats and rapid internal change in Europe – which worked to the particular disadvantage of the Jews and made their vulnerability to changes in the Christian psyche all the more frightening.

The destructive confluence of religious attitudes and political power is brought to light in David Abulafia's study of the policies of the kings of Majorca and Naples towards Muslims and Jews within their realms at the end of the thirteenth century. Like Chazan, he rejects simplistic explanations of the oppression of these communities based on purely material considerations, whether they be the financial needs of kings, the moneylending of the Jews, or the wealth of the Muslims. These studies thus reinforce Moore's argument that the reasons for persecution cannot be found in the practices of the oppressed communities; they can only be located in changes within the policies and psyche of the oppressors. Abulafia considers not only the religious fervor which undoubtedly underlay the royal acts against minorities, though it is seen to be uneven, but also the development of state power itself, which used the persecution of minorities to display its authority and assert a religious uniformity to strengthen governmental centralization. Hostility between the Muslim and Christian faiths was played out in a slightly different, and less tense, fashion along the frontier in Spain. By tracing the changing currents of the trade in Christian and Muslim slaves, Olivia Remie Constable adds an instructive commercial dimension to the picture. Christians, Jews, and Muslims collaborated in this exchange of human merchandise during the thirteenth century, providing an unfortunate platform for cooperation, even though each religion forbade the enslavement of their own people. The ethnic mix of the slave trade fluctuated according to the changing military fortunes along the Spanish frontier, providing a means of gauging interfaith conflict.

In all of these studies of Christendom's confrontation with other faiths, the issue of the nature of Christian belief itself is brought to the forefront of analysis, focusing attention on the obscure dynamic between religious belief and psychological motivation. What they lay bare is the degree of uncertainty, whether emotional, religious, or rational, which haunted Christians. These uncertainties in turn produced anxieties which struck at the heart of Christendom and help explain the aggressiveness with which Christians attacked minorities.

The central mystery of the Christian religion, the real presence in the bread and wine of the Eucharist, was one such source of anxiety. Gavin Langmuir explores the role of this fundamental Christian doubt in producing the massacres of Jews from 1298 to 1338. Like Chazan, he is interested not only in the derogatory image of Jews but in the ambiguities and discontents within the Christian faith itself which can help explain its violent reaction to Jewish believers. Accusations against Jews for torturing the body of Christ can only be understood in the context of a long theological development in Christendom concerning the real presence and the change in religious sensibilities which dramatically highlighted Christ's humanity and suffering. Those changes left believers uncomfortable about their relationship with the Eucharist, a discomfort which had to be repressed and which finally erupted in terrible violence against those who were imagined to mock their doubts.

In developing his argument about the real presence, Langmuir shows that conceptions of permissible ecclesiastical criticism, intellectual exploration, or religious expression were the subject of continual debate at various levels of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. From its inception, Christianity had been characterized by a fruitful exploration of the meaning of the central tenets of the faith. The magnitude of commentary quickly outstripped the amount of scripture, setting in motion a tension within the community over the definition of "true" faith and proper interpretation. Religious diversity sprang from many different causes and motives, presenting religious authorities with a daunting task of detection as well as discrimination.

The papers by Richard Kieckhefer and Edward Peters examine the issue of permissible exploration from two different angles. The problem in distinguishing the holy and unholy was that they manifested themselves in strikingly similar ways, leaving the interpretation of visions or ecstasies to outsiders, to those who could not partake and could only view the crude manifestations in the saint's/heretic's/witch's behavior. Interpretation was likewise at stake in the expression of ideas and reading of texts. In each case, authority was put to the test of whether to acknowledge as genuine modes of expression which lay outside traditional experience.

Kieckhefer examines the complexities involved in distinguishing boundaries of sainthood, witchcraft, and magic in the later Middle Ages. The period is important because the spread of lay literacy opened the doors to new expressions of piety which did not always follow traditional, and permissible, paths. Kieckhefer finds that saints, witches, and necromancers crudely mirrored one another's activities but were at base fundamentally different. Their similarities created problems for their interpreters. At the opposite end of the intellectual spectrum, there was the problem of scriptural exegesis. How far did human reason and curiosity dare to go in explicating scripture and what place did tradition and authority have in declaring limits to intellectual

exploration? Edward Peters shows how the frontier between these forces moved backward and forward over the long sweep of Christendom from the later Empire to the eve of the Reformation, igniting controversy yet changing the notion of acceptable interpretation. There might be broad agreement about the extremes, when understanding or practice pushed into clearly forbidden realms, yet at the center there was ample room for debate. Categorizing the issue too neatly can present a deceptive impression of the complete segregation of heterodoxy and orthodoxy, as though those categories were equally clear to all parties. Interpretation and dissent repeatedly raised anew the issue of where the boundary between proper and improper, between orthodox and heterodox should be drawn.

This uncertainty and a corresponding hesitancy to apply repressive measures in some cases appear to have been as important attributes of medieval Christian culture as outright repression. They raise the underlying question of what determined medieval Christendom's response to minorities and outsiders, an issue touched upon in one form or another by all of the essays in this volume. Most accounts rely on the notion of "anxiety" to help explain Christian violence against outsiders or deviants, whether arising from a fear of pollution, from theological doubt, or the strain of abrupt social change. Anxiety has been cited, for example, as a product of economic expansion in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as well as economic contraction in the fourteenth. Assuredly, the use of the concept in two such radically different contexts does not invalidate either explanation. It does, however, suggest that the nature of anxiety and the psychic mechanisms by which it led to hate and oppression need further refinement. The hope is that the essays presented here will point out lines of inquiry, hypotheses for further investigation.

Explanations based on anxiety, moreover, raise the question of whether other cultures shared the same degree of apprehension, or whether Christendom was unique in the way it assuaged its internal doubts through outward aggression. In the discussion of the papers during the conference, it became apparent that a comparison of Latin Christendom, Byzantium, Judaism, and Islam would be necessary to round out the exploration of Christendom's discontents. How these different cultures handled diversity and criticism and how they determined uniformity and conformity are crucial for understanding their peculiarities and commonalities. As these religions were forced to share the increasingly cramped quarters of the Mediterranean, they not only had to stake out their own religious and intellectual territories but they also borrowed from one another. A comparative analysis would help clarify the dynamics of faith, reason, and emotion which produced intolerance and repression. With the exception of women's religious outlook, what is largely represented in this volume is the view of the dominant group in Latin Christendom: its tensions and contradictions which rebounded to the detriment