Celebrating Arthur Darby Nock

Choice, Change, and Conversion

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A. Introduction: "All or Nothing"

As he transitions from his chapters outlining the "traditional religions" of Greece and Rome to discussing the rise of Christianity and the shift from "adhesion" to "conversion," Arthur Nock confesses: "Our way of thinking is throughout coloured by the nature of Christianity. We conceive of religion as 'all or nothing.'"[1] We might ask: Who is Nock's "we" in this passage? Is it simply the author and reader together (as it seems to be earlier in the paragraph: "We have … surveyed …")? Or is this a more capacious "we," the modern person who shares with Nock a certain understanding of what real religion comprises: a total moral and spiritual orientation of the self, "religion as 'all or nothing'"?

In *Conversion*, Nock both assumes and argues for this particular definition of religion and uses the concept of conversion to naturalize that definition. Without "conversion" there is no "religion" (in the abstract sense) and there are no "religions" (in the concrete sense). One of the brilliant facets of *Conversion*, alongside its easy erudition and plainspoken style,[2] is its ability to convince us that *religion* precedes *conversion*, that what had to come into existence was "religion as 'all or nothing'" before people could properly convert. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case: Nock must conjure the possibility and necessity of *conversion* in order to produce *religion* in his precisely modernist, European, Protestant sense. It is my modest goal in this essay to trace how Nock uses conversion to produce religion(s) and then to explore its similarities to and differences from an analogous construction of religion-through-conversion in late antiquity.

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[1] Arthur Darby Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 160. I offer many thanks to Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos for her comments on an early version of this essay and to Paula Fredriksen for help in bringing it to its final form. All infelicities and mistakes remain, of course, my own.

[2] To quote Simon Price, "The Road to *Conversion*: The Life and Work of A. D. Nock," *HSCP* 105 (2010): 317–339, 317: "His vast learning tends to compel assent."

In the first half of the essay, I describe how Nock's concept of conversion assists him in positing Christianity as the paradigm of "religion as 'all or nothing'" through comparison with other (lesser) religious formulations in antiquity. In creating this hierarchical and teleological taxonomic system, Nock operates squarely within the context of late colonial articulations of "religion" and "religions," which prioritizes the psychological interiorization of religious "faith" over (less evolved) forms of worship. Nock's innovation is framing conversion as the mechanism by which superior religion is placed in relationship to its inferior competitors.

In the second half of the essay, I consider a set of late ancient narratives of conversion from Judaism to Christianity from the fifth-century *Church History* of Socrates Scholasticus (ca. 440). My goal is to apply my insight about Nock's production of religion-through-conversion to an ancient imperial context. Socrates, like Nock, uses conversion to delineate a novel taxonomic system of religions. But his specific and strategic accounts of ex-Jewish Christians allow Socrates to highlight the imperial context of his religious system. I conclude by turning back to Nock to ask what is effaced from his narrative of religious change and difference through his own particular accounts of Jews and Judaism.

B. Nock's Religion, Nock's Conversion

Nock begins *Conversion* by describing the "the nature of religion" in such a way as to reproduce an evolutionary, hierarchical taxonomy of religion which had become common by the early twentieth century.[3] Nock distinguishes between the "two opposing poles of man's spiritual history,"[4] that is, "traditional" and "prophetic" religions. According to Nock, "traditional" religions have existed in a relatively static form since time immemorial, providing explanations for the operations of the cosmos and prescribing technologies to influence those cosmic operations. Religions of tradition are fundamentally transactional, outwardly focused, and localized; they merely demand an adherent's "action and not belief."[5] By contrast prophetic religions are transformational, inspired, and universal in their ambition. The prophet

is fired with a new idea, and launches out on a new path in a sincere conviction that he has been led by something external and objective. Whereas in religions of tradition the essential element is the practice and there is no underlying idea other than the sanctity of custom

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[3] See Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[4] Nock, *Conversion*, 4.

[5] Nock, *Conversion*, 2.

hallowed by preceding generations, in prophetic religions the reason is all-important and the practice flows from it and is in a sense secondary even if indispensable.[6]

I interpret Nock's contrast between religions of "tradition" and "prophets" as evolutionary and hierarchical, a simplified version of the more elaborate "family trees" and taxonomies that had by then been circulating for decades in the developing schemata of "world religions."[7] Traditional religions, grounded in practice retained for the sake of "tradition," belong to the pagan past of Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; prophetic religions, grounded in belief and transformation, had appeared with some limited success (Nock gestures to Judaism, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism),[8] but achieved full expression in Christianity.

Most of *Conversion* is not about Christianity, but about what preceded it and then surrounded it: the traditional cult of the Greek *polis*; the infusion of "eastern" cults, first to the porous Hellenistic world and then to the more authoritarian and rigid Roman sphere; the growing appeal of these "mystery" religions during the early empire; the place of philosophy; and, finally, the "appeal" of Christianity as a social and theological phenomenon. (Nestled between the chapters on "mystery" cults and Christian success is a revealing chapter on "conversions" from Christianity to paganism, to which I return below.)

This teleological thrust (which he signals in his subtitle: "from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo") is neither Nock's invention nor his main point. Nock's contribution rather is to single out *conversion*, "the reorientation of the soul" and so forth, as the *sine qua non* of real, prophetic religion: "religion as 'all or nothing.'" Famously Nock distinguished between *adhesion*, incorporating new cultic acts and dispositions into an existing framework, and *conversion*, an interior orientation to a new and exclusive belief system. Central to Nock's argument, however, is how conversion is not only restricted to "prophetic" religions but how it slowly builds up, through the intermediary failures of the "mystery religions," until it finally appears full-grown and ready to ensure the "success" of Christianity. That is, the taxonomic system of religions culminating in Christianity, at which Nock gestures in his general introduction, can only come into full view once conversion is there to index religious difference.

In his introduction, Nock seems to hint that any "prophetic religion" allows for the possibility of conversion rather than mere adhesion. He repeatedly gestures to "Judaism and Christianity" (always a pair)[9] as epitomes of "prophetic" religion over against the "traditional" religions of Greece or the "supplemental" adhesions of mystery cults like Orphism or Mithraism. Yet when Nock

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[6] Nock, *Conversion*, 2–3.

