

Jewish Believers  
in JESUS  
SPAIN, 300–1300 C.E.



OSKAR SKARSAUNE



# Jewish Believers in Jesus: Spain, 300–1300 C. E.

Oskar Skarsaune

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## *Preface*

This unpolished book manuscript – that is what I dare call it, not a publishable book – is the result of more than 10 years of work amid other, now published, projects. Not only did it turn out much different from what I had in mind when I began, it also turned out that producing a manuscript sufficiently copy-edited and polished for a print-ready version is now beyond my capacity.

What I planned when I began, was a narrative history of the Jewish Believers, or (in the terminology of their own time), the Jewish converts to Christianity in the medieval period in Spain. I soon discovered, however, that the necessary spadework in accessible archives (including the Cairo Geniza) that must be done to write such a history has not been done by anyone, only scattered beginnings have been published. This spadework is absolutely beyond my competence and resources. It would in fact require a whole team of scholars with a wide range of linguistic expertise.

Because of this, I have downscaled the present project into something that seemed both possible and worthwhile, viz. a briefly told narrative of how the Jews in general fared under the different ruling powers in the Iberian Peninsula during the period in question. Within this narrative, special emphasis has been laid on the phenomenon of Jewish conversions: Jews being baptized and joining the Church, voluntarily or forcedly. The latter problem of forced baptisms of Jews has here been addressed as far as the sources allow us. This part of my narrative leans heavily on standard secondary literature, referenced in the footnotes.

But I wanted to write a book which was based, as far as possible, upon direct study of primary sources. One theme therefore claimed my special attention: (1) the *writings* left by Jewish believers in Jesus in Spain during the set period, or (2) writings speaking about them or writings telling stories of conversions. In the thirteenth century we meet the new phenomenon of missionary efforts aimed at converting Jews to Christianity through reasonable argument. This endeavor has left us with (3) interesting reports on public and private disputations.

I readily admit that in this manuscript these few writings claim an entirely disproportionate part of the text. The advantage, however, in doing it this way, was that it enabled me to present in one and the same volume material that, to my knowledge, has not been assembled in one place before. I also had and have the ambition to present, in varying

degrees, new points of view concerning this material, thus adding to the scholarly debate concerning these interesting pieces of literature. And thirdly, I believe that for many of my readers, I present in this work material that has hitherto been unknown to them. When I began, much of what I present here was completely unknown to me.

Another reason for this choice was that in focusing on these “dialogue” genre of writings, I could draw on my competence in analyzing the earliest preserved Christian example of this genre, Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* (see the Bibliography). I was surprised to find how often the “proof-texts” of the Medieval debates/dialogues were found already in Justin. I therefore often compare the Medieval argument with Justin’s.

Due to the fact that this manuscript has been written during more than 10 years, I have not always been able to update it and keep abreast of the most recently published studies. In some cases, but not always, I have tried to amend this by passages or notes entitled “update 2021.”

In this volume I have tried to keep the same style as was used in the first volume of *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, viz. the style of the *SBL Handbook of Style* 1999, although on some occasions I have simplified somewhat, e.g., by naming the author only, when several notes in sequence refer to the same title.

With these various provisos I deliver the results of my work to the benevolent readers, hoping that most of you will find something of interest in these pages. I did.

Rygge, Norway, December 2021

Oskar Skarsaune

## Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 1885–1887. 10 vols. Several reprints.
<i>b.</i>	<i>The Babylonian Talmud</i>
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
<i>EHRP</i>	<i>Études d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>Hebrew Bible/Old Testament</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Volume I, Part 2: The Middle Ages</i> . Edited by Magne Sæbø. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LThK</i>	<i>Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>LV</i>	<i>Leges Visigothorum</i>
Mansi 1–59	Johannes Dominicus Mansi, ed. <i>Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio</i> . 59 vols. Paris: Hubert Welter 1901–1927. Repr. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1960–62.
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
<i>NPNF</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Several reprints.
<i>NPNF</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> . Series 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 1890–1899. 14 vols. Several reprints.
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts

PL 1–217	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris. 1844–1864.
Robles Sierra I and II	Adolfo Robles Sierra, ed., <i>Raimundi Martini Capistrum</i> , vols. I and II. See bibliography, Primary sources
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–.
Schreckenberg I, II, III	See bibliography, Primary sources, Schreckenberg.
Soncino translation	Epstein, Isidore. <i>The Babylonian Talmud</i> . 18 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1935–1952.
Str-B	Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash</i> . 6 vols. Munich, C. H. Beck, 1922–1961.
VCS	Variorum Collected Studies
ThH	Théologie historique
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
Weber I	Robert Weber and Bonifatius Fischer, eds., <i>Biblia sacra: iuxta vulgatam versionem, vol. I</i> (see bibliography)
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZWT	<i>Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie</i>

## *Introduction*

This second volume of the series *Jewish Believers in Jesus* covers the period from approximately 300 C.E. to 1300 C.E. in the Iberian Peninsula, Roman Hispania, modern Spain-and-Portugal.

Beginning around 300 C.E., we have evidence in synodal ecclesiastical decrees for close socializing between Jews and Christians, including mixed marriages. Under such circumstances, conversions both ways do happen, but there is no solid evidence as to frequency. This situation continued under the first Arian period of the Visigothic dynasty, 456–587 C.E. From the beginnings until 587 the situation for the Jews of Spain was very similar to that of the Jews elsewhere in the Western part of Europe. The official Church policy was to allow the Jews to practice their religion undisturbed. This was founded on Augustine's theology about the Jews: they did Christianity double service, first by authenticating that the Old Testament was pre-Christian, hence its messianic prophecies, fulfilled by Jesus, could not be Christian fabrications. And secondly, their subject position in Christian societies proved that they were no longer blessed by God. His pleasure had passed from them to the Church.

But with the conversion of king Reccared to Catholicism in 587, a change was to occur that made Spain special and different from its neighbors as far as treatment of the Jews was concerned. King Sisebut (612–621) is said to be the first to use “force” to convert the Jews of the kingdom to Christianity. I shall return to this point below; what is certain is that the Catholic period of the Visigothic kingdom (456–711) is marked by the passing of many royal laws intended to coerce the Jews to get baptized. This was a new policy, not practiced elsewhere in Europe, making Spain a special case as far as religious policy is concerned.

This special position was continued, although in a totally different way, with the Muslim invasion of Spain from 711 onwards. Even more than before, Spain was now the odd man out compared with its European neighbors. For European Christians, to live under Muslim overlords was a new experience. For the Jews of Spain, it was also something new, but not for their compatriots further south and east. Compared with the intermittent persecution the Jews of Spain had been exposed to by the Catholic Visigothic kings, their living as *dhimmi*s under more tolerant Muslim overlords was no doubt an improvement. From now on, Spain was the only European country “of three faiths.”

This meant that in this period, Christians and Jews were to some extent on an equal footing as far as political dominion was concerned. None of them could lord it over the other.

It also meant that Muslim Spain – *al-Andalus* – gradually became the European spearhead for what one might call three-faith dispute, conflict, polemic, – but also dialogue and occasional co-operation. Spain was the leading laboratory for that kind of fruitful cultural exchange which later was to transform and invigorate the rest of Christian Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

From the end of the ninth to the middle of the thirteenth century we see the narrow strip of small and weak Christian kingdoms along the Northern coast of the Peninsula gradually “reconquer” all of Spain except the vassal Muslim province of Granada in the south. Under much political turmoil, the cultural and religious interchange continued to flourish, now here, now there. In this interchange, Jewish believers in Jesus played a not insignificant role. I treat this in some detail in Part Four.

But during the latter two thirds of the thirteenth century a new factor entered the scene that was to become a real gamechanger for the Jews. Two Jewish converts played crucial roles here: (1) