Hope against Hope: Jewish and Christian Messianic Expectations in the Late Middle Ages

David B. Ruderman, University of Pennsylvania

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Abstract
In the year 1473, Francesco de Meleto, a young Florentine with delusions of prophetic grandeur, journeyed to the city of Constantinople with a companion of his native city, Benedetto Manetti. There he sought from a number of Jewish legal scholars opinions regarding the time of the coming of the Messiah and the ultimate conversion of the Jews to Christianity.\(^1\) He was especially pleased to gain the acquaintance of one notable Rabbi who secretly confessed to him, so he claimed, that all the Jews would convert to the Christian faith if the Messiah for whom they had waited will not come during the entire year of our salvation, 1484.\(^2\) The Jew based his prediction on the Book of Daniel, refusing to elaborate but claiming nevertheless that this view was not merely his own but also that “of all the other masters of their law.”\(^3\) Delighted that the Jews of his generation were ready to confirm his wildest fantasies regarding their imminent conversion, Meleto returned to Italy where he preached and composed treatises predicting the end of days and the ultimate conversion of the Jews and Moslems. In his *Convivio de'segreti della scriptura santa*, written some time after 1513, he records the Rabbi’s remarks, adding his own clarifications with respect to the Daniel prophecies. Daniel must have indicated, so he claimed, that “in this time their great persecution begins, brought about by the kings of Spain and Portugal,” representing no less than the universal flagellation of Christ’s enemies which precedes the renovation of the Catholic Church.\(^4\) Meleto had certified beyond doubt by Jewish counsel and by the evidence of Jewish suffering that the end of their “blasphemy” was at hand leading undeniably to the universal redemption of all mankind.

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Some "messianic Jews" actually are Jewish in that they were born Jewish and converted to Christianity. I accept that these individuals are Jews but I also believe that they have changed religions. The are ethnically Jewish but they are not practicing "Messianic Judaism" they are practicing Christianity. Although this question is vague and is asking for personal opinion, I hope this answer sheds light on how many of the responses here do not take into account the full breadth and depth of the Jewish experience. First and foremost, Jews have been arguing for millennia on who and who is not a Jew. Belief in the Christian messiah identifies the believer as not holding Jewish beliefs. This believer may identify as being ethnically Jewish, but his religious beliefs are not Jewish.