[7] Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in idem, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 179–196.

[8] Nock, *Conversion*, 9–10.

[9] Nock, *Conversion*, 13–16.

steps back to survey religion in the ancient world, Judaism recedes into the background. Notably, Nock never discusses conversion to *Judaism*, which might support his notion that conversion is characteristic of "prophetic" religions. He turns to examine Judaism in the context of other "oriental" religions to which "gentiles" might choose loose and partial affiliation, analogous to "eastern" cults. Nock refers several times in these pages to "proselytes," but almost immediately qualifies the existence of such converts to Judaism: some might just follow the "Noachite commandments," others might be "godfearers," yet others might observe a few Jewish customs "without being prepared to go to the drastic length of being a proselyte."[10] Judaism, like the mystery religions and philosophies among which Nock places it, failed to inspire true conversion.

Much of *Conversion* surveys a series of failures to achieve conversion. Movements from "the East" were insufficient to inspire truly life-changing reorientation of the soul, as Christianity would.[11] (Nock is notably vexed by Renan's famous assertion that "if Christianity had died Mithraism might have conquered the world.")[12] Hans Lietzmann, in his review of *Conversion* in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, correctly describes the book as narrating the "victory of the Christian mission over all of its other oriental rivals."[13] In this

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[10] Nock, *Conversion*, 61–64. The history of the study of "godfearers" provides another important chapter in the invention of conversion in the history of religions, particularly at the fraught boundary of Judaism and Christianity. On "godfearers," see Ross S. Kraemer, "Giving up the Godfearers," *JAJ* 5/1 (2014): 61–87, and, in response, Paula Fredriksen, "'If It Looks Like a Duck, and It Quacks Like a Duck …': On *Not* Giving Up the Godfearers," in *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey, et al., BJS 358 (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 25–33.

[11] For a vigorous defense of authentic conversion in "mysteries" see Birgitte Secher Bøgh, "Beyond Nock: From Adhesion to Conversion in the Mystery Cults," *HR* 54/3 (2015): 260–287; while supplementing Nock's definition of conversion with more recent sociological studies, Bøgh more or less retains Nock's broader conception of conversion as a radical religious reorientation of the self.

[12] Nock, *Conversion*, 14; Ernest Renan, *Marc-Aurèle et le fin du monde antique* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882), 579: "On peut dire que, si le christianisme eût été arrêté dans sa croissance par quelque maladie mortelle, le monde eût été mithriaste."

[13] Hans Lietzmann, review of *Conversion*, by Arthur Darby Nock, *JRS* 25 (1935): 107–108, 108: "welche Umstände der christlichen Mission den Sieg über alle anderen orientalischen Rivalen beschert haben." On the ways in which Nock's own religious context may have informed his writing in the 1920s and 1930s, see Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 66–71; Price, "Road to *Conversion*," 330–334, 334: "Thus, although his positivism and minimalism were, as we have seen, averse to grand theories, his conviction of the unique nature of Christianity underpinned some aspects of his research." See also Nock's obituary by Eric R. Dodds and Henry Chadwick: "Nock's choice [of research field] was dictated by his deeply religious temperament and endless curiosity about religious behaviour" ("Obituary: Arthur Darby Nock," *JRS* 53 [1963]: 168–169, 168).

review, Lietzmann, a Protestant theologian and church historian, expresses sympathy for such a triumphalist narrative.

Having concluded his survey of "eastern cults" in chapter 6 by recognizing in them "a religious spirit, even though we cannot in our sense give [them] the name of a religion,"[14] Nock then turns in chapter 7 to inquire into these cults' "appeal." More specifically, Nock seeks out "the psychological factors of attraction" which led Greeks and Romans to be drawn to these foreign movements. Nock identifies several novel psychological pressures at work: a growing sense of individual smallness in the vast, uncaring cosmos; a new interest in achieving immortality; and a "general increase in the tendency to believe."[15] Nicola Denzey Lewis has outlined how several early 20th-century scholars ascribe feelings of "enslavement to fate" or "cosmic pessimism" to the later Roman Empire, Nock among them.[16] In his introduction Nock had approvingly referred to William James's deeply psychologizing explanation of conversion as "a passion of willingness and acquiescence, which removes the feeling of anxiety, a sense of perceiving truths not known before, a sense of clean and beautiful newness within and without."[17] In order to arrive at this removal of a "feeling of anxiety," Nock first establishes the pervasiveness of that anxiety throughout the Roman world.

With this internal need in place, Nock then explains why existing options – "religions of tradition," "eastern cults," even philosophical discipline – proved insufficient to address this need and bring about this "newness within and without." Religions of tradition, as Nock has already explained, relied on rote ritual repetition that had little hope of addressing inner psychological needs. "Eastern cults" were more appealing insofar as they offered tentative answers to the desire for psychological security and safety, but they lacked the moral and theological teaching that would lead to a totally new life: "while you can become attached to a cult without theology or hierarchy … it is hard for you to be converted to it: there is nothing in it to seize. The mysteries gave a revelation but not a dogma."[18] For Nock, "theology and hierarchy" refer to the need for a divine force that can reorient and reorganize human life. The "East" may bring new answers ("a revelation") but not the certainty that would come from "theology and hierarchy."

Philosophical schools, Nock notes, meet these needs better than mystery religions because they structured a way of life and provided a moral rationale ("theology and hierarchy," of a sort) that resonated with the psychological

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[14] Nock, *Conversion*, 98.

[15] Nock, *Conversion*, 99–119.

[16] Nicola Denzey Lewis, "'Enslavement to Fate,' 'Cosmic Pessimism,' and Other Explorations of the Late Roman Psyche: A Brief History of a Historiographical Trend," *SR* 33/3–4 (2004): 277–299.

[17] Nock, *Conversion*, 7–8.

[18] Nock, *Conversion*, 135.

needs of Hellenistic Greeks and early imperial Romans. In his chapter on philosophy, Nock even suggests that something like *conversion* has come nearly fully into view: "A mystery evoked a strong emotional response and touched the soul deeply for a time, but philosophy was able both to turn men from evil and to hold before them a good, perhaps never to be attained, but presenting a permanent object of desire to which one seemed to draw gradually nearer."[19] Where philosophy failed, Nock suggests, was in its limited appeal to the narrow, literate, educated classes.[20] With the revelatory allure of the mysteries and the moral compunction of philosophy in place, *conversion* in Nock's sense now seems possible (indeed, he calls this chapter "Conversion to Philosophy"). At this point, we encounter Christianity.

