Christian–Muslim relations developed significantly in a number of areas during the encounter of European Christians with Muslims in the Mughal Empire in South Asia, beginning in the sixteenth century. Initially, the encounter was military, as the Portuguese arrived with the intention of taking control of the spice trade in the Indian Ocean, which had previously been dominated by Muslim traders. However, because the Mughals had no ambitions to control the seas and because the Portuguese likewise made no efforts to conquer the subcontinent, relations transformed from military confrontations to trade agreements in the economic sphere. With the decline of Mughal authority in the eighteenth century, the encounter once more became a political and military contest as European nations such as France and Britain sought to expand their influence and control. By the end of the Mughal dynasty in 1857, the British Empire had established itself as dominant, leading Muslim scholars to debate whether India had ceased to be dār al-Islām (domain of Islam) and had become dār al-ḥarb (domain of war).

The encounter between Christians and Muslims had other theological dimensions beyond the status of India in Muslim law. With the arrival of Roman Catholic missionaries in the late sixteenth century, Jesuit priests debated with Muslim scholars in the courts of Mughal rulers such as Akbar and Jahāngīr, addressing many of the doctrinal issues that had been debated centuries earlier in Baghdad in the ʿAbbasid era. The arrival of Protestant missionaries in the eighteenth century brought a new voice, one that grew more strident as the missionary presence expanded rapidly in the early nineteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, Muslim scholars had been drawn into discussion both in print and in public debate. The fact that the religion of the British conquerors was Christian meant that these encounters had a significance beyond abstract matters of theology. Interconnected with the theological debate was rapid increase of knowledge about each other’s religion, particularly regarding the sources of authority for each group. Muslims studied German and English works on the textual criticism of the Bible, and Christians studied Arabic and Persian works on the Qur’ān, on the Hadith, and on the life of Muhammad more generally. Both groups would use their new-found knowledge in their interactions with each other, whether these were confrontational or conciliatory.

The acquisition of knowledge about the other extended beyond the realm of theological encounters. An increased knowledge of Muslim law in particular was essential for British rule in South Asia. Owing to their declared commitment to continue to administer Muslim law to the Muslims, members of the East India Company collaborated with indigenous scholars to translate
and transform traditional Muslim jurisprudence into an amalgam known as Anglo-Mohammedan law. This coincided with other Orientalist research by Europeans at the close of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, resulting in the publication of edited or translated volumes of key texts of Muslim scholarship. Concurrently, some Muslim scholars were fascinated with European knowledge, particularly in the fields of mathematics and science, and worked to translate works into Persian or vernacular languages. Other cultural encounters also occurred, affecting both art and architecture. Nor was this interaction restricted to South Asia; increasingly Indian Muslims travelled across the seas to Britain and other European destinations, transforming Christian–Muslim relations in the metropolis as well as on the periphery.

**The coming of the Portuguese**

While the temptation to interpret the history of Christian–Muslim relations in light of current political tensions tends to result in an over-simplification of the encounter either in terms of confrontation or conciliation, depending on one’s ideological orientation, the reality is more complex and variegated. Likewise, even the categories of ‘Christian’ and ‘Muslim’ need further elaboration to reflect accurately the diversity within each community. For example, it must be recognised that Christians had been present in South Asia for centuries prior to the Portuguese arrival. The St Thomas Christians trace their history back to the missionary work of Thomas the Apostle of Jesus Christ. Historical evidence indicates that from the sixth century onwards these communities of Christians received ecclesiastical supervision from the Church of the East in Persia and sometimes also received Christian emigrants from Persia (Mundadan 1984: 98–106). Roman Catholic clergy began to visit India as early as the late thirteenth century with the arrival of John of Montecorvino, who was on his way to China. Another group of Christians was the Armenians, who had visited India as merchants and traders but appear to have settled in India only in the second half of the sixteenth century, when they were invited to do so by the Mughal emperor Akbar (Neill 1984: 384–6).

The Muslims who dominated trade on the Indian Ocean at the time of the Portuguese arrival likewise were very diverse in ethnic background, political affiliation and religious practice. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Mughals had not yet begun to establish their dominance in India, nor had the Safavids consolidated their rule in Persia. Perhaps the Muslim dynasty exercising the most influence in the Indian Ocean at that point was the Mamlūk dynasty in Egypt, but even so there was considerable variety in the local rulers, port cities and trading alliances that controlled the maritime trade (Subrahmanyam 1997: 95–109). Nevertheless, Vasco da Gama and other Portuguese invaders did consider the religious identity of the rulers and merchants to be significant, because not only had they come with the intention of creating a monopoly of the spice trade, they had also been motivated by crusading zeal against Muslims in their explorations and conquests along the coast of Africa and beyond (Boxer 1969: 18–38). By 1510, the Portuguese had established their State of India at the port of Goa and, through military conquest or diplomacy, set about exercising control over maritime trade in the region. One example of the resistance they encountered is that of Malik Ayaz, the Muslim ruler of the port city of Diu, who initially allied himself with the commander of the Mamlūk fleet sent from Egypt to challenge the Portuguese and subsequently sought the help of the Ottomans, who were shortly to dominate the Middle East. In his correspondence, he too expresses the conflict in religious terms, referring to the invaders variously as Naṣūrā (Christians), ṭaʿīfa-yi kaḏara (community of infidels), firangiyān (Franks) and ahl-i Rūm (People of Rum, or Byantines) (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 39–50). Thus, while the diversity of communities cannot be reduced simply to ‘Christians’ and ‘Muslims’, these religious identities did play an important role in how each group perceived the other.
Jesuit missionaries and Muslim rulers

Although military and political conflict dominated the early phase of the encounter between Portuguese Christians and various Muslims groups in India, more overtly religious encounters soon followed. Franciscan priests began arriving with some of the earliest expeditions, not only to minister to the needs of the European sailors and settlers but also to seek the conversion of the indigenous peoples (Mundadan 1984: 355–77). The first Jesuits, led by Francis Xavier, arrived in India in 1542, working primarily among various Christian communities but also beginning to proselytise among the Hindus. However, beginning with a local Muslim ruler’s invitation to the Jesuit priests to visit his court to discuss religious matters in the late 1550s, a new chapter in Christian–Muslim relations began. ‘Alī ʿĀdil Shāh, Sultan of Bijapur, repeatedly requested to the Archbishop of Goa to send two or three learned padres who would converse with him and debate with Muslim scholars. In response, three priests, including a Jesuit and a Dominican, were sent along with a Christian merchant to the sultan’s court. When admitted to the sultan’s presence, the priests presented him with a Bible and a copy of Thomas Aquinas’ Summa contra Gentiles. In return, they received robes of honour and accompanying headdresses. Religious discussion, however, was limited to a series of questions asked by the sultan regarding laws of Christian practice, disappointing the priests, who had come prepared to discuss doctrinal beliefs (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 251–5). The incident signifies the revival of the munāẓara or formal religious debate that had been prevalent between Christians, Muslim and representatives of other faiths in the ʿAbbasid era and prefigures subsequent encounters with Mughal rulers that were much more extensive and substantial.

The Mughal dynasty was initiated by Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur, a Chagatai Turk from Central Asia who decisively defeated the Muslim sultan of Delhi at the Battle of Panipat in 1526. Bābur’s grandson Akbar came to the throne in 1556 and ruled for the next 49 years, consolidating an empire in northern India. Beginning with Akbar’s reign, increasing numbers of Armenian merchants who had been based in Persia began to settle in India, some rising to posts of considerable responsibility in the Mughal court (Aslanian 2011: 47–52). In particular, Mirza Zul Qarnain is mentioned in both Muslim and Christian accounts as having been accorded privileges and responsibilities during the reigns of Akbar and Jahāngīr (Seth 1937: 1–87). It was also an Armenian from the court of Akbar who was sent to Goa with the invitation for Christian priests to come to the court and who would act as interpreter; he would later accompany a third Jesuit mission to Akbar as well (Seth 1937: 88–91).

Akbar’s request resulted in a delegation of two priests arriving in Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar’s capital at the time, in 1580. As in Bijapur, the Christians made a gift of the Christian scriptures, this time in the form of a polyglot Bible bound in seven volumes. Subsequent efforts by the priests to learn the Persian language led to the translation of portions of the Gospel. In public audiences, the debates covered the familiar topics of the reliability and authority of the Bible versus the Qurʾān, Jesus as the Son of God, Muḥammad as the Prophet of God, the death of Jesus the Messiah, and the Trinity. But the interest that Akbar showed in the Christian religion and the favour he showed to the priests led them to anticipate his conversion to Christianity. He frequently gave them private audiences in which he asked further questions about Christian beliefs and practices. He also appointed one of the priests, Antonio Monserrate, to tutor his son and provided a room which the priests transformed into a chapel, with a nativity scene and a statue of the Virgin Mary (Hoyland and Banerjee 1922: 37–60). Eventually, though, they concluded that he was not interested in converting to Christianity and considered their efforts to have failed. Two subsequent visits followed a similar pattern.

Akbar’s interest in religious discussions was not limited to Christianity and the Jesuits, but included Hindus, Jains, Zoroastrians and diverse Muslim groups. He established the ʿĪbādat Khāna
or Prayer Hall, where representatives of the various sects and faiths would meet in his presence and debate religious topics. In 1582, Akbar initiated the *Tawḥīd-i Ilāhī* or Divine Unity, which the Jesuit priests interpreted as the starting of a new religion and which certain members of the scholarly Muslim class interpreted as heresy. However, this could also be seen as entirely consistent with that strand of Islam practised by Sufis and philosophers which gave freer rein to reason and intuition in interpreting revelation for the purpose of legislation (Pirbhai 2009: 71–89). Akbar's other actions in assuming the prerogatives of a supreme *mujtahid*, one qualified to interpret and issue authoritative Islamic legislation, in abolishing the *jizya* or poll tax on non-Muslims and in declaring the dawning of a new age can all be seen in this light as well. Along with other non-Muslim communities, Christians benefitted from these ‘tolerant’ policies, and Christian priests in particular found themselves profiting from the emperor's favour and curiosity.

In 1595, at the request of Emperor Akbar once again, another delegation of Roman Catholic priests including Jerome Xavier, a grand-nephew of Francis Xavier, arrived in Lahore, which had become Akbar's capital. While there, Xavier attended religious disputes in the emperor's court and devoted himself to the study of the Persian language. A church was built in Lahore, opening in 1597, and a *fārmān* issued by the emperor in 1601 granted freedom of worship in the city, strengthening the cause of the Christians (Maclagan 1932: 54–62). Likewise, a church was built in Agra around 1599 with the assistance of the Mughal rulers and was popularly known as Akbar's church. Xavier's unique contribution to Christian–Muslim relations was his literary work, including both books introducing the Christian religion and books contrasting Christianity with Islam. In the former category, he wrote *Mirʾāt al-quds ya'nī dāstān-i ḥażrat ʿĪsa* (‘The mirror of holiness, that is, the life of the Lord Jesus’), as well as a history of the lives of the Apostles which emphasised the peaceful spread of Christianity and an explanation of the Apostles' Creed (Camps 1957: 14–31). His major work, however, was his *Āʾīna-yi haqq-numā* (‘The truth-showing mirror’), written first in Portuguese and then translated into Persian. The book argues the superiority of Christianity through a series of imaginary dialogues between a priest and a philosopher and between the priest and a Muslim scholar. In the former sections, the arguments are based on reason as the common ground, while in the latter sections the debate shifts to the reliability of the Christian scriptures and a refutation by the priest of the Muslim claim that Islam had replaced Christianity (Camps 1957: 92–6).

These discourses probably reflect the discussions Xavier had with both the emperor and the scholars. As a result of such regular dialogue with Muslims, he had the Qurʾān translated into Portuguese, thereby adding to a broader Christian understanding of Islam. Xavier's controversialist works, meanwhile, initiated a textual dialogue that included a Protestant republication in the Netherlands in the 1630s, a Persian refutation in Safavid Iran in 1622 and a rejoinder to the Persian refutation in Rome in 1631. This was translated into Arabic and eventually translated into English and excerpted in the early nineteenth century, along with tracts written by the English chaplain and missionary Henry Martyn (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 307–10). That conversion was the primary motive for the Jesuits is amply attested in their writings, but political diplomacy on behalf of the Portuguese viceroy in Goa was also part of their mandate and would occasionally disrupt their relationships with the Mughal rulers, who were being successfully wooed by embassies from England. At times, political developments had direct consequences on the Christian community, such as when the Emperor Jahāngīr responded to the capture and burning of a Gujarati ship by a Portuguese captain by closing down the Christian churches in Lahore and Agra and by retracting his financial aid to them (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 306–7). A few decades later, his successor Shāh Jahān ordered the Jesuit Fathers in Agra to tear down their church because he considered them allied to the Portuguese with whom he was at war. However, the following year he once again permitted them to rebuild the church.
The motives of the Mughal rulers and other Muslims in their courts for their interactions with the Christian foreigners were more than religious or political. The Emperor Akbar had repeatedly initiated contact with the Christians at Goa because of his curiosity about their religion and desire to learn more. As the ruler of one of the wealthiest and most powerful empires in the world, he sought to understand more of the rest of the world around him, devoting considerable resources and attention to the project. He patronised men such as ʿAbd al-Sattār ibn Qāsim Lāhōrī and commissioned them to learn the Greek and Latin languages in order to translate books of western learning. In addition to playing a key role in assisting Jerome Xavier in translating his works into Persian, ʿAbd al-Sattār produced a work on the rulers and philosophers of Greece and Rome (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 264–74). While this work exemplifies the transmission of European knowledge to India, it goes beyond that to offer, at times, an Indian Muslim interpretation of events in Europe such as the Christian conquest of al-Andalus (Lefèvre 2012: 134–5).

This cultural dialogue continued during the reign of Jahāngīr, successor to Akbar. Jahāngīr continued the practice of inviting religious representatives to debate religious questions in his presence. In addition to the Jesuit record of these events, ʿAbd al-Sattār provides a Muslim perspective in which it is the Jesuits who are confounded rather than the Muslim scholars, as is presented in Christian accounts. ʿAbd al-Sattār records that the emperor regularly invited him to participate in the discussions and that because of the knowledge of the Christian scriptures and Roman Catholic practices he had gained by his close association with Jerome Xavier, he was able to ask questions for which the priests had no reasonable reply. He mentions debates over topics such as divisions among Christians, Jesus raising the dead to life, the relationship between Jesus and God, the Eucharist, Jesus’ crucifixion and permissible and prohibited foods (Alam and Subrahmanyam 2012: 286–305). In this instance, increased exposure to Christian writings led ʿAbd al-Sattār from curiosity and fascination to a determined opposition to Christianity. Another cultural sphere in which Christian–Muslim dialogue was dynamically active during Akbar and Jahāngīr’s reigns was that of the visual arts such as painting and sculpture. Both emperors had taken a keen interest in the religious imagery introduced by the Jesuit priests in their worship and encouraged artists not only to reproduce European works but also to blend European styles with the more traditional Persian/Mughal styles, resulting in a considerable collection of miniatures, murals and sculptures reflecting this creative dialogue (Bailey 2004: 152–61).

**Protestant missionaries from Germany**

The Protestants of Europe were slower in sending missionaries than the Roman Catholics. Their arrival in South Asia, however, heralded a distinct new approach to Christian–Muslim relations. Images and other pictorial representations of Jesus, Mary and other saints were for the most part rejected, and an evangelical emphasis on repentance, belief in Jesus as the Saviour from sin and salvation by grace apart from works became dominant. Philip Baldaeus, a Dutch missionary, arrived in Sri Lanka in 1657 and recorded his impressions of Indian Muslims in his book *A true and exact description of the most celebrated East India coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, as also of the Isle of Ceylon*, originally published in Dutch in 1672. A more sustained engagement came with the arrival of German Pietist missionaries from the University of Halle, sent by King Frederick IV of Denmark. The first of these, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, arrived in Tranquebar in 1706, which was then under the control of a Danish governor who did not initially welcome the missionaries (Frykenberg 2008: 146–7).

