



# Twilight of the Saints: Everyday Religion in Ottoman Syria and Palestine

*James Grehan*

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In this study of everyday religious culture in early modern Syria and Palestine, James Grehan offers a social history

that looks beyond conventional ways of thinking about religion in the Middle East. The most common narratives about the region introduce us to the separate traditions of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, highlighting how each one has created its own distinctive traditions and communities. *Twilight of the Saints* offers a reinterpretation of religious and cultural history in a region which is today associated with division and violence. Exploring the religious habits of ordinary people, from the late seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, when the region was part of the Ottoman Empire, Grehan shows that members of different religious groups participated in a common, overarching religious culture that was still visible at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Most evident in the countryside, though present everywhere, this religious mainstream thrived in a society in which few people had access to formal religious teachings. This older, folk religious culture was steeped in notions and rituals that the modern world, with its mainly theological conception of religion, has utterly repudiated. Indeed, the people of Syria and Palestine today would hardly recognize religion as it was experienced in the not-so-distant past. Only by uncovering this lost lived religion, argues Grehan, can we appreciate the largely unacknowledged revolution in religion that has taken place in the region over the last century.

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