Christianity will take up and allow for the full measure of conversion in a way the mystery cults' amoral revelation and philosophy's elite discipline could not. To be sure, this Christianity is not the Jewish messianic movement of the first century,[21] but the gentile movements of the second century, following "the definitive rejection of the new ideas by conservative Judaism and the withering of Jewish-Christianity after the disaster of 70 and its sequel in 135 cut the connection with the synagogue."[22] The Christianity that spoke to the inner fears and desires of "John Doe and Richard Roe of the second century"[23] is a small, stout-hearted, persecuted Christian faith comprising gentiles most visible to the populace in the shocking but inspiring figure of the martyr.[24] The adherent willing to die for truth was not unknown, especially among philosophers; but the theatricality of the Christian martyr gave special solace and inspiration to the common man ("John Doe and Richard Roe"). Christianity, for Nock, brings together successfully all of the elements which, in previous chapters, had failed to inspire authentic conversion:

The success of Christianity is the success of an institution which united the sacramentalism and the philosophy of the time. It satisfied the inquiring turn of mind, the desire for escape from Fate, the desire for security in the hereafter; like Stoicism, it gave a way of life and made man at home in the universe, but unlike Stoicism it did this for the ignorant as well as for the lettered. It satisfied also social needs and it secured men against loneliness. Its way was not easy; it made uncompromising demands on those who would enter and would continue to live in the brotherhood, but to those who did not fail it offered an equally uncompromising assurance.[25]

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[19] Nock, *Conversion*, 185.

[20] Nock, *Conversion*, 177–178.

[21] Nock, *Conversion*, 210, even goes so far as to dismiss "the central figure of Christianity as presented in the Synoptic Gospels [i.e., Jesus]" as "a primary factor in the success of Christianity."

[22] Nock, *Conversion*, 202.

[23] Nock, *Conversion*, 187.

[24] Nock, *Conversion*, 193.

[25] Nock, *Conversion*, 210–211.

Christianity provides the emotional satisfaction of traditional religion (through its "sacramentalism"), the moral rigor ("a way of life") of philosophy, and the supernatural guarantees ("uncompromising assurance") of the mystery cults. To become Christian, then, was to convert in a way that had not been possible before. Once Christianity proves its superiority by inspiring real conversion we begin to see a system in place, the generic category of religion and the specific *exempla* of religions.

The logic behind Nock's system comes into clear view in his chapter on pagan "conversion." In chapter 10, "The Last Phase," Nock explores what he considers the only authentic instances of conversion to "religion of tradition": conversion of Christians to paganism in the third and fourth centuries. Nock's signal example is the Emperor Julian (posthumously "the Apostate") whose transition from "eager Christian" to ardent pagan signals the (momentary) transformation of "religion of tradition" into something closer to "religion as 'all or nothing.'" Unlike earlier Christians who lapsed back into their pagan lives, Julian's transformation is a "result of religious experience," the resolution of a "psychological crisis."[26] The outcome, for Julian (and, Nock allows, perhaps for other fourth-century ex-Christian pagans) is paganism *as a religion*, complete with "those features which had in Christianity been most effective, theological and moral dogma, hierarchical organization, and systematic works of charity and benevolence."[27] This progression – from psychological need, to the "religious experience" of conversion, to a full-blown "theological and dogmatic" religion – mirrors precisely the narrative logic of the rest of *Conversion*. Conversion as a psychological possibility and necessity precedes the religion(s) in which it is realized. Furthermore, conversion brings into view religion in its best sense (Christianity) and the taxonomy of other religions that do not rise to its psychological challenge (including, eventually, paganism).

As I noted above, this assumption of a taxonomic hierarchy of religions, with Christianity as religion's apex and exemplar, was common when Nock wrote *Conversion*. Nock's particular contribution to this taxonomizing endeavor was articulating the conceptual key by which religion (the genus) and religions (the species) make sense: conversion. Nock follows James's lead in envisioning religion as a fundamentally interior and experiential phenomenon. Unlike James, Nock anchors that experiential phenomenon in concrete historical examples and so requires a mechanism that will connect and differentiate those examples.[28] Conversion is that mechanism.

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[26] Nock, *Conversion*, 158.

[27] Nock, *Conversion*, 159.

[28] Evident from the subtitle: William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longmans, Green, 1902) (Lectures IX and X [pp. 189–258] are specifically on conversion). See also Gauri Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 84: "In William James's work the use of 'turning' as a literary trope of transformation from lower

Conversion, as Nock produces it in *Conversion*, connects and differentiates religions from each other. As Nock notes in his concluding pages, "analogies enable us to see … differences more clearly."[29] In a banally literal sense conversion connects religions, as John Doe and Richard Roe (or, in the final chapter, Justin, Arnobius, and Augustine) move from "religion of tradition" to Christian faith. But conversion also provides the psychological metric by which different religions may be assessed and measured, ranked on a hierarchical scale culminating in "religion as 'all or nothing.'" Lesser religions – traditional, exotic, philosophical – try and fail to meet the psychosocial needs of humankind, and so fail to produce the internal reorientation that is conversion. Conversion (the concept) and *Conversion* (the book) naturalize a taxonomy of religious difference that places a Protestantizing, interiorized Christian faith at its pinnacle.

C. Imperial Contexts

While Nock's study dwells entirely in the world of ancient empires, there were larger conversations about conversion and empire taking place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that shed light on his arguments and their contexts. It is worth expanding briefly on these contexts to grasp how Nock's theorization of conversion both draws from but also occludes some of the underlying logics of empire that were naturalized in his day.

In her study of conversion narratives in colonial contexts, Gauri Viswanathan explores the role that a Jamesian psychological readings of conversion played in the articulation of a distinctly "Western" (imperial) consciousness in the twentieth century. According to Viswanathan, James concocted a "fictionalization of religious experience as self-engendered and separable from the authority of law and other institutions."[30] This autonomous self-realization is best suited to particular (Western, Christian) cultural context for James. According to Viswanathan:

If both law and religion (as understood in Christian society) are said to be joined in a common purpose to achieve an undivided community of regenerate persons, it is easy to see why the recovery of an authentic self becomes a necessary fiction for sustaining the symmetry between civil society and Christian religious experience.[31]

That is, the "authentic self" is most suited to, most achievable, and most visible in a Western, Christian context. For James, the politics and power structures of

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to higher mental states … dispenses with the need to engage with history, more specifically with the contradictory aims of societal norms."

[29] Nock, *Conversion*, 267.
[30] Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 84.
[31] Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 86

civil society provide an accommodating context for "Christian religious experience" but have no direct role in its actualization. James's Christianizing rhetoric of conversion effaces the role of states, laws, and politics in the management of religious difference and status change.[32] By turning her gaze from the metropolitan to the colonial context, Viswanathan by contrast finds conversion policing and disciplining fragmentary and hybrid selves, divided precisely at the moment of "conversion" by the politics of empire, race, and ethnicity.[33] Stepping outside of the artificial context of the white Protestant West brings back into view the role of power and politics in mechanisms of conversion and religion.

Nock's deployment of conversion also makes sense within the broader context of personhood naturalized by imperializing assumptions, now explicitly plotted along the evolutionary axes of historical religion. I do not mean that Nock was a secret agent of empire (British or U.S.), stealthily deploying his philological expertise to secure the superiority of white Christianity over non-white colonial subjects. (Nor does Viswanathan claim such a deliberate objective for James.) Quite the opposite: in his narrative of a positivist history of religions through conversion, Nock operates from within a naturalized religious taxonomy "coloured by the nature of Christianity." Similar to James, Nock does not consider in depth the role of state power in the rise of conversion, nor does he take "law and institutions" into account in his analyses of conversion: the three conversions he attends to in detail in the final chapter are all painted in terms of emotion and psychology. Imperial logics operate most effortlessly when they are invisible, even to those reproducing them, as part of an intellectual common sense.

Empires require the organization of difference, typically hierarchalized in such a way as to make their own imperial practices seem reasonable and necessary. *Religion* has, for much of the modern era, been a key mode of imperial organization; indeed, as many scholars have argued, we might say that *religion* as a tool of social organization of difference emerged from and undergirded successive ages of imperialism.[34] When Nock puts forward a history of conversion as the precursor to "religion as 'all or nothing,'" he is in fact theorizing a novel and powerful tool for this imperial management of difference without, perhaps, being aware he is doing it. Nock's conversion (the concept and the book) make possible a particular way of viewing religious difference, of

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[32] Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 88.

[33] See also Laura Salah Nasrallah, "The Rhetoric of Conversion and the Construction of Experience: The Case of Justin Martyr," *StPatr* 40 (2006): 467–474.

[34] Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious"; Masuzawa, *Inventing World Religions*; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); David Chidester, *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

comparing different religions, of affirming the superiority, but congruity, of one religion over others.

D. Empires of Difference: Socrates Scholasticus

Nock's deployment of conversion to taxonomize religious difference has illuminating analogues in late antiquity. Such analogues should not surprise us since late antiquity is precisely the period in which Nock located the emergence of the psychological forces that made conversion possible. I am not arguing that Nock was accurate in his psychological diagnosis of late antiquity (how could one know?). I am arguing that some Christians living under the Roman Empire, particularly once imperial institutions became entangled with Christian ones in the fourth century, also produced naturalized taxonomies of religious difference through the mechanism of conversion. One clear example of this late ancient process is in the *Church History* of Socrates of Constantinople (known as "Scholasticus").

We know nothing about the historian Socrates that is not found in his sole surviving text, the *Church History*, a continuation of the earlier *Church History* of Eusebius of Caesarea.[35] From the *History* we know Socrates lived in the capital city of Constantinople. His sobriquet σχολαστικός, appearing in one manuscript but attached to him by an early editor, probably indicates his erudition and not a career in law as some have assumed. He moved in highly educated, and rather politically and religiously tolerant, social circles in the capital city. He was deeply sympathetic to, if not actually a member of, the disfavored Novatianist sect of Christians, and their Constantinopolitan church plays a prominent place in his account of fifth-century church politics. He wrote approvingly of Christian emperors who secured the political and religious unity of a Christian Roman Empire. Socrates, writing from the vantage point of the imperial capital, structured his history according to the imperial reigns: it is very explicitly a history of the *Christian* Roman Empire. He may have died soon after he completed his history, around 440.[36]

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[35] I cite Socrates from the critical edition of Günther Christian Hansen, ed., *Sokrates: Kirchengeschichte*, GCS n.F. 1 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1995), as printed in Pierre Périchon and Pierre Maraval, trans., *Socrate de Constantinople: Histoire ecclésiastique*, vol. 1: *Livre I*, SC 477 (Paris: Cerf, 2004); vol. 2: *Livres II et III*, SC 493 (2005); vol. 3: *Livres IV–VI*, SC 505 (2006); vol. 4: *Livre VII*, SC 506 (2007). Translations are my own.

[36] On Socrates see Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius*, ThH 46 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 167–189; Martin Wallraff, *Der Kirchenhistoriker Sokrates: Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsdarstellung, Methode, und Person*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 68 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Theresa Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Peter Van

   Lack of secure biography or authorial persona positions Socrates in a manner similar to Nock: an interested but removed historical expert, "coloured by the nature of Christianity" but otherwise (ostensibly) free from polemical or apologetic motives, notably more so than other ancient church historians.[37] I focus on four seemingly unrelated episodes from the final, seventh book of his *Church History* that recount Jews converting to Christianity. (This final book covers thirty-two years of the reign of Theodosius II, from his childhood coronation to the time of Socrates's writing). The *History* as a whole is highly preoccupied with mapping the terrain of religious difference, and these four episodes fit squarely into that preoccupation.[38] I single them out here because they show with special clarity the ways that conversion operates as one mechanism by which Socrates asserts and manages that terrain of difference. Like Nock, Socrates uses conversion to establish and organize a taxonomy of religions in his imperial context. Unlike Nock, Socrates acknowledges the need for power and control – that is, for empire – in the process of conversion and therefore in the maintenance of religious taxonomic boundaries.

