Religious Coffee Drinkers

Historical reactions to coffee by organized religions and their implications

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Abstract

Historically, the arrival of coffee into cultures who had never before experienced it is an event fraught with religious turmoil. This paper analyzes significant reactions to coffee from each of the three Abrahamic religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, in order to discover how religions' reactions to entirely new phenomenon may be more or less successful. Significant reactions to coffee included incorporation of coffee into religious rituals, religious controversy surrounding coffee-related social gatherings, and authoritative rulings about coffee made by religious figures leaders. The success of these reactions is measured by their public acceptance and longevity of acceptance. Islam and Judaism's mystical sects were the first parts of both religions to interact with coffee. These communities both quickly incorporated coffee into their religious rituals, harnessing coffee's properties to enhance long-standing traditions. All three religions expressed concerns both that coffee's drug-like properties may be immoral, and that social coffee-drinking gatherings were detracting from religious attendance and piety. Ultimately, both Christianity and Judaism's major leaders made declarations that coffee drinking was acceptable, as long as it could be harnessed to increase the enjoyment of religious life. The various ways in which Islam, Christianity, and Judaism reacted to coffee's first arrival form a relatively complete picture of how any religion might interact with new and unknown phenomena. This paper argues that the degrees of success of these reactions should be used as a model for how religious enterprises should handle future encounters with the unknown.

In the mid-18th century, during a respite between the many Jewish high holiday prayer services, the Chief Rabbi of Prague delivered a curious sermon. In this sermon Rav. Ezekiel Landau[1] emphasized to his community the importance of remaining close to the faith and devout in prayer. While other communities across eastern Europe had fallen into immoralities like mixed dancing, the secular habit that Rav. Landau suggested was the greatest vice of the Jews in Prague was nothing less than drinking coffee (Elietz 179)[2]. Rav. Landau was known on multiple occasions to harshly criticize Jews who drank coffee, especially those

[1] Rav. Ezekiel Landau is also known as the *Noda Be'Yehuda*, the title of his most famous responsa which is also one of the sources for this anecdote.

[2] Translation of primary documents done with assistance from R. Mendy Alevsky of Chabad at Case Western Reserve University.

who did so in Muslim-owned establishments and during the Jewish Sabbath. He called into question their piety and excluded them from the learned community (Landau 21). Why in the world would such a prominent and well-regarded authority of Jewish law and culture be so vigorously opposed to the simple habit of drinking coffee?

Rav. Landau's objections are echoed by many religious leaders both in his community and among the communities of Christianity and Islam. Many leaders had trouble accepting coffee as it conquered the Muslim and Christian worlds from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. On the other hand, the more stringent and mystical sects of these religions tended to embrace the drink and then became the groups that would spread its influence further. One thing is common across all three Abrahamic religions: when they encountered coffee, it was an entirely new substance for them. No precedent existed in these religions for how to deal with such a phenomenon that was equal parts beverage, drug, and social upheaval. Yet, there are distinct similarities across the reactions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam to the arrival of coffee. Some of these reactions were totally violent and short-lived, while others opened up brand new avenues for religious observance. Examining the historical reactions of these three religions to coffee as a totally unprecedented beverage, drug, and social phenomenon provides a broad set of guidelines for any religion looking to the future on how to react and interact with the unknown in ways that develop the greatest amount of meaningful religious engagement.

1. Incorporation

The global history of coffee owes much more to the three Abrahamic religions than might be guessed from a casual morning visit to Starbucks. Coffee's regular consumption as a recognizable beverage began among a mystical inner sect of Islam. This sect, called Sufism or the Sufis, focused on attaining spiritual greatness and discovering divine truths through intense meditation and through involved rituals

(Arendonk 450; Spencer 194-196). When coffee first arrived in Yemen from its native Ethiopia in the early fifteenth century,[3] it was the community of Sufis who recognized that coffee would benefit their religious practices (Arendonk 450; Hattox 74). The first verifiable organized drinking of coffee in history was as a part of a Sufi ritual called a *dhikr*.

