

the Church within a society which was experiencing dramatic and constant political and religious changes. The fourth chapter examines the activities of the Angelics, the Barnabites, the Somascans and the Ursulines within the thorny context of Italian reformism, and how, in some cases, they sought to converge on the ideas proposed by the most prominent figures within the circles of Evangelism and Spiritualism. The fifth chapter examines how, in the second half of the sixteenth century, the reforming orders underwent a series of seminal changes which would alter their physiognomy. At the same time the chapter explores how the ideas of Battista da Crema, and in part those of Merici and Miani, managed to survive in the years following the Council of Trent.

Mazzonis's book offers a vivid and well-researched investigation of the intellectual and religious ferment which characterised the reforming orders of the Italian Peninsula during a period which was polarised by the spread of Lutheranism and the orthodoxy of the Catholic Reformation. By focusing on the key – but hard to decode – concepts of devotion, salvation and spiritualism, the author sheds lights on the inner mechanisms which regulated the life of the reforming orders and how their agenda was much freer and more inclusive than that elaborated by the traditional Tridentine orders like the Jesuits or the Oratorians. Overall, Mazzonis's book is a welcome and much awaited analysis. It will finally explain to both established and young scholars how the concept and practice of reforms of Christian life in the sixteenth-century Italian peninsula was more extremely articulated and fluid than the traditional historiography on the Catholic Reformation had previously taught.

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*Catholic spectacle and Rome's Jews. Early modern conversion and resistance.*

By Emily Michelson. Pp. xvi + 333 incl. 11 ills. Princeton–Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022. £30. 978 0 691 21133 6

*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046923000726

Emily Michelson has produced a timely and important intervention on the subject of the Catholic Church's efforts to convert Jews in early modern Rome. Jews, perhaps surprisingly to some, were one of Rome's oldest constituencies: the eternal city was Europe's only site where they had remained in continuous residence since antiquity. Popes had often protected the Jewish communities under their rule, implicitly accepting Augustine's 'doctrine of Jewish witness'. However, both the numbers of Jews in Rome and the apparent importance attached to converting them changed during the course of the sixteenth century. Jews expelled from Iberia began to resettle on Italian shores, sometimes to the chagrin of others whose residence there had been longstanding. At the same time, the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe and the discovery of new lands and peoples far beyond it radicalised the Catholic Church in profound ways. Preaching and proselytising were in – and church careers were built around the success with which ambitious individuals mastered their techniques. They could also be built around narratives of miraculous success at achieving conversions. Rome, as the self-styled *caput mundi* at the Church's centre, naturally became – in Michelson's own useful term – a 'clearinghouse' for all this (p. 34). The city's Jews

became a mirror image of the Protestant heretics beyond it: a highly visible reminder of Christianity's lack of unity. However, they were also, like Rome's prostitutes, a necessary evil which it was advantageous to cultivate as a receptacle for containing society's financial impurities and sexual excess (p. 151). Either way, they were legitimate targets for preachers to harangue and hone their skills on – and those preachers all too often competed to outdo each other in pious zeal.

The major argument Michelson prosecutes in this book is highly persuasive: conversionary preaching to Rome's Jews was not really about Jews at all. Sure, such an audience of potential converts was an entirely requisite part of the conversionary preacher's habitus and apparatus. Jews were accordingly paraded from their confines in the ghetto to the Church of Santissima Trinità dei Pellegrini every Saturday (Pius IX finally abolished this coercive practice in 1847). And yet the sermons to which Jews were subjected were by no means intended to persuade: their standard formula involved high level doctrinal disputation about theological arcana. At least they were not all about the depravity of Jewish rituals and customs or the blood libel and other conspiracisms – so, in that respect, Rome's antisemitism was at least a more cerebral, intellectual version than the still more revolting versions which flourished in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe or Iberia. And yet Rome's conversionary preachers, *via* rhetoric which certainly constituted hate speech, still put the full banality of antisemitic evil very much on display. One irony is that many of these preachers were themselves converts from Judaism – the rewards for such conversion were significant but the demands of continuously proving loyalty to Christ as a former Jew perhaps even more so. A successful 'Preacher to the Jews' – there was an official post – could hope to go on to a prestigious university career, typically as a scholar of Hebrew. Michelson's third chapter sets out the career paths open to such men and the tendencies towards self-fashioning and self-promotion which many of them displayed. Michelson is also highly effective when applying work on the general historiography of early modern conversion to such cases as the Jewish convert poacher-turned-gamekeeper preachers. She emphasises conversion as an ongoing life-long process of internalisation – and therefore how conversion from Judaism to Christianity was seen only as a first step, and not even necessarily as the most celebrated step. Jewish women who converted and then entered the cloister were thus lauded more for the latter than the former act (p. 25).

