


conversion to Islam were mentioned in a plethora of early and medieval Muslim sources (consult Jamsheed Choksy, *Conflict and Cooperation: Zoroastrian Subalterns and Muslim Elites in Medieval Iranian Society*, 1997). In southern Iraq and Iran, encounters with and conversion of Mandaeans to Islam occurred too (consult Kevin van Bladel, *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Šābians of the Marshes*, 2017). Further to the east, Manichaean and Buddhist communities were present and though not viewed as followers of revealed scriptures but as idolators were converted to Islam nonetheless (consult David Scott, “Manichaeism in Bactria: Political Patterns and East-West Paradigms,” *Journal of Asian History*, 2007; and Mostafa Vaziri, *Buddhism in Iran: An Anthropological Approach to Traces and Influences*, 2012). Yet all these communities are absent from Ibrahim’s analysis.

Ibrahim also neglects to utilise the conversion stories of specific members from these groups pre or post adoption of Islam. The most conspicuous absence from the book is the archetypal convert Salmān al-Fārisī who, according to Muslim tradition preserved in the *Sīra*, “Biography (of the Prophet Muhammad),” was a close companion of Islam’s founder since entering the nascent *umma*, “community” at Yathrib/Medina after abjuring his birth faith of Zoroastrianism and experimenting with both Christianity and Judaism. Salmān’s conversion tale should have been analysed thematically because it parallels, while being far more powerful symbolically, conversion stories of rabbis and monks (p. 233) and hence could have been central to Ibrahim’s subsections on “Significant Conversions” and “Encountering Muhammad and His Message” (pp. 143–154).

It must be emphasised that the four literary topoi of “significance, compromise, supremacy, and affirmation” identified by Ibrahim (p. 6) were applied by medieval Muslim historians to all the faiths that became minorities in Muslim-controlled lands. So, “different portrayals of conversion ... during the first three Islamic centuries” (p. 3), even if looking at broad vignettes, cannot be comprehensive through examining only the incorporation of Christians and Jews into Muslim societies.

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CHRISTOPHER BUCK: *The Baha’i Faith: The Basics*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021; pp. xi+250

The Baha’i Faith: the basics is part of “The Basics” series of introductory books published by Routledge on topics as diverse as archaeology and film making. The series also includes several books on various religions. Christopher Buck’s volume is a welcomed addition to this collection. It joins a number of introductory books on the Baha’i Faith beginning with John Esslemont’s *Baha’u’llah and the New Era* (1923, and revised numerous times) to more scholarly works such as Moojan Momen’s *The Baha’i Faith: Beginner’s Guide* (2007) and Peter Smith’s *An Introduction to the Baha’i Faith* (2008).

The most important contribution of this work to the literature on the Baha’i Faith consists of its focus on current Baha’i community life and its description of core activities which include devotional meetings, children’s classes, junior youth groups

and adult study circles, even describing the current curriculum being used for those activities. Attention is given as well to social and economic development projects and Baha'i participation in public discourse, all elements not covered in previous introductory material. In other words, this text focuses much more broadly on what Baha'is do, rather than simply what they believe.

This is not to say that basic Baha'i beliefs and principles are not also included. Indeed, the book begins with three chapters dedicated to spiritual and social teachings. Buck sees the problem of human existence expressed in the Baha'i Faith in terms of disunity, an illness which Baha'u'llah's revelation alone can heal. While all religions offered remedies for their day and age, Baha'u'llah's teachings address the needs of the present age. Individual salvation cannot be separated from the regeneration of human society. God's essence is unknowable apart from what He reveals of Himself through revelation. This revelation is seen as progressive through the various religions throughout human history. The human soul is eternal and should be developed to reflect God's attributes by acquiring virtues. Heaven and hell are seen as metaphorical references to nearness and remoteness from God. Buck summarizes a common repertoire of Baha'i principles which include an individual's obligation to search for truth, the unity of humanity, the unity of religion, the need for religion to accept science, gender equality, the need to eliminate prejudice of all kinds, universal education, the application of spiritual principles to economic problems, and the adoption of a universal auxiliary language. To this standard repertoire Buck adds his own compilation of fifty Baha'i principles of unity.