Dhikrs are a meditative practice of controlled breathing and the repeated recitation of a single word or phrase from the *Quoran* that was popular among the Yemenite Sufis. Over the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they added many elements to augment this basic premise that increased the likelihood of attaining spiritual visions and transcendence during a *dhikr*. By the early fifteenth century, *dhikrs* included song and dance, musical accompaniment, and often consumption of mind-altering substances such as marijuana or alcohol. The Sufi masters could induce mystical experience in almost anybody with the right combination of these elements (Trimingham 199).

Soon after coffee's first arrival in Yemen, the Sufis recognized that its ability to keep someone awake would be incredibly beneficial for their *dhikrs*. The Sufis found the nighttime to be a particularly powerful setting that would help immensely in attaining spiritual experiences, they only had lacked a means to stay awake for it. A caffeinated drink opened these previously inaccessible hours to them and thus they incorporated coffee into the *dhikrs*—the ritual which most benefited from being done at night (Hattox, 74). The use of marijuana and alcohol—which are both problematic under Muslim law—during *dhikrs* fell out of practice, and the ritual quickly migrated to later and later hours of the night.

Following in the example of the Sufis' *dhikrs*, Muslims across Yemen began using coffee to better stay awake for many other less mystical practices. Coffee became an integral part of a prayer service that details the life of Muhammad. This service was most commonly recited the evening before *Isra al'Miraj*,

[3] While historians are confident that Muslims in Yemen first encountered coffee in the first half of the fifteenth century, coffee's vehicle of arrival in Yemen is relatively unclear. There are conflicting myths about coffee's origin that arose less than a generation after its first mass use in Yemen (Weinberg & Bealer, 10). *The Encyclopedia of Islam* suggests that these competing origin myths may be evidence that coffee arrived in multiple distinct regions at relatively the same time (Arendonk, 450).

the holiday celebrating the prophet's ascent to heaven (Trimingham 199). Additionally, coffee's usefulness for staying awake for the nightly feasts during the month-long celebration of Ramadan was one of the factors that allowed the drink to spread quickly from Yemen across the entire Arab world (Topik 88).

The Sufis' use of coffee for their *dhikrs* and the subsequent incorporation of coffee into several other Muslim rituals represents one of the most successful ways that a religion can interact with something new or unknown, and perhaps even subverts what might be assumed about initial reactions from religious communities. As suggested by the opening anecdote, one might assume that strict religious adherents might be quicker to ban or prohibit new substances that emerge from the unknown. While this response certainly exists and will be discussed later, the primary reaction from the religious community of Islam was just the opposite. It was the members of a more highly observant sect who first identified the ways in which coffee could *augment* and *improve* their long-standing traditions. By doing so, they set a precedent for many other Muslims that coffee's unique properties could be harnessed in a meaningful way, and in a way that enhanced religious practice.

This technique of incorporating coffee as a part of religious rituals was not unique to Islam. Certain Jewish rituals incorporated coffee in a similar way, and with equal success. In the article "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry," Elliott Horowitz compares the varying popularity of two different Jewish rituals, *Tikkun Hazot*, and *Shomrim Haboker*, in the middle east and in Italy. *Tikkun Hazot* is a ritual, observed traditionally at midnight, solemnly commemorating the loss of the Jewish temple with songs and prayers of lamentation. *Shomrim Haboker* can be viewed as an alternative practice to *Tikkun Hazot*, but instead of requiring observance in the middle of the night, *Shomrim Haboker* was an addition to the beginning of regular daily morning prayers which only required those who observed it to wake up slightly earlier. Both rituals have origins in medieval times, but the latter enjoyed much wider popularity in both Europe and the Middle East during the sixteenth century.

Horowitz ascribes *Shomrim Haboker*'s greater popularity to its accessibility. Jews could recite

Shomrim Haboker as a supplement to their regular morning prayer routine, while recitation of *Tikkun Hazot* required them to stay awake until midnight (Horowitz 31). Before the arrival of coffee, the late hours of the night were less accessible, so most communities simply did not observe *Tikkun Hazot* (Horowitz 41).

One notable Jewish community did favor *Tikkun Hazot* over *Shomrim Haboker*: the kabbalistic mystics of Safed. The Jewish mystical authority during the sixteenth century, Rabbi Isaac Luria (also known as the *Ari*), believed that the spiritual value of *Tikkun Hazot* far surpassed that of its alternative *Shomrim Haboker* . Rav. Luria's following in Safed, therefore, observed *Tikkun Hazot* during a time when the majority of Jewish communities in the Middle East and Europe had abandoned it in favor of *Shomrim Haboker* (Horowitz 30). As the *Ari*'s influence grew, the greater Jewish community became aware of how the mystical expert preferred the midnight ritual over the early morning ritual. However, there was significant resistance from the adherents to *Shomrim Haboker*. Horowitz traces the parallel expansion of coffee across the middle east and the rising popularity of *Tikkun Hazot* over *Shomrim Haboker*. In the major Jewish communities in Jerusalem and Italy, coffee's arrival shortly preceded the popular switch from observing the morning ritual to the midnight one (Horowitz 18, 26, 41).

It is important in this discussion to point out a key difference between coffee's influence on *Tikkun Hazot* and the Sufis' *dhikrs*. In the Jews' case, the coffee was not a direct part of the ritual or even the experience of *Tikkun Hazot*. Instead, coffee's arrival simply made the late hours of the night more accessible, and thus the more spiritually powerful of the two rituals became easier to observe for the wider community. Whereas, the Sufis fully incorporated coffee into their *dhikrs* as a direct element of the ritual itself. A crucial similarity between these two examples is how the more observant, mystical sect of Judaism and Islam recognized the spiritual power of the nighttime, and how both religions harnessed coffee when it arrived to make those experiences accessible to the wider community. The Jewish kabbalists and the Muslim Sufis asked the question 'what can we do with this new thing that would improve our religious life?' and both groups came up with similar answers.

Tikkun Hazot was not the only Jewish ritual that was affected by coffee's arrival. Other nocturnal Jewish traditions emerged after the sixteenth-century distribution of coffee across the Middle East. The holidays *Shavuot* and *Hoshanna Rabbah* both have associated all-night vigils of scripture study and learning (Horowitz 26, 43-44). Both of these customs were invented in Safed by the mystical Rabbi Joseph Caro in 1530, and both rose in popularity across the Jewish world only after coffee became available (Liberles 82-83).

Muslim *dhikrs* and the Jewish *Tikkun* are not the only examples of the incorporation of coffee into religious practice. Coffee became invaluable during the Muslim observance of *Ramadan* and also assisted in the creation of night-long Jewish learning festivals on the eve of *Shavuot* and *Hoshanna Rabbah*. The Jewish and Muslim examples of harnessing coffee early in its history to enhance and improve already existing rituals and traditions teach a clear lesson. One of the most successful strategies that a religion can employ when interacting with an entirely new phenomenon is to *incorporate* it. The success of these reactions is not simply because they are positive, but because they are long-lasting, and were widely accepted over time by the entire religious community. Utilizing something novel's unique properties, such as coffee's ability to help someone stay awake, to improve or enhance religious practice is an incredibly powerful technique for interacting with the unknown.

2. Controversy

It would be academically irresponsible as well as misleading to pretend that Judaism and Islam welcomed coffee with open arms, but it would also simply be impossible to discuss religious reactions to coffee without diving into the extensive history of religious controversies surrounding coffee. Islam was once again the first Abrahamic religion to struggle with religious dissent against coffee, but Judaism and Christianity, especially the Anglican church, all had their share of controversies. By and large, dissent against coffee ended in failure, since the vast majority of religious communities simply did not follow coffee bans or protested until they were lifted. The rationale for resisting coffee, however, is similar across the

three religions, and identifying the common themes among the failed reactions of the past is just as important for religions today as learning from the successful ones.