In addition to his pioneering work on the Tamil language, Ziegenbalg welcomed Muslim scholars and saints into his home to discuss religious topics. He distinguished between the ‘priests’ or ʿulamāʾ, who focused on questions regarding doctrines and laws, and the ‘holy men’, who were
more concerned with seeing the face of God (Ziegenbalg 1719: 21–34). In his discussions, he strongly denounced the Prophet Muhammad as a false prophet and imposter, arguing that all that was good in Islam had been borrowed from the Christians and the Jews (Ziegenbalg 1719: 21, 68–9, 227). These denunciations and the debates over doctrines such as the Trinity echoed similar debates throughout the centuries, but the emphasis on a process of introspection and realisation of one’s own sinfulness and need of a Saviour, coupled with an emphasis on salvation by faith in Christ alone without any merit earned by keeping the law, was a uniquely Protestant and Pietist emphasis (Frenz 2008: 203–6).

Two other German missionaries were to play important roles in Christian–Muslim relations in southern India. Benjamin Schultz arrived in Tranquebar in 1719 and, after a few decades of ministry, devoted himself to evangelization among Muslims and producing literature in Dakhini Urdu, the language of the Muslim courts in southern India. He translated portions of the New Testament, produced a grammar of the language, and wrote a refutation of the Qur’ān (von Sicard 2006: 612–13). Christian Friedrich Schwartz, who had trained at Halle (as had Ziegenbalg and Schultz), arrived in 1750, during a time of political turmoil in south India. With the decline in power of the Mughal Empire, regional rulers such as the Nizām of Hyderabad had consolidated independent states with only nominal submission to the Mughal Emperor. Schwartz’s pattern of ministry and interaction with Muslims followed that of Ziegenbalg’s, with a significant departure in that he was more directly involved with Muslim political leaders (von Sicard 2006: 619–30). He recorded regular interactions with the local Muslim ruler, including several theological discussions, and on several occasions he was called upon by the British to serve as an intermediary with Ḥaider ʿAlī Khān, ruler of Mysore (Frykenberg 2008: 155–7). In these negotiations, however, he insisted that he would not go as an agent of a European power but only as a missionary and as an emissary of peace. The level of confidence that Ḥaider ʿAlī placed in him testifies to his success in this regard.

With the expansion of control by local Muslim princes, populations of Indian Christians were coming under direct Muslim rule. When Ḥaider ʿAlī captured the Kanara region, he negotiated with the Roman Catholic community, ensuring the continuation of the privileges they had enjoyed under the previous Hindu ruler, namely the right to their property and churches and the right to be subject to the laws established by the clergy and the Portuguese Factor of Mangalore (Moraes 1999: 131–4). When British forces attacked those of Ḥaider ʿAlī, the Christians and their Portuguese leaders initially advocated neutrality but eventually defected to the British side, bringing upon themselves the wrath of their Muslim ruler. Ḥaider ʿAlī’s son, Tipu Sulṭān, imposed even harsher measures when he took control after his father’s death. When the Mangalore Catholic Christians once again proved treacherous, he fined them, expelled a large portion of the community, and forcibly converted some of them to Islam (Moraes 1999: 135–6).

### Scientific and historic knowledge

The arrival of Europeans in South Asia resulted in Christian–Muslim interaction in the field of scientific and historical knowledge. As Kapil Raj has argued, this interaction cannot be reduced either to the simple diffusion of superior European knowledge in India or to the mere collection of indigenous knowledge and reordering it in the European canon but is more accurately a ‘construction and spread of scientific knowledge through reciprocal, albeit asymmetric, processes of circulation and negotiation’ (Raj 2007: 13). One of the first instances of this exchange occurred during the reign of the Emperor Aurangzeb, who sent one of his courtiers, Rustam Beg al-Hārithī al-Badakhshī ibn Qubād Beg (also called Mu’tamad Khān), to Portugal. While there, he learned Latin and translated several astronomical and mathematical works by the Jesuit scientist Christopher Clavius into Arabic (Khan 1998: 270). In his writings, Clavius
himself draws upon Arabic scholars, who in turn are interpreting and developing earlier Greek scholarship.

