Projecting Identity onto the Other: Christian Identities in Medieval Preaching and Polemics[1]

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Abstract

Religious polemics and sermons are two common sources for studying the image of religious minorities in the Middle Ages. Yet these works also construct Christian identity. While it might seem initially that this identity is the opposite of the image created to portray minorities, a closer look reveals that Christian identity is not homogeneous or immutable and that Christian authors end up portraying (bad) Christians using the same images and characteristics as are used for Jews and Muslims.

1. A two-fold identity under ongoing construction

The question of identity is in fashion in today's society and, consequently, in academia,[2] but too often "[t]he problem is discussed by medievalist historians focusing on source analysis without theorizing,"[3] which can lead to confusion. Moreover, the process of categorizing and characterizing a community entails a distortion of reality, which means that any identity is partly imagined. Identity is not a neutral concept, nor is it a natural given: it is fabricated by society's elites and serves specific political, religious and economic ends.[4]

In this chapter, we will define identity as "qualities of a person or group that make them different from others."[5] Identity is socially and culturally constructed in tandem with the image of other groups or societies that it is in contact with through literature, art, law, tradition, dress, food and language. Identity evolves and is not perfectly consistent.

2.   See, for example, Lambert, Sarah and Nicholson, Helen (Eds.) (2012), *Languages of Love and Hate. Conflict, Communication, and Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean*, Turnhout.
3.   Pleszczyński, Andrzej, Sobiesiak, Joanna, Tomaszek, Michał and Tyszka, Przemysław (2002), «Introduction», in: Id. (Eds.), *Imagined Communities. Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe*, Leiden, p. 2.
4.   Pleszczyński, Sobiesiak, Tomaszek, Tyszka (2002), «Introduction», p. 3-4.
5.   Cambridge English Dictionary: Another meaning is "sense of belonging to a large collectivity" or "consciousness factor actually connecting People", as in Pleszczyński, Sobiesiak, Tomaszek, Tyszka (2002), «Introduction», p. 2 and 3. In this chapter, we will use the term identity to refer to characteristics that a group attributes to itself, while the term image is used for characteristics attributed to other groups.

Among the many different kinds of identity constructed in the Middles Ages (personal, professional, religious, ethnic, gender and, in fledgling form, national), I am going to focus on Christian identity and its construction in religious polemics and sermons up to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.[6] The thesis of this chapter is that preaching and Christian polemics—in addition to creating an image of minority groups—also construct Christian identity.[7] This Christian identity is often considered to be the opposite of that of minorities.[8] Less frequent is the recognition that Christian identity can be, at least in part, similar to that of minorities. A close reading of the sources shows that, in some cases, the image of the other is in essence a negative image of the self, an image that the self is struggling against and attempting to exorcize.

Christian identity had been constructed in the early centuries of Christianity in opposition to beliefs considered heretical or against the Jews, the group that Christianity had broken away from and that it sought to differentiate itself from.[9] From the very beginning, there were not only religious aspects but also territorial and ethnic aspects to Christian identity.[10] Thus, several biblical quotes that have traditionally been interpreted as a paean to ethnic diversity can also been interpreted as a signal that in Christian belief all people are susceptible to conversion; that is, that Christianity tends toward universalism in that it seeks salvation for all of humanity.[11]

In addition to the immutable primacy of baptism, another key feature of Christian identity was the construction of difference between orthodoxy and heresy, a process that gave rise to the *Credo*. During this same period, Saint Augustine revolution-

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6. After that point, the development of the notion of "purity of blood" marks a significant change in the situation.

7. "It is their (the texts' authors) religious self-image that is reflected most clearly. This self-image is further seen as a religious identity, a means of distinguishing between religious communities". Tieszen, Charles L. (2013), *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain*, Leiden, p. 266. "The Jews are [...] symbolic figures who play an essential role in the communication and development of the church's own distinctive conception of God's plans for His chosen people, and in the formation of the church's cultural identity". Taylor, Miriam S. (1995), *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity*, Leiden, p. 5.

8. "Depiction[s] of Muslims in ... texts [are often] designed to hold up a mirror to medieval Christian practice, showing the readers of those texts what they are not so that they may understand what they are". Akbari, Suzanne, «Imagining Islam: The Role of Images in Medieval Depictions of Muslims», p. 20, cited in Tieszen (2013), *Christian Identity*, p. 266.

9. Cohen, Jeremy (1998), «Slay them Not: Augustine and the Jews in Modern Scholarship», in *Medieval Encounters*, 4/1, pp. 78-92. Id (1999), *Living Letters of the Law. Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, Berkeley.