If the Jewish people all across the world, and among varying levels of observance, all seemed to accept coffee quite well on its first arrival in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, using coffee to broaden the accessibility of rituals, then what possible reason would Rabbis like Ezekiel Landau (chief Rabbi of Prague, mentioned at the beginning of this paper) have to vehemently oppose it less than a century later? The story is actually very simple and easy to decipher, since the Rabbis of that time, especially in eastern Europe, had excellent habits of writing to each other and of publishing all of their discussions and religious decisions.

As coffee took the Jewish community by force, the Rabbis had to scramble to fit it into a Jewish legal framework, but since no other drink that they had encountered had properties quite like coffee, this proved a bit of a struggle (Liberles 41). What blessing should be said over it? Should it be permitted within the extra dietary restrictions of Passover? (Liberles 45) All of these questions, however, took the back-burner to a big issue: coffee drinking on the Sabbath. This posed a problem, since coffee needs to be drunk while hot, and using flames or boiling water is forbidden from sundown on Friday to Sundown on Saturday. The Jews got around this for a time with creative solutions such as brewing the coffee in advance and then leaving it on their heaters overnight so that it would be warm in the morning (Liberles 48-50). When they found out that some people were leaving their furnaces lit in the heat of summer just to warm up their coffee, the Rabbis were not pleased that coffee was driving their congregants to violate the spirit of the Sabbath observance (Liberles 50).

Another popular method that Jews would use to acquire coffee on the Sabbath was to pay for it in advance or maintain an open tab at the public coffeehouses. In this way, they could drink coffee that was not made for them specifically and made by a non-Jew (Liberles 49).[4] This 'solution' was of much greater

[4] This problem has many, many issues in Jewish law. The coffee could not have been made by a non-Jew on Saturday with a Jewish person as the intended drinker. However, coffeehouses in those days prepared large vats of coffee and served out of those. This preparation method does technically avoid all Sabbath prohibitions, but

concern for Jewish community leaders since synagogues' Sabbath morning attendance plummeted as the popularity of coffeehouses grew (Liberles 49). Jews were not simply picking up coffee on their way to prayers; they were staying a while, chatting with each other and with other secular patrons (Liberles 51). Thus, coffee on the Jewish Sabbath came to represent exploitation of loopholes to subvert religious law, and coffeehouses threatened the synagogue as a social gathering place, one that the Rabbis feared held the gates to pull Jews even further away from the faith. Under this context, Rav. Ezekiel Landau's high holiday sermon condemning coffee as a dangerous secular habit is more understandable. Compelled by fears of losing congregants and by a dangerous attitude towards the restrictions of the Sabbath, rabbis across the Jewish world took hard-line stances against coffee in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, they forbade Jews to attend secular coffeehouses (Liberles 48).

The leaders of the other two religions were not necessarily compelled by the same worthy motivations as the 18th-century rabbis. The first Islamic coffee controversy took place just under a century after the Sufis in Yemen began drinking it. In the year 1511, a figure named Khã'ir Beg al-Mímar brought the drink to the religious court of Mecca and sued to make it illegal under Muslim religious law (Hattox 32; Arendonk 451). In one account of the story, al-Mímar's serious objections to coffee included a concern that coffee drinking distracted from serious piety and promoted profane activities (Hattox 35). In a second account, the trial against coffee in Mecca was something of a charade where many of the actors involved had veiled ulterior motives and were only attacking coffee as a means to damage their political opponents (Hattox 32-33).[5] The 1511 Meccan coffee scandal, as a story, reflects how the religious enemies of coffee, as often as not, only targeted it as a smokescreen, feigning some stringent religious objections in order to legally attack their political enemies.

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preparing coffee on the Sabbath without breaking the technical laws or the spirit of those laws is still a problem for observant Jews today (Liberles 47, 49).