Unfortunately, one does not come to be acquainted with the lives and history of the central figures of the Baha'i Faith until midway into the text. For an Abrahamic religion this strikes me as odd, for any introductory presentation of either Christianity or Islam would begin first with a description of the life of Christ or Muhammad. Baha'u'llah, the founder of the Baha'i Faith, is as important to Baha'is as Christ or Muhammad is to Christians and Muslims respectively, yet that is all too often not the way they present their religion to others. One wishes more time had been spent discussing the concept of Manifestation which the author describes merely as a "special Baha'i term for prophets and messengers of God" (p. 22). For Baha'is, Manifestations are much more than that for they embody all we can understand about God humanly speaking.

In the book's longest chapter, Buck gives substantial attention to the Baha'i scriptures and other authoritative writings. The former consists of the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah's forerunner, Baha'u'llah himself, as well as 'Abdu'l-Baha his successor. The latter includes the writings of Shoghi Effendi, who served as Guardian of the Baha'i Faith from 1921–1957 as well as some of the messages from the Universal House of Justice which consists of elected members who currently govern the affairs of the Baha'i community.

A chapter is also devoted to Baha'i institutions and the structure of their administration. Buck stresses the importance of consultation in its decision-making processes by elected bodies on the local, regional, national, and international level. While no professional clergy exist in the Baha'i community there are individuals appointed for five-year terms to advise Baha'i institutions and individuals.

This text serves as a good up-to-date presentation of current Baha'i beliefs and practices. What is somewhat lost is the kerygma common to all Abrahamic religions where its most essential message is found: the history, lives, and ministry of its central figures.

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EVAN HAEFELI, ed, *Against Popery: Britain, Empire, and Anti-Catholicism*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2020; pp. xvi + 342.

This valuable collection of original essays from an interdisciplinary group of contributors summarizes the state of scholarship on anti-Catholicism in the wider Atlantic world and suggests new avenues for future research. Together, the essays span three centuries of Anglo-American history on both sides of the Atlantic. The book is arranged into three parts that generally trace the evolution of anti-Catholicism across time and place.

The project's editor, Evan Haefeli, associate professor of history at Texas A&M University, writes the introduction, the conclusion, and two articles. Haefeli draws a subtle distinction between anti-Catholicism, or religious prejudice, and anti-popery, or "an ideology deriving from hostility to the religious *and* political examples of the Roman Catholic papacy" (p. 2). In this way, Haefeli, along with several of his co-contributors, draws on historian Peter Lake's definition of anti-popery as "an anti-religion, a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity" (p. 9). The political ideology of anti-popery justified Protestant hegemony, informed Anglo-American conceptions of liberty and slavery, and inspired the rift between British Protestants during the American Revolution (p. 2). "Anti-popery could make sense of otherwise perplexing political processes and social changes," Haefeli explains in the introduction, "because it had a sociocultural theory about how the progression from corruption to tyranny happened," in which "one had to be constantly vigilant" (p. 13).

Part One explores the origins of anti-popery in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain, Ireland, and America. The first chapter by historian Tim Harris (Brown University) establishes the fundamental distinction of this collection: "Anti-Catholicism and anti-popery were not the same thing" (p. 25). While anti-Catholicism in Great Britain entailed prejudice against the Roman Catholic religion and/or individual Catholics, anti-popery maintained a certain intellectual coherence as an ideology, which was often levied against non-Catholics. Next, historian Cynthia Van Zandt (University of New Hampshire) traces the official and personal entrenchment of anti-popery in America's first permanent English colony, Virginia, especially in light of imperial tensions between Protestant England and Catholic Spain. Focusing on Presbyterian-dominant Scotland, historian Craig Gallagher (New England College) describes the use of anti-popery among Presbyterians as a tool against established religion more than the Roman Catholic Church, *per se*. Haefeli's first full-length essay argues that religious confrontations within Roman Catholic-dominant Ireland shaped a unique language of "Irish anti-popery" in the broader British-American world (p. 93).