   In all four of the episodes, the Jewish conversion to Christianity is either prompted by or requires unnatural intervention. In the first instance (*Hist. eccl.* 7.4.1–5), a chronically ill and paralyzed Jew sought baptism only when all of his other medical and religious options failed: having received the baptism "with unalloyed faith, when he was brought up from the pool of the baptistery, immediately was released from the illness and was in good health for the rest of his days."[39] In the second case (*Hist. eccl.* 7.13.16–17), when all of the Jews were expelled from Alexandria following a pogrom, one of them, named Alexander, fled to Constantinople and found refuge with the orthodox bishop. "Having professed his desire to become Christian," he converted and so was able to move back to Alexandria.[40]

   In the third instance (*Hist. eccl.* 7.17.7–15), a "Jewish cheat" kept getting baptized by bishops of different Constantinopolitan Christian sects and through this deception somehow grew wealthy. Coming at last to Paul, the Novatian

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Nuffelen, *Un heritage de paix et de piété: Étude sur les histoires ecclésiastiques de Socrate et de Sozomène*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 142 (Louvain: Peeters, 2004). On Socrates's erudition and historiographic style, see Alberto J. Quiroga Puertas, "The Literary Connoisseur: Socrates Scholasticus on Rhetoric, Literature, and Religious Orthodoxy," *VC* 69/2 (2015): 109–122.

   [37] See the discussion of Van Nuffelen, *Un héritage de paix et de piété,* 105–118.

   [38] See now the excellent study of Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos, *Constantinople: Ritual, Violence, and Memory in the Making of a Christian Imperial Capital*, Christianity in Late Antiquity 9 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2020), which relies heavily on Socrates in the later chapters and in its overall framing of difference and empire in the capital city.

   [39] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:26–28.

   [40] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:52–54.

bishop, the Jew could not be baptized because the waters of the font kept vanishing. Realizing the Jew had been already baptized (a fact affirmed by the gathered crowd), Paul sent the (ex-?) Jew on his way.[41] Finally, in the most dramatic of the episodes (*Hist. eccl.* 7.38.1–12), the Jews of Crete were duped into following a charlatan claiming to be Moses *redivivus*, who commanded his followers to leap from a promontory. Some Jews died, some stopped before jumping, others who survived the jump were rescued by Christian fishermen. As a result of "this suffering many of the Jews at that time on Crete, having renounced Judaism, joined the faith of Christianity." The *faux* Moses vanished, revealed as "an avenging demon who took human shape."[42]

From our own vantage point, influenced by Nock's Jamesian approach to conversion as a "reorientation of the soul," we might pause to wonder if any of these episodes constitute conversion in Nock's sense: compelled by greed, illness, political circumstance, and demonic suffering, do any of these Jews undergo a dramatic and total reintegration of the self toward a new moral truth ("religion as 'all or nothing'")? Socrates, for his part, does not seem interested in adjudicating the psychological authenticity of these conversions. Even though he does not operate from the same interiorizing, psychologizing logics as Nock, he nonetheless uses narratives of conversion to arrive at an ideologically similar place as Nock: the production of a taxonomy of religious difference in the landscape of empire.

If Socrates is not interested in the psychological authenticity of these conversions, he is nonetheless focused on the strange circumstances that attach to all of them: the miraculous hands of rival bishops (Atticus and Paul), the violence of civic unrest (Alexander), and the deflated aftermath of demonic temptation (the Jews of Crete). These conversions are unsettled and unsettling. These Jewish conversions call attention to the fraught nature of religious boundaries and the need for authoritative – even divine – maintenance of those boundaries. The result of these muddled stories of ex-Jewish Christians is, in fact, the clear separation and hierarchalization of distinct religious groups, including orthodox Christians at one end of the spectrum and "disbelieving Jews" at the other. In between lie various other forms of religious life, Christian and pagan, co-existing in a Christian Roman Empire. As with Nock, it will be useful to step back and ask how Socrates produces a system of religious difference.

Unlike other Christians of the fourth and early fifth centuries, Socrates throughout the *Church History* betrays a notable tolerance for multiple forms of coexistent religious life.[43] What's more, he discusses these disparate forms

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[41] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:62–64.

[42] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:136–138.

[43] By religious toleration I do not mean an approval of religions often ascribed to Enlightenment theory but rather a political strategy of management (which may also in some sense accurately describe Enlightenment "toleration"). The distinction is made clearly by Peter Garnsey, "Religious Toleration in Classical Antiquity," in *Persecution and Toleration:*

of religious life in comparable terms, often referring to them with the Greek θρησκεία. In book 3, when treating Julian's apostasy, Socrates discusses "Greek religion" (Ἕλλην ... θρησκείαν [*Hist. eccl.* 3.1.15]);[44] in book 5, he mentions a law of the emperor Gratian "granting freedom to the religions" (ἄδειαν ταῖς θρησκείαις [*Hist. eccl.* 5.4.2]).[45] Socrates also includes rival forms of Christianity among the various "religions" coexisting in the Christian Roman Empire, as in an excursus on Christian ritual diversity in book 5 when the author bemoans that "it is impossible, anywhere at all, among all the θρησκεῖαι, to find two that agree with each other on the matter of prayers" (*Hist. eccl.* 5.22.57).[46]

Socrates's use of a common term to describe these various forms of religious life – pagans, orthodox, Macedonians, Arians, Novatians, and so on – signals how he brings them into a comparative system. Like Nock, Socrates assumes that Christianity – uniquely among these religious options – represents the actual truth of religion, although he is somewhat cagey on *which* of the many flavors of Christianity that embrace the Nicene creed of Trinitarian consubstantiality is correct. Nonetheless, it is clear that some forms of θρησκεία are inferior even though they belong to the same generic category. The heresiologist Epiphanius, writing a generation before Socrates, distinguished orthodox Christianity absolutely from everything else, and those instances of "everything else," from pagan philosophy to Judaism to Arians and Macedonians, he called "heresies."[47] Socrates also uses the term "heresy," but more as an inflection of a type of Christian θρησκεία. His plural religious world is not simply divided into "right" and "wrong" but rather into multiple types of attempts to approach God.[48] Most of them miss the mark, some more than others. What is

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Papers Read at the Twenty-Second Summer Meeting and the Twenty-Third Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical Historical Society, ed. W. J. Sheils, SCH 21 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 1–27.