[5] In explaining these historical accounts, Hattox argues that they are both equally inaccurate historical accounts. He examines the political alignment of the authors of his sources and identifies the sides of the coffee argument that they likely sympathized with. What I have summarized here in this paragraph are the elements of both stories that Hattox believes are most truthful.

The 1511 Mecca court passed down a ruling that coffee should indeed be banned in all forms. This would be the greatest victory for coffee dissenters in the Muslim world. Soon after, the higher Muslim authorities in Cairo returned a response to the Meccan decision, declaring that they agreed with the reprimand of the habits present in collective coffee drinking places, but they found that coffee itself held no intrinsic harm (Arendonk 451; Hattox 35). Some years later, Cairo itself fell into controversy over coffee. Several preachers made declarations that the drink was forbidden on the grounds that drinking it leads to all manner of evil things. This was followed by weeks of civil unrest and violent collisions between the enforcers of religious law and coffee fanatics. The ban was quickly lifted, and there were few further attempts to ban the drink (Arendonk 451; Hattox 39). In 1544 a blanket ban on coffee was issued from Istanbul, apparently over concerns over the rising trend of attending coffeehouses instead of mosques, but this was largely ignored throughout the Ottoman empire (Hattox 38; Weinberg & Bealer 14). The Ottoman Empire's attempt to remove coffee in 1544 was the last significant event in Islam's 33-year period of controversies; objections to coffee either died off or accepted defeat. Caffeine was here to stay.

The *Encyclopedia of Islam* notes that Muslim religious devotees often objected to coffee from very early in its expansion on the basis that the way people drank it emulated the habits of those who drank alcohol. Coffee drinkers would play games and chat idly while sipping coffee from a collective bowl (451). The collective bowl is especially reminiscent of wine-drinking habits of that time. Al-Mímar in his case against coffee referred to places of coffee drinking as akin to taverns in the immodest habits that they promoted (Hattox 32). Concern over immoral goings-on associated with coffee and its drinking places is the second common theme among religious objections to coffee. It was certainly a valid concern to the leaders of Islam since, by the end of the sixteenth century, Muslims all across the Arab world were abandoning Mosques for the new 'coffee-house' as their preferred social gathering space (Liberles 6; Topik 88; Arendonk 451). This concern is a direct parallel to the concerns of Jewish rabbis some two hundred years later who saw coffeehouses threatening to undermine synagogue attendance.

As for Christian controversies, coffee arrived in England during its long period of religious turmoil as the Roman Catholics and the English Protestants fought for dominance. As it grew in popularity, coffee

was thrown into the fray of the battling Christian sects. One of the major points of the Protestant Reformation was to promote sobriety and an intellectual relationship with god, which are ideals that coffee consumption naturally fits (Schivelbuch 31). Later, coffee was marketed to many priests on both sides of the Christian schism as a way to quell sexual desire and help maintain ease in their celibacy. This particular concept sparked a hilarious public discourse in England between anonymous satirists over the sexual benefits or shortcomings of coffee (Schivelbuch 37). Thus, drinking coffee in England during the seventeenthcentury was a religious argument in and of itself.

Along with the arrival of coffee, of course, came the coffee drinking culture and the coffeehouse. Coffeehouses in Europe are usually associated with a rise in public intellectual discourse, but in England, things were not so simple. Because of their tendency to stimulate intellectual discourse, English coffeehouses of the late seventeenth century were hotbeds of heterodox religious ideology and revolutionary politics (Lund 394). Whig party members—opposers of an absolute monarchy—and Puritans both flocked to coffee houses to discuss 'rebellious' ideology and plan civic demonstrations (Lund 396). The English monarchy and religious establishment, the Anglican Church, fought back against the progressive Whigs and more extreme Protestant movements by publishing damning propaganda against coffee; they repeatedly railed against coffee and coffeehouses in pamphlets and other types of propaganda attempting to demonize anyone participating in coffee culture (Lund 392-395). The Anglican Church was especially keen to label coffeehouses as places of devil worship and accused those who frequented coffeehouses of being atheists, as many people who gathered there were members of opponent protestant movements (Lund 396). Essentially, the major religious fight over coffee in England in the seventeenth century amounted to the traditional seats of power in England attacking coffee and coffeehouses in order to damage their political opponents by proxy.