10. On the concept of Christianitas and its connection to the concept of Europe, seem Tolan, John (2016), «Constructing Christendom», in Hudson, John and Crumplin, Sally (Eds.), *The Making of Europe*, Brill, pp. 277-298. On the geographical aspect of identity, and its fluidity and rigidity, see Weeda, Claire (2016), «The Fixed and the Fluent. Geographical Determinism, Ethnicity and Religion c. 1100-1300 CE», in Futo Kennedy, Rebecca and Jones–Leis, Molly (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Identity and the Environment in the Classical and Medieval Worlds*, London-New York, pp. 93–113.

11. Kimber Buell, Denise (2009), «Early Christian Universalism and Modern Racism», in Eliav-Feldon, Miriam, Isaac, Benjamin and Ziegle, Joseph (Eds.), *The Origins of Racism in the West*, Cambridge-New York, pp. 126-128.

ized personal identity by placing it at the center of the road to salvation. From that moment on, there was a debate between personal identity and group identity that, though it evolved over time, constituted an important part of Christianity.

Economic, political and cultural changes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries influenced Christian identity: the growth of cities, the emergence of alternative Christian beliefs to official Catholicism, evangelical pauperism and the mendicant orders, the conquest of Muslim territories and the consequent increase in the Jewish and Muslim populations in Christian territory altered interconfessional relations and Christianity's concept of itself.

The image of Christianity offered by preachers and polemicists is two-fold. On the one hand, they believed that human nature inclined toward evil:

> Naturalment los hòmens són inclinats a mal […] aquesta inclinació no és peccat, que ja naix la creatura ab aquella inclinació.[12]

Nonetheless, the Christian is destined for eternal salvation. To that end, he or she must triumph in the war against nature and the Devil and lead a life according to the norms established by the Church. Christian identity is also constructed along the axis between nature/Devil and perfection. Humankind is capable of overcoming nature:

> Let us try, each and every one, to rise above the vice of his own people. If you are a Jew, take pains to rise above your innate disbelief. If you are from France, take pains to overcome your innate arrogance. If you are from Rome, take pains to overcome your innate avarice. If you are from Poitou, take pains to overcome your innate gluttony and garrulity, and the likewise applies to the others.[13]

Admittedly, only saints and martyrs can attain perfection in this battle:

> I say that all men who live uprightly are moved by this Crucifix as the thing they love and desire, for if you look around and read carefully all the histories in accordance with moral philosophy, you will not find—nor can one even imagine—any life more ordered than that of the Christian, a life such as Christian saints have not only described, but also as they have lived it. […] all those who have followed this Crucified One as the thing they loved and desired—those who lived before Him as well as those who have lived since then—were all perfect.[14]

But perfection is not necessary for salvation. Vincent Ferrer admits that only Jesus and Mary were perfect:

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12. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, vol. III, p. 240.
13. Raoul Ardent, *Homilia 22 In die Trinitatis*, PL 155, 1949 cols. C-D. Cited by Weeda, *The Fixed and the Fluent*, p. 105.
14. Borelli, Anne, Passaro, Maria Pastore (Eds.) (2006), *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola. Religion and Politics, 1490-1498*, New Haven, p. 7.

Jamés fo hom ne dona, sinó Jesuchrist e sa mare, verge Maria, que per molt que vis-
qués, que del tot pogués arrencar aquella mala inclinació.[15]

Salvation is achieved by living a life in accordance with basic precepts: knowing
the basic prayers, following the Commandments, going to confession regularly and
doing good deeds: alms, prayer, forgiving offenses, etc.

És d'alguns que moren no lluny ne prop, mas dintre Déu. E qui són aquests? Hòmens
e dones que no moren en lo camí, mas complida la penitència, que han fetes tantes de
bones obres que més són les béns que·ls mals. Aí com ara los qui han vera contric-
ció e ploren e confessen sovín e fan abstinències, porten cilicis, etc. en tant que en la
balança pesarien molt més los mèrits que·ls peccats que havien fets […] E tals van a
paradís tot dret, sens purgatori.[16]

But reality differs from the ideal. As we have said, human nature is sinful by
nature, and there is a struggle between the flesh and the spirit:

You will not find anything which is composed of elements that has greater contrariety
than man, because he is composed of four contrary elements […] the major contrari-
ety is the one between flesh and spirit; the flesh is opposed to the spirit and the spirit
to the flesh.[17]

The three most common metaphors used to describe this reality were the ship
beset by a tempest, the warrior against sin and the sick man in need of a doctor:

"*Erat navis in medio maris et Iesus solus in terra*" […] Per questa nave s'intende la
santa Ecclesia, anzi potem dire tutta la natura umana, la quale è posta ne la tempesta-
de e ne la varietade di questo mare, cioè di questo mondo, nel quale non è altro che
tempestade e mutamenti continui, non si trova ne pace ne tranquillità nulla.[18]

Tutta la vita de l'omo insino a la morte è tempo di battaglia e di tentazione, e comin-
ciasi insino che nnasce […] "*Temptatio est vita hominis super terram*", vedete quanto
n'è utile e necessario di sapere combattere e difenderci del nemico.[19]

Nos summus infirmi in peccatis multis […] unus de superbia, alter de avaricia. Etc.
Ideo medicus noster Iesus, sua gratiosa misericordia, nos visitat cotidie dans nobis
preciosam medicinam sui sacri corporis et sanguinis […][20]

15. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, vol. III, p. 241
16. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, vol. III, p. 287.
17. Borelli and Passarro (Eds.), *Selected Writings,* p. 14.
18. Giordano da Pisa, *Quaresimale fiorentino 1305-06*, (Ed.) Carlo Delcorno, Florence, pp. 27-28.
19. Giordano da Pisa, *Quaresimale fiorentino*, p. 38.
20. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 72.

2. New aspects of Christian identity in the Late Middle Ages

2.1 Individual responsibility

The gradual increase in literacy did not involve merely the ability to read and write; it also meant that memory became a text written by each individual, for which he or she periodically had to render an account. With the expansion of compulsory auricular confession, each Christian became responsible for his or her own salvation. Each man or woman needed to know the rules to follow and to lead a life of perfection in order to avoid eternal condemnation:

> When the penitent went to confession, he had to prove to the priest that he knew his prayers by heart: that he had acquired the kind of memory on which words could be engraved. Only after this memory-test could he proceed to the examination of another spot of his heart, henceforth called his conscience, in which the account of his evil deeds, words, and thoughts had been kept. Even the illiterate "I" that speaks in confession now perceives through new, literate, eyes, its own "self" in the image of a text.[21]

The Christian was thus under perpetual scrutiny, and salvation depended on his or her actions: it was not enough to know and believe the Credo, and there was no hiding behind the predestination argument. The faithful were frequently reminded by the preachers that free will was not affected by divine foreknowledge.

Moreover, individual behavior determined not only personal salvation but also the security of the entire community. In the same way that Adam's sin affected all of humanity, individual sins corrupt and influence all of society, leading to catastrophic consequences:

> Per un hom que tenia una putana dins la ciutat, de què tota la ciutat ere corrompuda, e de fer sostenie de grans plagues, e no sabien perquè, entre les quals ne hagueren una, que tres anys estigueren que no·y plogué. E trameteren a sent Pau que·ls o declaràs; e dix-los que per tal peccat, que sostenien aquella putana, dient-los: "Nescitis quia modicum fermentum total massam corrumpit?" (1Cor 5, 6)[22]

2.2 Faith, reason, segregation and violence

Being Christian was not a given and was not a matter of birth: it was dependent on several factors and actions. The two most basic factors were perhaps baptism and the profession of faith. Once baptized, the Christian needed to learn the basic concepts that defined him or her—that is, he or she needed to learn, understand and believe the Credo:

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21. Illich, Ivan (1987), «A Plea for Research on Lay Literacy», *Interchange* 18, 1-2, p. 17.
22. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, vol. III, p. 112.

Que al matí, al peu de vòstron llit, ans que us occupeu en altres negocis e ans que anats a la església, digats agenollat ab les mans altes e ab devoció axí: "Credo in Deum", etc. …] E si·l sabets, si no, aprenet-lo, que gran peccat és de no saber-lo; e si·l sabets e·l dyets, exireu de hun perill. E quiny? Sapiats que en breu deu venir la fi del món e Antechristi, e quan seran acèn los seus dexebles, quan te trobaran, diran: "Quinya fe has tu?" Diràs tu: "la fe christiana". "E quala és?" Si no la saps, diràs: "No·u sé". Oo, quiny perill! Que·t poran mostrar una error que·n seràs dapnat. E si sabeu lo Credo, poreu dir: "Aquesta és la mia fe", e diràs-la, *scilicet*: "*Credo in Deum, Patrem*", etc. "Veus ací la mia fe". […] Tingats almenys lo eçcut de la fe[23].

Beginning in the thirteenth century, reason came to complement faith as an aspect of Christian identity. Early on, Pedro Alfonso, in his *Dialogus adversus iudaeos*, linked faith and reason, arguing that the Holy Spirit in baptism illuminates the heart and guarantees the rationality of Christian beliefs:

M. Multum certe suae tibi Deus dedit sapientiae et te magna illustravit ratione, quem vincere nequeo, immo tu obiectiones meas confutasti ratione.
P. Hoc procul dubio donum est Spiritus Sancti, quem in baptismo recipimus, qui et corda nostra illuminat, ne falsum quid crere presumamus. Quod si tu, quod credimus, ipse etiam crederes et baptizari te faceres, eandem Spiritus Sancti illustrationem haberes, ut, quae vera sunt, cognosceres et, quae falsa, respueres. Nunc autem quoniam super te pietatem habeo, Dei misiericordiam imploro, ut Spiritus sui plenitudine te illustret et finem meliorem quam principium tibi prestet. Amen[24].

Later, Thomas Aquinas also explained the complementarity of faith and reason, and described Muḥammad and his followers as irrational, ignorant and beasts. Although the human reason cannot grasp fully the truths that are above it, yet, if it somehow holds these truths at least by faith, it acquires great perfection for itself[25].

[…] He (Mohammed) seduced the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh goads us. His teaching also contained precepts that were in conformity with his promises, and he gave free rein to carnal pleasure. In all this, as is not unexpected, he was obeyed by carnal men. As for proofs of the truth of his doctrine, he brought forward only such as could be grasped by the natural ability of anyone with a very modest wisdom. Indeed, the truths that he taught he mingled with many fables and with doctrines of the greatest falsity.
[…] No wise men, men trained in things divine and human, believed in him from the beginning. Those who believed in him were brutal men and desert wanderers, utterly

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23. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*. vol. IV, pp. 17-18.
24. Petrus Alphonsi, *Dialogus contra Iudaeos*, ed. Klaus-Peter Mieth (1996). Huesca, p. 193.
25. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith. Summa Contra Gentiles Book One: God,* Anton C. Pegis (1955), trans. New York, p. 71.

ignorant of all divine teaching, through whose numbers Mohammed forced others to become his followers by the violence of his arms […] It is thus clear that those who place any faith in his words believe foolishly.[26]

At the same time that Christianity was using rational arguments for its faith, the emergence of beliefs labelled heretical, along with a growing Jewish and Muslim population in Christian lands and the Turkish victory at the Battle of Manzikert (1071), resulted in a sense that Christianity was under attack. This led to a military response, as we can see in the different versions of the call for the First Crusade that are given in Robert the Monk, Guibert of Nogent, Fulcher of Chartres, William of Tyre and Orderic Vitalis.

According to some, the Jewish-Muslim threat was present not only in the Holy Land but also in Christian territory. This sense of threat no doubt derived in part from stories about ritual murder, host desecration, well poisoning and vandalizing of images of Jesus, which placed Christians in the position of martyrs under attack by infidels.[27] At times, in spite of increased segregation, Jews were described as having special privileges:

> In detrimentum fidei katholice in multis locis sunt magis exaltati et privilegiati quam christiani, quod est magnum peccatum et probat esse multos antichristos.[28]

In reaction to the sense of fear or insecurity, Christianity went on the attack, making coexistence more and more difficult with other creeds that, up to then, had existed side by side with Christianity. The dialogue format of Pedro Alfonso's *Dialogus adversus iudaeos* gradually disappeared from Christian polemics, which adopted a more and more aggressive tone. This exclusionary ideology involved denying rationality to heretics and infidels. The Christians were the only ones who understood, who used reason correctly. This argument, which was frequently used against the Jews, appears early on in a sermon by Bernard of Clairvaux:

> Car ce gens-là ne cèdent pas aux arguments, puisqu'ils son incapables de comprendre; ni a l'autorité, qu'ils contestent, ni aux efforts de persuasion, puis qu'ils on été pervertis.[29]

Peter the Venerable, a contemporary of Bernard, also contrasts Christian rationality with the irrationality of heretics, Jews and Muslims:

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26. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith*, pp. 73-74.

27. An example is the story of the Beirut Christ, which appears in different literary forms and in sermons, such as one by the Franciscan Bernat de Déu. See. Catalán, Oriol (2015), «Los sermones de Bernat de Déu, OFM en el contexto de la predicación antijudía medieval», in *Archivo Iberoamericano* 75/281, pp. 422 and 437-438.

28. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 68

29. Bernard of Clairvaux (1957), *Sancti Bernardi Opera V. Sermones II*, Rome, p. 186. Quoted from Iogna-Prat, Dominique (1988), *Ordonner* et *exclure*: Cluny et la société chrétienne face à l'hérésie, au judaïsme et à l'islam, 1000-1150, Paris, p. 132.

Sed quid proderit inimicos Christianae spei in exteris aut remotis finibus insequi ac persequi, se nequam blasphemi, longeque Sarracenis deteriores Iudaei, non longe a nobis, sed in medio nostri, tam libere, tam audacter, Christum, cunctaque Christiana sacramenta, impune blasphemauerint, conculcauerint, deturpauerint? Quomodo zelus dei comedet filios dei, si sic prorsus intacti euaserint, summi Christi ac Christianorum inimici Iudaei? An excidit a mente regis Christianorum, quod olim dictum est a quodam sancto rege Iudaeorum? *Nonne* ait *qui oderunt te, domini oderam, et super inimicos tuos tabescebam? Perfecto odio oderam illos.* Si detestandi sunt Sarraceni, quia quamuis Christum de uirgine ut nos natum fateantur, multaque de ipso nobiscum sentiant, tamen deum deique filium quod maius est negant, mortemque ipsius ac ressurrectionem, in quibus tota summa salutis nostrae est, diffitentur, quantum execrandi et odio habendi sunt Iudaei, qui nichil prorsus de Christo uel fide Christiana sentientes, ipsum uirginem partum, cunctaque redemptionis humanae sacramenta abiiciunt, blasphemant, subsannant?

[…] Non inquam ut occidantur admoneo, sed ut congruente nequitiae suae modo puniantur, exhortor.

[…] Manet multum scelus detestabile in Iudaeo, quod horrenda morte suspendii punitur in Christiano.[30]

Although this idea might never have been hegemonic and although less extreme ideas persisted in Christianity, the presumption that Christianity was the only rational religion would be part of Christian identity for centuries, and augustinian tolerance gave way to intolerant rationalism. In fact, reason and intolerance are sometimes complementary. Ramon Martí contrasts Christian rationality with the blindness, hardness of heart, malice and perfidy of the Jews.

Circa cetero vero, quae in Iudaeorum disputatione concurrunt, multos habent dolos, quibus Deum ac veritatem scire renuunt, multasque fallendi species sive modos, ad quos, non obstante timore Dei, non hominum verecundia, cum a fraude quam circa textum faciunt per supradictum modum appulsi fuerint, sic extento collo refugiunt, quemadmodum lacerta praeocupata, vel talpa, refugit ad cavernam. Timore vero fastidii, non nisi tres modos ex eis in hoc proemio volui coartare.[31]

The following excerpt shows how Ramon Martí's reasoning becomes a pillar of Christian identity:

His ita praemissis, deducantur omnia in rationis ordinem et dicatur: Cum legumlator et virga, sive sceptrum, quod non debebat recedere de Iuda donec Messias veniret, sit Cenhedrin et eorum potestas, ut ex praedictis manifestum est, et ipsi Cenhedrin recesserint de loco suo et amiserint potestatem regendi et iudicandi per XL annos

30. Constable, Giles (1967), *The Letters of Peter the Vénérable*, Cambridge (Mass.), vol. I, pp. 327-330.
31. Ramon Martí, *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, ed. and trans. Adolfo Robles Sierra (1990), Würzburg,, p.56.

ante destructionem templi, et postmodum recesserint non solum de Iuda, sed etiam de toto mundo, ut ipsu factum ostendit, et supra probatum est, de duobus sequi alterum, necessarium est. Videlicet, vel prophetam fuisse mentitum, vel Messiam iam diu venisse. Sed cum primum sit impossibile, scilicet, prophetam fuisse mentitum, ultimum, scilicet, Messiam iam diu venisse, erit necessarium.[32]

Jews were accused at times of malice and obstinacy or of madness, always with the subtext that Christian identity was the opposite:

Jesucrist reprenia als majors de la llei dels jueus de un gran pecat en què estaven en dubte e menyscreença, que ell fos lo ver Messies e salvador […] Nota la follia dels maestres de la llei. Nostre senyor Jesucrist confermava la sua doctrina santa, e que ell era tramès per Déu lo Pare, faent miracles molt meravellosos, il·luminant los cecs, e faent oir los sort, e fer parlar los muts, e los mesells guarint, los paralítics sanant, los morts ressuscitant […] Per ço, per la follia de aquells maestres rabins, jueus malvats, que volien veure algun senyal, la reprensió que Jesucrit los fa, diu: Generatio prava et adultera […] no el podien creure ne conéixer, ans se partien d'ell: "Excecavi illos malitia".[33]

Com a les primeres preïcacions verdaderament cregueren Jesucrist (Mt. 21) bé ho mostra Nicodemus quan dix: "Rabbi, scimus quis a Deo vinisti" (Jo. 3, 2).
E com Jesús los reprenia […] hagueren malícia e foren encegats, e lo diable tornà en ells, e lladoncs, induïts per los dimonis, feren ordenació ab sentència e crida, que tothom que digués que fos lo rei Messies, que morís.[34]

The negative image of the Jews has been widely studied and is not the subject of this chapter. It interests us only as a counterpoint to Christian identity. In one of his sermons, Vincent Ferrer presents contrasting Christian and Jewish identities using the concept of nobility. The Jews, God's chosen people, lose their nobility when they reject Christ. This nobility is passed onto the Christians, while the Jews become the Devil's vassals:

Aquesta noblea és de nosaltres, que som fills de Jesucrist e de santa mare Església […] *Vos ex patre diaboli estis* (Io. 8, 44)[35]

To confine to oneself the ability to reason is to reserve for oneself alone the status of personhood. From there it is only a small step to the brutalization and demonization of the other.[36]

32. Ramon Martí, *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, p.80.
33. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons de Quaresma*, I, p. 109.
34. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons de Quaresma*, I, p. 113.
35. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons de Quaresma*, I, pp. 118-119.
36. Due to space limitations, and because of the large number of studies, we will not expand on this topic.

3. Christian identity in question: Reality versus the ideal

The Late Middle Ages were not the first period to be aware of a divergence between alleged Christian identity and reality,[37] but during this period there was increased zeal in the quest for perfection. Identity became radicalized, while the middle ground and half-heartedness disappeared. Both lay and religious were criticized for the corruption of mores:

> Multis Ecclesiarum pontificibus et prelatis […] potius sunt Pilati quam prelati; dissipatores quam dispensatores; depresores ouium quam defensores; ruptores potius quam rectores […] Uita eorum facta est omnibus exemplar malitie, sentina criminum, spectaculum ignominie, ambitionis materies et totius auersionis forma deformis: quorum est inexplebilis et inexplicabilis auaritia, libido insatiabilis, ambitio infinita.[38]

> Iste rex est Dominus noster Iesus Christus […] Civitas eius es sancta Dei Ecclesia. Quem regem acriter offendimus, dum sibi civitatem suam subtrahimus, id est, de sacramentis ecclesiasticis non curamus, cui eciam fidem, quam sibi i baptismo promissimus dicentes: "Abrenuncio Sathano", etc. Frangimus, tociens quociens peccatis suo adversario, scilicet dyabolo, nos subdimus, prout faciunt divini et divine demones invocantes, superbi, avari, etec. Omnes tales sunt filii dyaboli Christum negantes, eius sanctissimam matrem et omnes sanctos.[39]

> Idio ha aspettato, e aspettato, e voi non fate niuno frutto che sia a sua laude, ma fate ogni cosa contraria alla sua volontà; unde che elli e già indegnato, e credetemi che ha in pensiero di tagliare questo arbore, poi che elli è disposto a non volere dare il frutto, come elli ha aspettato già cotanto tempo. Ma se elli arà tanta pazienzia d'aspettare questo quarto anno, e tu non li rendi frutto, guardati, guardati, poi guardati, Siena![40]

> Doh, dimmi: hai tu veduta Italia come ella sta nel Lappamondo? Or ponvi mente: ella sta proprio come uno ventre. Eglino hanno errato tutti 'Taliani. O fuoco di Dio, come non discendi tu di cielo, a ciò che dibrugi tutti questi paesi! Tutta questa patria si può chiamare madre di questo peccato, però che non s'ode di niuna parte del mondo tanto contaminata, quanto questa. O Italia, aspettane vendetta.[41]

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37. For example, Houdeville, Michelle (2000), «Les sarrasins, miroir des chrétiens?», in *La chrétiené au péril sarrasin*, Aix-en Provence, Université de Provence, pp. 77-84 (p. 78) : "Le païen, par sa logique implacable, oblige à réfléchir sur le comportement du chrétien et l'invite à adopter une attitude plus conforme aux principes qu'il prétend défendre", and in Suard, «La chrétiené …», (p. 247): "Ainsi le motif de l'invasion sarrasine, qui met en péril un lieu essentiel à la vie et au développement de la chrétiené (…) apparaît-il comme un élément fondateur de la chanson de geste".
38. Lillo Redonet, Fernando (Ed.) (2011), *Sermonario. Juan Gil de Zamora*, Zamora, p. 86.
39. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 57.
40. Bernardino da Siena (1989), *Prediche vulgari sul Campo di Siena 1427*, Ed. Carlo Delcorno, vol. I, p. 439-40.
41. Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari*, II, pp. 1145-1146.

> Nosaltres mesquins, que havem ley, la Bíblia, decrets e cànones e altres santes scrip-
> tures e preÿcacions, mes que jamés no servim Déu ne fem res de bé. Ideo dicit Dom-
> inus: "Reddite prevaricatores […]" gran vergonya és nostra, que tants llibres e tants
> preÿcadors havem, e ab tot açò som malastruchs en creure la fe catòlica.[42]

One of the main accusations against Christians concerned the irrationality of
their behavior:

> E parlaremo contra coloro i quali credono nel destinato delle costellazioni; chè sonno
> assai che dicono e credono e tengono una grande eresia; dove stamane cognoscia-
> ranno la verità, e i'errore dove so'stati […] E qui puoi vedere: se hai tenuta quella
> oppenione, che ella è gattiva, non la tenere più, ma crede l'uomo avere il libero
> arbitrio di poter fare bene e male, senza èssare constretto a fare contra al suo volere.
> O pazzatoni, a volere credare quello che non avete niuno atacco di ragione! Sappiate
> che questo è atacco del diavolo.[43]

> Superbi, avari, luxuriosi, etc. Sensualitati more animalium irracionabilium sensual-
> itati innitentes, dicuntur bestie, et per peccatum bestie efficiuntur […] contra quod
> Deus dedit nobis racionem et intellectum, et non bestiis, ut si sensualitas nos ducat ad
> malum faciendum, racio resistat[44]

From this point of view, many Christians are seen as traitors to the contract
signed at baptism, becoming subjects of the Devil or the Antichrist:

> Quando venerit, Lucifer et omnes dyaboli servient sibi, et omnes thesauri auri et ar-
> genti, lapidum preciosorum, etc. sibi per demones aperientur et presentabuntur, et elle
> distribuer cuilibet sibi adherere volenti, iuxta appetitum et desiderium suum.[45]

This betrayal makes Christians similar to Jews:

> No siam semblants als jueus: nostres senyor Déu ne vol fruita de nosaltres […] Los
> jueus fulles li daven de paraula […] mas no fruit de bona vida.
> Donen clergues la cistella plena de fulles a nostre senyor Déu […] en paraules donen
> llaor a Déu, e no en obres de penitència e pietat […] Molts religiosos donen paraules
> a Déu com fan la professió […] mas no faran fruites, sinó fulles. Ítem los que preïcam
> […] Item los regidors […] Item los senyors […] e los servidors […] Item los juristes
> e notaris e altres.[46]

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42. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, III, p. 309.
43. Bernardino da Siena, *Prediche volgari*, I, pp. 36-37.
44. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 61.
45. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 54.
46. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons de Quaresma*, I, p. 166.

> Hominibus peccuniam indigentibus consilium do ut vadant ad iudeos, qui absque hoc sunt dampnati, et non des causam christiano sue perpetue dampnacionis accomodando ab eo ad usuram. Sed, heu! Tot sunt mali christiani usurarii quod iudei modo nichil lucrantur, ecce crimina, videlicet superbia et avaricia multum generalia.[47]

Indeed, the sins of Christians are worse than those of Muslims and Jews, since there is an element of betrayal in their sin. Although this view does not appear very frequently, it is implicit in preaching and polemics.

3.1 Association with Jews: Coexistence and acceptance of converts

The construction of one's identity and the image of the other also entails the construction of symbolic and physical borders that the members of each group must not cross: marriage and sexual relations with members of the other group, taking up residence in certain neighborhoods, regulations in dress and other markings, etc., which we know were the subject of legislation in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[48]

Tolerance toward the Jews was compatible with segregation. Although legislation attempted to minimize cohabitation among Jews and Christians as much as practicable,[49] some sermons demonstrate that the law was not followed:

> Want to taste everything: Muslim and Jews, and animals, men with men; there is no limit[50]

> Moros, Juheus e Christians tots están mesclats. Acó podeu dir que destroix... Lo Rey nostre ha ordenat en Castella que tots los moros van ab hun capuxo senyalat, e los juheus ab una roda, e aci van los moros axi com a christians ¿e no sou gelosos de vostres mullers?[51]