[44] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 493:248.

[45] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 505:156.

[46] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 505:232. I use the term "orthodox" to refer to the imperially supported form of Christianity which was, from the 380s onward, aligned with the theological of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE). Notably Socrates does not use this terminology, and I briefly discuss his fuzziness on which Christianity is "correct" below. My thanks to Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos for pointing out Socrates's terminological preferences (private correspondence).

[47] On Epiphanius's heresiological schema, see Young Richard Kim, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodox World* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2015); Todd Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

[48] Echoing the pagan aristocrat Symmachus in the late fourth century who complained to the Christian emperor Gratian upon Gratian's removal of the Altar of Victory: "One cannot arrive at so great a mystery by a single path" (*Relatio* 3.10, ed. and trans. R. H. Barrow, *Prefect and Emperor: The* Relationes *of Symmachus, AD 384* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1973], 40).

important, for Socrates, is that their diversity be peacefully maintained. Socrates conveys to his reader an interconnected and hierarchialized taxonomy of religious forms of life. That is, we see in Socrates's writings a system of *religions*.

Ancient historians have struggled to determine if there is a concept in the ancient Mediterranean equivalent to a modern notion of "religion" and, if so, if it can be identified terminologically. The most recent consensus to both questions is "no":[49] there is nothing like a separable, interiorized notion of "religion" in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, where devotion to particular gods (to use Paula Fredriksen's memorable phrase) "runs in the blood."[50] For much of antiquity, the relationship between humans and the divine was inseparable from political, ethnic, or cultural forms of communal life. To translate a term such as θρησκεία as "religion" therefore risks anachronistically imposing modern ideas about self and religion on a starkly different ancient context.[51]

I agree with all of this critique, to a point. The *content* of the modern notion of religion underlying the work of Nock and relying on a highly individualized, psychologized idea about "faith," is a fundamentally modern, Protestant invention. Nonetheless I do agree with other historians of the period that it is precisely in late antiquity that we see what Seth Schwartz has called the "disembedding" of religion "as a discrete category of human experience."[52] To be clear, I do not argue that Socrates and Nock would define religion the same way. Socrates's conception of θρησκεία is much more focused on outward expressions of faith and ritual than Nock's psychologizing view of religion.[53] But what we see happening in Socrates's fifth-century text is the emergence of a taxonomic system of communities that can be compared, and between which one can move, a system that is not coterminous with, but analogous to ἔθνος or

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[49] Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), is an ancient historian (specifically a paleographer) who makes this argument cogently.

[50] Paula Fredriksen, "Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time to Go Has Come," *SR* 35/2 (2006): 231–246, 232 and 238, may be the earliest occasion on which she deploys this phrase.

[51] On θρησκεία as "religion" (or not) see Carlin Barton and Daniel Boyarin, *Imagine No Religion: How Modern Abstractions Hide Ancient Realities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 123–210; Falcasantos, *Constantinople*, 20–21; and Simon Goldhill, *Preposterous Poetics: The Politics and Aesthetics of Form in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 155–157 (specifically in a discussion of conversion). My thanks to Kate Cooper for the Goldhill reference.

[52] Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society From 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179; see also idem, "How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization," *JSJ* 2/2 (2011): 208–238, esp. 228–238.

[53] Falcasantos, *Constantinople*, 17–26.

βασιλεία or γένος. Socrates maps out this system in his *History*, locating it in his notion of empire.[54]

Indeed, Socrates's system of religions is central to his understanding of empire, and vice versa: the religious system is critical to understanding how empire should function and empire is critical to the logic of this religious system. Socrates insists that these diverse types of θρησκεία should coexist without threat of violent exclusion, even more than he insists on any single version of Christianity being "orthodox."[55] Just as he praises Theodosius II for refusing to apply the death penalty, even for capital offenses (*Hist. eccl.* 7.22.9–10), so too Socrates praises good bishops who tolerate diverse kinds of Christian and non-Christian θρησκεῖαι in their territories and condemns bad bishops who do not. Book 7 alone contains several stories of "bad" bishops who violently drive out rival Christian and non-Christian groups. Theodosius of Synada (in Phrygia) "eagerly persecuted the heretics there, driving them not only out of the city but out of those regions."[56] Socrates sternly notes that this practice was "not customary for bishops in the orthodox church" and specifies further that Theodosius acted out of greed rather than piety (*Hist. eccl.* 7.3.1–2).[57] When Socrates notes that Anastasius was the first bishop of Rome to persecute the Novatians and confiscate their churches, he remarks in the very next sentence that "Rome was taken by barbarians," suggesting a causal link between the two events (*Hist. eccl.* 7.9.2–10.1). Socrates's own city of Constantinople stands as a model of religious pluralism. While the episcopacies of Rome and Alexandria are degraded by "tyrannical rule" (δυναστεία), emblematized by the exclusion of non-orthodox Christians,[58] the bishops of Constantinople "with affection" allowed dissident voices "to assemble in the city" (*Hist. eccl.* 7.11.4–6).[59]

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[54] The link between the system of religions and empire is affirmed by two stories in *Hist. eccl.* 7 set outside the Roman Empire: *magoi* (Persian priests) who try to turn the Persian king against a visiting Christian (Roman) bishop (*Hist. eccl.* 7.8) and the story of the Burgundian "barbarians" who seek out the protection of "some God" and settle on the Christian (Roman) God (*Hist. eccl.* 7.30). In both cases something comparable to Roman θρησκεῖαι is lacking.

[55] For a very different view of the role of coercion, empire, and religious difference, Socrates's older contemporary Augustine provides the signal example: see, classically, Peter Brown, "St. Augustine's Attitude to Religious Coercion," *JRS* 54/1–2 (1964): 107–116, and more recently Geoffrey Dunn, "Discipline, Coercion, and Correction: Augustine against the Violence of the Donatists in *Epistula* 185," *Scrinium* 13/1 (2017): 114–130.

[56] Falcasantos, *Constantinople*, 17–18, discusses this report.

[57] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:24.

[58] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:40–42. Socrates is also censorious of intolerance against Jews and pagans: see his discussion of the lynching of Hypatia and the expulsion of the Jews by Cyril in Alexandria (*Hist. eccl.* 7.13–15).

[59] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:46. The one exception in Book 7 proving the rule of Constantinopolitan tolerance is Nestorius, whose elimination of heretics reveals his "irascible and vainglorious" personality, for which he will suffer later (*Hist. eccl.* 7.29.6,

Of course, toleration for Socrates does not suggest equality.[60] His coda on the story of the Synadian Theodosius's impetuous and greedy persecution of all the heretics in his city is revealing on this score. Unsatisfied with the limitations on his ability persecute these groups, Theodosius went to secure more power from the Praetorian Prefect in Constantinople. During his absence, the Macedonian bishop Agapetus summoned together his clergy and, after some discussion, they all agreed to embrace the Nicene creed of consubstantiality (Macedonians denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit). When Theodosius returned, he found Agapetus calmly occupying the city's episcopal chair: "he united the people and exercised control over all the other churches of Synada." Theodosius tried to appeal to Atticus, bishop of Constantinople, but was turned away; Agapetus's orthodox control of the episcopacy was affirmed. It is clear from this story that Socrates is quite pleased with conversion from a worse to a better form of religious life; the best medium for encouraging those conversions is the peaceful and relatively tolerant space of a well-run Christian Roman Empire.

What's more, we see from this story that *conversion*, the well-regulated movement from one type of θρησκεία to another, is the mechanism that allows Socrates to articulate the delineation and operation of this system more clearly. Agapetus and his Macedonian coreligionists do not one day realize they are the same as their orthodox brethren, and so start attending the orthodox church. They make a clear (albeit unexplained) choice to alter their creed, accepting the Nicene formulation of ὁμοούσιος. This change brings them into alignment with a different Christian θρησκεία, both intellectually and physically. They have gone from Macedonian to Nicene. Religious status transformation affirms – or, we might even say, creates – the distinction between the two groups at the same time as it affirms their commensurability. The peripheral role of the imperial capital in this story, both in the (inappropriate) religious intervention of the Praetorian Prefect and the (appropriate) intervention of the orthodox bishop Atticus, locates the structural role of conversion squarely in Socrates's ideal Roman *imperium*.

Let's return now to our four conversion narratives of ex-Jewish Christians. How do these conversions contribute to Socrates's efforts to delineate a smooth and well-managed taxonomic system of religions in a smooth and well-managed Christian Roman Empire? Certainly, they differ a great deal from the practically frictionless conversion of Agapetus and the Macedonians. These conversions occur at the more troubling boundary between Judaism and (ortho-

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12, ed. ibid. 506:108); by contrast his successor Proclus is more typical of Constantinopolitan bishops, who preferred "to care rather than use force" and so left heresies in the city unmolested (*Hist. eccl.* 7.41.5–6, ed. ibid., 144).

[60] On the colonial roots and neocolonial echoes of "religious pluralism" in the West, see Masuzawa, *Inventing World Religions*.

dox) Christianity.[61] They are troubling not because the sincerity of the converts is in question; they are troubling because they require much more direct, even forceful management of the boundary between religions than we saw with Agapetus and the Macedonians. In all four cases, this focus on the difficult management of boundary-crossing draws attention to the role of power in conversion for securing the distinctness and commensurability of religious groups.

In two cases, divine intervention must be brought to bear to ensure the effectiveness of conversion to Christianity. Socrates assures us that the paralyzed Jew went into the baptismal font "with unalloyed faith" (εἰλικρινεῖ πίστει), but also tells us that the Jew "fled to Christian baptism as his last resort" (τέλος προσφεύγει τῷ Χριστιανικῷ βαπτίσματι). The unlikeliness of a Jew seamlessly crossing over to Christian orthodoxy is underscored by the coda to the story: "Christ's power wanted to show this curative ability even in our own times, and through it a lot of pagans (Ἕλληνες) came to believe and were baptized; but these signs that occurred did not attract Jews even though they were 'seeking signs' (1 Cor 1:22)" (*Hist. eccl.* 7.4.1–5).[62] The default setting of Jews remains disbelief and stubbornness. Without the divine intervention of God, not only relieving the illness but presumably also inflicting it in the first place, this Jew would not likely have become an orthodox Christian.

Likewise, the unnamed fraudulent Jew must have his Nicene Christian baptism affirmed through a miracle at the Novatian baptismal font (*Hist. eccl.* 7.17.8).[63] Again, the point of the story for Socrates seems not to be the sincerity or insincerity of the conversion, since the Novatian bishop affirms that the orthodox baptism did, in fact, make the Jew into a Christian.[64] Rather the point is the troubling nature of this particular conversion, and the divine intervention required to expose it.

The other two incidents are prompted not by divine intervention but by wicked, even demonic, activity. Socrates is unequivocal in his disapproval of Cyril's expulsion of Alexandria's Jews (although he makes clear that he finds the Jews equally responsible for the urban unrest that led to it [*Hist. eccl.*

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[61] This troubling Jewish-Christian boundary breaks into the text elsewhere in Book 7, for example at the attempts by the ex-Jewish Novatian Christian Sabbatius to convince his fellow Novatianists to celebrate the Jewish Passover (*Hist. eccl.* 7.5) and the infamous story of the lynching of a Christian child by Jews at Inmestar (*Hist. eccl.* 7.16).

[62] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:26–28.

[63] That no such miracle occurred at the Arian or Macedonian baptism shows Socrates's preference for Nicene forms of Christianity, among which he includes Novatian Christians: Falcasantos, *Constantinople*, 124.

[64] Socrates may also be attempting to show that Novatianist Christians in the fifth century do not require or approve of the rebaptism of non-Novatianists, an accusation made in earlier generations against the sect: see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.7 (citing an earlier letter but included in a section on heretical baptismal practices). If Socrates has this apologetic purpose in mind it affirms even more the validity of the nameless Jew's prior baptism and conversion.