The controversy in England, like those in the Arab world, was a complex combination of genuine religious concerns and smoke-screened political attacks. On one hand, the Anglican church could have justified their concern, since church-goers who liked coffee all tended to drift away from regular attendance and practice. On the other hand, when King Charles II, an Anglican king, briefly attempted to ban coffee,

it was more than likely over the fear of anti-monarchy talk in the coffee houses and not over concern that it bred atheism (Liberles 11).

In the cases of religious controversy over coffee all three of the Abrahamic religions, the primary concerns were always that of reduced religious participation. However, this rationale for fearing coffee was hardly ever the entire story. In the scandals of both seventeenth-century England and sixteenth-century Mecca, the opponents of coffee stood to gain politically. When Al Mimar and his fellow dissenters in Mecca opposed coffee over religious objections to intoxicants, he was making a coded threat to his political opponents—who all loved coffee—that he would have them suffer the punishment for consuming intoxicating substances under Muslim law, an embarrassing public lashing (Hattox, 58). Similarly, by associating coffeehouses with atheism and heterodoxy, the Anglican church stood to gain favor with the British monarchy, since coffeehouses were known gathering places for the Whigs, a political movement that wished to weaken the monarchy.

All of the reactions to coffee that involved opposition share one last quality: they did not last. Opposition to coffee, including bans against it and against its houses of consumption, all failed within a very short period of time. After less than half of a century, resistance to coffee in all three religions lost traction and dissipated. These negative reactions attempting to forbid or control coffee were neither long-lasting nor accepted by the broader religious community. Since the negative reactions failed to accomplish their goals, they should be viewed historically as failed reactions, and religions of today should learn from the examples of the past.

Serious religious concerns over the coffee's social issues were historically the most valid concerns. Across all three religions, coffeehouses as a social gathering place did begin to draw congregants away from their traditional houses of worship. One of the key factors contributing both Christianity's and Islam's failure to curb coffee drinking was that, for the most part, the dissent was not truly religiously motivated. Coffee's opponents instead used religious arguments as leverage for political motivations. This is a tactic still used by politicians today, especially in political fights over social issues like marijuana use. Anyone who wishes to limit or prohibit something under a religion's practice should be extremely aware of this

historical trend since politically motivated arguments that are veiled by feigned religious concerns have inevitably failed in the past.

3. Acceptance

The pattern of Jewish Rabbis' reactions to coffee did not end with their objections to its effects on Jewish society and culture. Just like in the Muslim world, there was significant pushback against the Rabbis' rulings. Many prominent Jews protested the stringent rulings, complaining that, since they were already dependent on coffee, a prohibition would significantly reduce their capacity to enjoy crucial elements of Jewish life (Liberles 50). Progressive Jewish leaders disagreed with the Rabbis' initial stringency and petitioned for a change in the rabbinic rulings. The pressure that they exerted was eventually great enough that Rabbis across Europe and the Middle East reversed their decisions and made rulings that erred on the side of permissibility (Liberles 50). The final Jewish reaction to coffee was one of leniency and understanding. Rabbis acquiesced the fact that many Jews would suffer from reduced engagement and enjoyment in Jewish life without coffee and deemed that a valid enough reason to permit it.