> [...] si vos moratis in simul cum judeis et infidelibus in hoc mundo in alio in inferno morabitis cum ipsis. Et ideo, si vultis hoc vitare, evitetis conversacionem ipsorum in

47. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 84.
48. English translations of fragments from Vincent Ferrer in Nirenberg, David (2014), *Neighboring Faiths: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism in the Middle Ages and Today*, Chicago, pp. 247-248.
49. A long quote in Vicent Ferrer, *Sermones de Cuaresma en Suiza*, p. 68. It is not copied here since it does not deal directly with Christian identity, but rather with the segregation of Jews. This reiteration in the prohibition against contact between religions has been called "a crisis of religious identification". Groebner, Valentin (2009), «Sleeping with Arabs and Blacks, 1300-1500», in *The Origins of Racism in the West*, Cambridge - New York, p. 225.
50. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons* I. English Translation from Nirenberg, *Neighboring Faiths*, p. 105.
51. Chabás, Roque (1903), *Estudio sobre los sermones valencianos de San Vicente Ferrer que se conservan manuscritos en la biblioteca metropolitana de Valencia*, Madrid, p. 85.

quatuor, scilicet hospicios et oficios et negotios et servicios, aliter conversabitis cum eis in inferno.[52]

Sed modo non cognocetis quis sit pater vester vel filius, quia talis putat esse filius christiani et est judei, et econtra. Et hoc est propter conversacionem et habitacione inter christianos et iudeos.[53]

No tingau juheus ne moros entre vosaltres, mas a una part de la vila, e quiscús viviu segons vostra ley. Vosaltres christians no·ls deveu encendre foch, car s'és esdevengut que una joveneta christiana fon forçada per hun juheu.[54]

Although Vincent Ferrer supported the segregation of the Jews, he also argued that converts should be integrated and enjoy the rights of full membership in the Christian community:

E vosaltres, ¿havets de aquesta consolació, quant hun juheu se converteix? Molts christians folls són que no n'han consolació, que·ls deurien abraçar e honrar-los e amar.los; e fets lo contrari, que·ls' menyspreau perquè són stats juheus, e no·u deveu fer, car Jesuchrist juheu fo e la Verge María abans fo juhia que christiana. Gran peccat és de escarnir-los, que·ls dieu "retallat"; no·u deus fer, que axi serás dapnat, com aquell fore si morís juheu; mas deveu-los adoctrinar en lo servi de Déu. […] Vet aquí quiny scàndel li fas, que li fas perdre la fe; e axí guardau-vos de menysprear-los.[55]

Si algun moro o jueu se converteix, e es fa cristià, que lo deu hom voler e fer-los tots plaers per honor de Déu, e no injuriar-los, que els dieu "retallats", e així, aquells tals cristians par que sien renegats, que hagen oi a aquells qui prenen la llei de cristiandat. Així, vullats-los honrar aquells qui vénen a cristiantat.[56]

As is well known, Vincent Ferrer's views in this matter were rejected after 1430 and converts were segregated from Spanish Christian society for centuries. However, this lies beyond the purview of this study.

52. Gimeno Blay, Francisco, Mandingorra, María Luz, (Eds.) (2002), *Sermonario de san Vicente Ferrer*, València, p. 536-7.
53. Gimeno Blay, Mangingorra, *Sermonario de san Vicente Ferrer*, p. 764.
54. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons*, III, p. 113.
55. Vicent Ferrer, Sermons, III, p. 70.
56. Vicent Ferrer, *Sermons de Quaresma*, I, p. 137.

4. Conclusion

The way Christian identity is reflected in late medieval sermons and religious po-
lemics combines faith, rationality and individual responsibility for the salvation of
the community with high moral standards that lead to an acknowledgment of both
the desire for perfection and everyday imperfection. To reflect this contrast, several
classical conventions were adopted for Christian self-representation: the saint, the
sick man, the warrior and the storm-tossed ship, among others.

    This negative self-image is sometimes very similar to the image constructed of
the other. Turning the argument around, it seems that the negative image of the other
is constructed from one's own defects. At bottom, then, the battle against the other is
the battle against the self, against the weakness, error or sin that needs to be excised
from oneself and from society as a whole.[57] The construction of this identity was
a laborious and complicated process in which preaching and the religious polemic
played a prominent role.

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57. Legros, Huguette (2000), «Réalité et imaginaires du péril sarrasin», in *La chrétienté au péril sarrasin*,
    Aix-en Provence, Université de Provence, pp. 125-14 (pp.137, 142). Houdeville (2000), «Les sarrasins»,
    (pp. 80, 82).