At the close of the eighteenth century, Tafazzul Husain Khan once again exemplifies this dynamic of circulation and negotiation in his scientific work, particularly in his translation of Newton’s *Principia Mathematica* into Arabic. Educated along traditional Islamic lines in Delhi and Lucknow, he first rose to prominence as the tutor to the son of the Nawab of Awadh. Subsequently, he was employed by the East India Company in diplomatic missions to the Marathas. The relationships he established with British employees of the EIC moved beyond politics to encompass scholarly discussions on astronomy and other scientific fields. He interacted with members of the newly formed Asiatic Society in Calcutta, both teaching what was contained in Muslim texts and learning what was arriving from Europe, synthesising the two streams (Schaffer 2009: 53–62). Reuben Burrow, an astronomer and mathematician who was an early member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, commented on the civilisational dialogue represented by Khan’s translation of Apollonius of Perga’s *De sectione rationis*:

The fate of this work is singular; it was translated from Greek into Arabic, and the Greek original was lost; it was afterwards translated from Arabic into Latin, from an old manuscript in the Bodleian library; the Arabic of it is now totally lost in Asia. I translated the Latin version into English, and from the English Tofuzzel Hussein is now rendering it into Arabic again.

*(Anonymous 1804: 7)*

This pattern of interaction would be reproduced in the middle of the nineteenth century when Aloys Sprenger, an Austrian medical doctor, was principal of Delhi College. He sought to bring western sciences to the East while simultaneously ‘transmitting the knowledge of oriental languages and literatures to the West’ (Minault 2011: 10). Muslims actively participated in this translation movement, though a debate over conflicting cosmologies did result in tension between the college and leading ‘ulamāʾ (Powell 1993: 197–9, 206–10). Sprenger later came into conflict with Muslim leaders again with his publication of a biography of Muḥammad in English followed by a three-volume biography in German. After the Revolt of 1857, the scientific dialogue was repeated in Bengal by ‘Abdul Laṭīf Khan, who founded the Muhammadan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta in 1863 (Khan 2013: 110–16). This society became a forum for scientific discussion for Indians – predominantly Muslims – and Europeans such as Eugène Lafont, a Belgian Jesuit priest who taught science at St Xavier’s College in Calcutta (Biswas 2013: 229–30).

In the North-Western Provinces, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān founded a scientific society, initially at Ghazipur and then at Aligarh in 1864, for the purpose of searching out and publishing rare oriental manuscripts and translating European works on arts and sciences, reflecting the activities of Tafazzul Husain Khān (Lelyveld 1978: 78–82). Here, too, Muslims and Christians, including William Muir, who earlier had written a biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, cooperated in scientific and other educational endeavours (Powell 2010: 221–5). In his speech at the first meeting of the society, Sir Sayyid lamented the ignorance among Indians of world history, natural philosophy and political economy and commended the offer of a prize by a British civil servant for the best essay comparing the influence of Greek scholarship on the Arabs in Baghdad and Córdoba with the subsequent influence of Arabic scholarship on Europe (Graham 1885: 78). That prize was ultimately won the following year by the Hungarian Orientalist resident in Bombay, Edward Rehatsek, who wrote numerous historical and anthropological essays on Muslims and translated into English works of Persian history and literature such as *Rauzat al Ṣafā* and *Gulistān* as well as the biography of Muḥammad by Ibn Hishām (Rehatsek 1877: v–viii). This circulation of
scientific and historical collaboration was a central component of Christian–Muslim interaction, even in times of political domination and subjugation.