The final ruling of the Rabbis, that room *must* be made in Jewish practice to permit coffee, since not drinking it would inhibit many people's enjoyment of Jewish life, bears similarity to Christianity's last reaction to coffee. Word of coffee first reached Europe through the mouths of Christian travelers to and from the middle east. Notably, Leonhart Rauwolf is credited for first bringing reports of Istanbul's coffee to Europe in 1582 (Liberles 6). Other travelers to the Ottoman empire as well as Christian merchants in Ethiopia noticed the coffee that the Arabs drank. All of these reporters associated the drink with the Muslim religion and classified it as a heathen practice to drink it (Ellis 5-8; Topik 86). This general association with the heathen and coffee's relation to Islam led Catholic religious leaders to attempt to restrict Christians' coffee consumption. A number of Catholic bishops petitioned to Pope Clement VIII during the end of the sixteenth century to have coffee forbidden for all Christians. The pope—very soberly for one who had never had coffee—requested to taste the beverage that he would be banning. After tasting it, he found that he

loved it too much, exclaiming, "Why, this Satan's drink is so delicious that it would be a pity to let the infidels have exclusive use of it," and had coffee beans ceremoniously baptized (Ukers 22). In this story, a significant clerical authority made a decision to permit coffee on the basis of enjoyment, the same rationale that Jewish rabbis used when reversing their rulings against coffee. When interacting with something unknown, a religion should always consider its community's continued enjoyment and continued meaningful experiences. This is something that both Judaism and Christianity did when interacting with coffee and negotiating coffee's opponents.

Discussion

The three major trends across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam when reacting to and interacting with coffee's arrival were: first, an incorporation into rituals by the more observant and mystical groups; second, opposition and attempts to ban coffee by groups of all three religions' leaders; and finally, a broad acceptance of coffee based on its capacity to bring greater enjoyment of religious life. All three religions expressed each of these three reactions, and largely in the same order as each came into contact with coffee for the first time. The universality of these trends makes them fit to be an appropriate model for religious reactions to any new phenomena religions might encounter.

A brief example of how these reactions appear under different circumstances may be in religions current interactions with medicinal and recreational marijuana.[6] Two of the three phases of reactions discussed in this paper are readily apparent in the religious history of marijuana's use. Marijuana's incorporation and use in religious rituals actually precedes that of coffee's incorporation. The Sufis in Yemen were known to use marijuana and hemp products to elevate their consciousness during *dhikr*s, the same ceremony that first incorporated coffee (Trimmingham 199).

[6] Religious reactions to marijuana were outside of the scope of this paper's research. Discussion of its parallels to coffee is based on common knowledge and educated speculation.

We are currently living in a period of religious opposition to marijuana. With nicknames such as "the devil's lettuce," the current cultural attitudes are strikingly similar to the initial Christian opposition against coffee as a 'heathen' drink and an immoral substance. The present day's marijuana controversy, just like the historic coffee scandals, is partially a politically-motivated charade. Feigning concern over immorality, politicians in the last half-century have targeted marijuana and other drugs as a pretense for incarcerating demographics who tend to vote against them. If the historical precedent for these reactions is any indication, the current controversies and attempts to ban marijuana are destined to fail.

The reason that marijuana is such an interesting example for parallel to coffee is that the third reaction, acceptance, has yet to occur. In the late-sixteenth century, Pope Clement VIII ignored the concerns of all the other bishops and demanded to taste coffee for himself before making a decision. One hopeful thought is that one day, Pope Francis may be convinced that marijuana may be misrepresented, will try a blunt for himself, and will declare it a totally valid substance for all. Obviously, that eventuality is very unlikely. On the other hand, it is crucial to realize that current religious reactions to social phenomena are not unprecedented. The current religious and political landscape surrounding marijuana use has deep parallels to religious reactions to coffee from hundreds of years ago and religious leaders today would benefit from considering how these reactions played out in the past.

Using the earliest reactions to coffee to create a model to describe how religions react to new phenomena is an incredibly robust tactic. All three of the major Abrahamic religions went through each of the three reactions described in this paper, and with the same of acceptance to those reactions across history. This congruence among the reactions of several religions to coffee, as well as their striking similarity to modern reactions to marijuana, shows that these patterns are not superficial. Modeling a religion's adaptation to a rapidly changing world by looking for these three distinct reactions is a powerful tool to understand the patterns of society. Fringe integration, mainstream opposition, and final acceptance is a sequence of reactions that comprehensively describes the process of a religion coming to terms with a brand-new experience.

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