7.13]). That this violence prompts the conversion of Adamantius the physician, baptized by the Nicene bishop of Constantinople, seems perhaps a silver lining in this sordid tale of city-wide bloodshed (*Hist. eccl.* 7.13.17). The story of the Jews of Crete is the most bizarre, particularly because we are not told why their deception at the hands of the "avenging demon" led them to convert.[65] Socrates reports: "Because of this suffering (πάθος), many of the Jews at that time on Crete, having renounced Judaism (χαίρειν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ φράσαντες), joined the faith of Christianity (τῇ πίστει τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ)" (*Hist. eccl.* 7.38.12).[66] Two things are notable in this formulation. First, the explicit parallel between Ἰουδαϊσμός and Χριστιανισμός, as commensurate entities which can be renounced (literally, "bid farewell") and joined. Second, the enormity of the circumstances it took to arrive at such a conversion: the near wholesale supernatural slaughter of the island's Jewish population. Conversion narratives establish two groups as parallel and commensurate by recounting movement from one group to the other. For Socrates, this structural role of conversion in creating a taxonomic system is analogous, *mutatis mutandis*, to the role of conversion in Nock. The particularly troubling nature of *Jewish* conversion adds nuance to Socrates's deployment of this systemic tool. Jews function for Socrates as the limit test for the ability of conversion to secure distinction and commensurability between religious groups. Jews cannot, like the serene Macedonian Christians of Synada, have a quiet meeting and simply become Nicene Christians. External forces – God's hand, urban riots, an avenging demon – tip the scales for the religious group always "seeking signs" but never heeding them.

The point of a taxonomic system of religions, for Socrates as well as Nock, is not only to naturalize the category of "religion" – in Socrates's case, a particularly efficacious ritual and liturgical relationship with the divine – but to classify and stratify the different members of that category. Some religions are true, more efficacious, closer to the divine will than others. Heretical forms of Christianity, philosophical modes of paganism, Judaism, all stand in a comparative relationship to superior forms of Christianity for Socrates. By staging scenes portraying the special difficulty of one particular kind of conversion, from Jew to Christian, Socrates underscores that management and control over this system of religions and transitions is vital. All of these difficult conversions *are* managed, eventually. The system of imperial-orthodox management works, even – especially – on its most recalcitrant participants.

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[65] On this incident see Ross S. Kraemer, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity: What It Cost the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 353–356, who suggests an apocalyptic impulse behind the Jews' attachment to the false Moses, and perhaps conversion prompted by apocalyptic disappointment; in this view she expands upon Pieter W. van der Horst, "The Jews of Ancient Crete," *JJS* 39 (1988): 183–200, 189–194.

[66] Ed. Hansen, in Périchon and Maraval, SC 506:138.

E. Conclusion: Jews and the Limits of *Conversion*

I have focused on the conversion of Jews to Christianity in my discussion of Socrates because these particular conversions show the necessary link between the power (and for Socrates power always hearkens back to empire) and the emerging taxonomy of religious difference. These difficult conversions require external, even supernatural force to be effective because conversion in empire always requires management; successful conversion under empire shows the importance of imperial management.[67] Having used my reading of Nock as a springboard to unspool Socrates's rhetorics of conversion, let me know turn the tables and ask: How might we make sense of Nock's contradictory discussions of Jews and Judaism in *Conversion*?

Both Socrates and Nock, I would say, are troubled by Jews and Judaism and their genealogical and conceptual proximity to Christians and Christianity. In this troubled state, of course, they are hardly alone in the history of Christian thinkers.[68] The first Christians were Jews and that original Jewishness haunts Christianity whenever it seeks to draw a clear distinction between the two groups. At some extreme moments in the history of Christianity, the solution is simple: to completely disentangle the two, to disavow *any* connection between true and authentic Christianity and Judaism. In a world of stark truth and falsehood, the perceived error of Judaism can be more safely separated from Christianity.[69]

Socrates and Nock, however, are not operating in a world of stark division but one of taxonomic systematization. In their respective imperial contexts, the management of difference takes priority over the elimination of difference. Jews and Judaism *must* exist in some relationship to Christians and Christianity because *all* religions much exist in some relationship to Christians and Christianity. Socrates uses Jewish conversion to outline more explicitly the need for

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[67] I have discussed these issues previously in the writings of Epiphanius in "Matters (Un-)Becoming: Conversion in Epiphanius of Salamis," *CH* 81/1 (2012): 27–47; and *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity*, Christianity in Late Antiquity 2 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 65–96.

[68] David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York: Norton, 2013), attempts a broad synthesis focused mainly on Christianity.

[69] The signal example of this extreme division is Marcionite Christianity, which posited that the God of Israel and the Old Testament was utterly distinct from and inferior to the saving Father of Christ (see, most recently on Marcion, Judith Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015]). For a modern racialized formulation of Marcionism, see Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Manichean Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries also sharply divided the two religions and (according to Paula Fredriksen) inadvertently inspired Augustine's novel theology of Jews and Judaism: *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

control and management: Jews, as the troublesome limit case of religious conversion, show the need for empire's strong hand. Politics and religion are not distinct for Socrates, but operate in tandem.

Nock, however, follows in William James's footsteps by effacing the role of politics and power in conversion and religion; in Viswanathan's terms, Nock also conceives of "religious experience as self-engendered and separable from the authority of law and other institutions." As a consequence, Nock has difficulty facing head on the perennially challenging case of Jews in a Christian taxonomy. He frames Judaism in his introduction as one of the "prophetic religions," along with Buddhism and Zoroastrians, for whom (in theory but apparently not practice) true conversion is possible. Later Judaism appears briefly, among other "Oriental" religions that fail to inspire true conversion. Finally, the "withering of Jewish-Christianity" makes room for the rise of a decidedly gentile Christianity, a church of the martyrs that will also be (in his taxonomic system) a church triumphant. Without Socrates's ability to see the role of power in religion, Nock cannot or will not seek to solve the problem of Judaism's troubling proximity to Christianity. The best he can do, it seems, is shuffle Judaism around in his system, at various removes from the possibility of "religion as 'all or nothing.'" Judaism haunts Nock's systematic, psychological approach to conversion and the religious system that depends upon it. In the world of *Conversion*, a world "coloured by the nature of Christianity," Jews are a ghost in the machine.