**Muslim law and British law in dialogue**

While European Orientalists such as Rehatsek may have been motivated by curiosity to devote their lives to knowing and translating the literary heritage of the East, this acquisition of knowledge was also regularly used to serve the imperialist aims of the growing British Empire. British victories at the Battles of Plassey (1757) and of Buxar (1764) permanently altered the relationship between the British East India Company and the Mughal emperor and local Muslim nawabs in north-eastern India. Receiving the *divānī* from Emperor Shāh ʿĀlam II in return for tribute meant that the British had the right to collect tax revenues from the larger Bengal region as well as the responsibility to administer peace and justice. When Warren Hastings was appointed by the company to be the governor-general of the British territories in 1772, he declared his intention that in matters relating to inheritance, marriage, caste and religious institutions, the Muslims and Hindus were to be judged by their own laws (Cohn 1996: 26). With regard to Muslim law, then, company employees became magistrates assigned to adjudicate civil matters according to Muslim legal traditions of which they knew little or nothing at all. To assist them, *muftis* (legal experts) and *qāzis* (judges) were employed as court officers to interpret Muslim law and give a *fatwā* or ruling in such cases. Although this arrangement continued until 1864, when the position of the Muslim court officers was abolished, earlier legislation had already begun to restrict severely their ability to decide Muslim law (Guenther 2004: 200–5). From the start, the British sought to replace the authority of the *muftis* with translations of Muslim legal texts. Thus, when Hastings commissioned the translation of the *Hedaya*, he was not only patronising Orientalist scholarship that valued the historical knowledge of the East, he was also seeking to use that knowledge to exercise increasing control over the Indian Muslims. At the same time, the project can be seen as a collaboration because it was Muslim legal scholars who recommended that the *Hedaya* should be the legal text to be translated and who themselves participated in the translation process (Strawson 2014: 162–8). This Christian–Muslim interaction on the *ṣharīʿa*, a foundational Islamic institution, produced a new hybrid, Anglo-Mohammedan law, which transformed the administration of Muslim law in India.

While some Muslim jurists served as court officers issuing *fatwās* and advising British magistrates and others continued their employment in lower levels of the judiciary, still others held themselves aloof from the new political environment and even issued *fatwās* speculating about the legal status of India under non-Muslim rule. This last group of scholars were disturbed by the rise of Anglo-Mohammedan law and its displacement of the *ṣharīʿa* administered by Muslim judges under a Muslim ruler. As qualified *muftis*, they continued to issue *fatwās*, but now directly to members of the Muslim community rather than as part of the official judicial system. One of these was the influential Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿĀzīz of Delhi (Metcalf 1982: 46–52), who addressed the question of whether India had been transformed from *dār al-islām*, or domain of Islam, to *dār al-harb*, or domain of war, with the defeat of Muslim rulers and the conquest by the British forces. This had important implications for the Muslim communities in that it determined whether they could continue to reside in India fulfilling religious practices such as Friday community prayers or whether they would be required to emigrate to a region under Muslim rule and organise a *jihād* against the British (Ghose 2014: n.p.). After the British conquest of Delhi in 1803, ʿAbd al-ʿĀzīz issued a number of *fatwās* that declared that India was indeed *dār al-harb*, but stopped short of calling for migration or *jihād*. One of his disciples, Sayyid ʿĀhmād of Rae Bareli, took a more radical position and with his followers migrated to north-western regions still under Muslim rule, from where he launched a *jihād* against the Sikh rulers of the Punjab (Ghose 2014: n.p.).
Other fatwās were more direct in confronting the religious texts of the Christians. After a public debate in Agra in 1854, ʿulamāʾ in Delhi responded to questions regarding the status or authority of the copies of the Bible being circulated by Christian missionaries. Their authoritative rulings declared that only the words revealed directly to Jesus Christ were to be considered as comprising the Injīl and that the ‘corruption’ of the Bible mentioned in the Qurān referred to changes to both words and meanings (Powell 1993: 258). While these fatwās served to define Christians and their religious texts in the first half of the nineteenth century, subsequent intrareligious debates challenged their conclusions. Sir Sayyid, for example, concluded that while the words were to be considered īlham or inspired, the writings of the Apostles were to be considered as on the same level as the traditions narrated by the Companions of Muḥammad, but not entirely free from the possibility of error (Ahmad Khan 1862: 64–75).