Attention to detail, rhetorical composure and archival resourcefulness are some of Michelson's many undoubted strengths as an author. She has an eye for the vivid. Witness her description of the gut-wrenching trick by which the friar Giovanni Domenico Nazzareno stole two of Prospero di Tullio Serampino's children away for Christ (pp. 17–18) or the story with which she begins her introduction: the odious preacher Melchior Palontrotti's juvenile attempts to disrupt the funeral of Rabbi Tranquillo Corcos the Elder (d. late 1640s) by shadowing his funeral cortege with a second procession in which the coffin contained a live and squealing pig (pp. 1–2). Tranquillo Corcos the Younger (1660–1730), who was the first and most significant Jewish leader in Rome to protest and push back against such indignities, in fact emerges in the book's final chapter as something of a hero. Michelson does not shy away from acknowledging the extent of 'carnival' violence against Jews. However, in general, she eschews moralising

over the naked obscenity of the incidents she describes. This self-restraint is admirable, on one level, and situates her historiographically. On the other hand, it limits her willingness to engage with David Kertzer's provocative thesis about the links between older ecclesiastical antisemitisms (such as those on display throughout this book) and the still darker, more destructive antisemitisms of the twentieth century's totalitarian societies. For an author who claims that 'early modern Catholicism cannot be understood without reference to these Jews and this spectacle' (p. 9), Michelson might also have gone further in spelling out the implications for that. The hand of Simon Ditchfield is strong in her characterisation of Catholicism's global and essentially missionary nature. However, I wondered where she would situate her conception of it as highly communal and ritualised in relation to John Bossy's older arguments about Christianity's transformation into a personal faith of conscience. Such quibbles are, however, minor. This is an outstanding book.

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*Itē missa est. Ritual interactions around mass in Chinese society (1583–1720)*. By Hongfan Yang. (Studies in the History of Christianity in East Asia, 7.) Pp. xii + 325 incl. 10 colour and black-and-white figs and 6 tables. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2022. €100. 978 90 04 49957 7; 2542 3681  
*JEH* (74) 2023; doi:10.1017/S0022046923000866

Through her book Hongfan Yang has provided an important contribution to our understanding of missionary interaction with Chinese society and the development of the Chinese Church in the earlier missionary period. Scholarship has slowly moved further away from the missionary actors and has shifted from a Eurocentric to a Sinocentric study of Chinese Christianity. This book fits well into this development through its focus on ritual and mass. This book is particularly interesting as it takes a step back to the first period of the missionary arrival in China with a focus on the early Jesuits as it explores 'the diverse and dynamic interaction of both Christianization in Chinese society and Sinicization of Catholic rituals' (p. 5).

Yang's book engages with this theme throughout five major sections focusing on different aspects of worship in the Christian Church in China. The first two sections focus on ritual and purpose of worship. An interesting point related to inculturation was in the discussion around the use of 'heaven (tian/天)' and the 'To Revere Heaven' tablet even after Pope Innocent x condemned its usage. Yang reports that some individuals like Michael Fernandez-Oliver only required a change to 'To Revere the Lord of Heaven' (p. 18). She notes that some were afraid that not using it might 'prevent them from approaching Catholicism' (p. 18). However, Charles Maigrot, the Vicar Apostolic of Fujian, forbade its usage in the Church and any tablet with them, even suspending two Jesuits who ignored his wishes. In the end, this led to conflict with the local Chinese Catholics (pp. 19–20). Yang concludes that the efforts to bring together the Lord of Heaven and the Chinese concept of heaven was one component leading to the inculturation of Christianity in Chinese society.