While the Revolt of 1857 stemmed from a multitude of concerns and grievances and encompassed both the Muslim and Hindu communities that rebelled against the British rulers, it took on a religious shape when a fatwā issued by ʿulamāʾ in Delhi declared the Revolt to be a jihād, though Sir Sayyid would later dispute the legitimacy of the fatwā. As disgruntled factions of Indians in the British army gathered around the Mughal emperor in Delhi, the Revolt also became the final attempt by the declining Mughal Empire to exert its authority and overthrow British domination. With the defeat of the mutineers a year later, the Mughal Empire officially ended, forcing the Muslims of India to rethink their relationship with their new Christian masters. In this changed context, an influential voice was that of Maulāna Karāmat ‘Alī Jaunpūrī. As a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, he had initially endorsed the view that India was no longer dār al-Islām. However, shortly after the conclusion of the Revolt, he repeatedly taught the opposite as he travelled and preached throughout the Bengal region, basing his ruling on the fact that the non-Muslim rulers nevertheless appointed Muslims as judges and left the adjudication of religious matters in their hands. In 1870, he was invited by ʿAbdul Laṭīf Khān to address the Muhammadan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta on the subject and gave a detailed lecture on the history of Muslim legal opinions, ending with his conclusive judgment that none of the conditions requisite for a change in status to dār al-ḥarb had been met (Ghose 2014: n.p.). His judgment was subsequently endorsed widely by influential ʿulamāʾ throughout northern India and became the position held by most Muslim groups with regard to their Christian political masters in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

**Conclusion**

The encounter between European Christians and South Asian Muslims was motivated by commerce and conquest, though curiosity and conversion introduced divergent elements to the encounter. Initially, the desire to control the spice trade in the Indian Ocean caused the Portuguese to begin exploration and military confrontations with Indian rulers and merchants. Subsequently, other European powers avidly pursued commercial ventures throughout South Asia as well, with the British East India Company achieving dominance towards the end of the eighteenth century. British conquests expanded their control, bringing much of the territory previously controlled by the Mughals under their governance. Politically, then, there was a dramatic reversal from a powerful Muslim ruler to a powerful Christian ruler. Commercially, the British increasingly integrated the Indian economy into that of the global economy, making interreligious encounters much more frequent.

The dominant powers, whether the Mughal emperors Akbar and Jahāngīr or Warren Hastings and the British Orientalists, were the ones motivated by curiosity to make concerted efforts to learn about the other. Each used state resources to initiate encounters, promote dialogue,
patronise translations of religious and other scholarly texts, and experiment with artistic collaborations. Despite the imbalance of power, Jesuit and Armenian Christians cooperated with the Mughal efforts, and muftis and other 'ulamāʾ participated in the British projects, producing a rapid expansion of knowledge about each other in the process. The Persian miniatures with European themes on the one hand and the Muslims’ legal, scientific, historical and literary texts published in English on the other were some of the enduring products of this dialogue. The expanding reach of the British Empire ensured that knowledge of the other was dispersed not merely as a matter of curiosity but also as a means of increasing control.

The religious encounter more narrowly defined was motivated to a considerable extent by the desire on the part of Christian missionaries to convert the Muslims and by the Muslim ‘ulamāʾ to prevent such conversions. The Jesuit records explicitly delineate the missionaries’ desire and efforts to convert members of the Mughal ruling class, and the public disputations in which they participated were seen as part of that strategy. The later Protestant missionaries, whether the German Pietists or British Evangelicals, were motivated by a similar desire. While actual conversions were limited, a more direct result was the revival of the munāẓara in Christian–Muslim encounters, eventually being transformed from public disputations into a dialogue of books and pamphlets, as the printing press brought about an explosion of printed materials. Topics addressed in these debates remained relatively consistent with those addressed in the 'Abbasid era, though several new emphases, such as the role of images of Mary and the saints, the necessity of a heartfelt religion, and higher biblical criticism reflected the peculiar interests of specific interlocutors. The end of the last vestiges of the Mughal Empire in 1857 meant that the Christians were now dominant but increasingly vocal about their commitment to religious neutrality, while simultaneously providing freedom for Christian missionaries to evangelise. A new dynamic that radically transformed Christian–Muslim relations beginning in the decades that followed the end of the Mughal Empire was the reversal of the tide of travellers, merchants and scholars, now moving from India to Britain and pursuing the interreligious dialogue in a new setting that continues to the present day.

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Further reading


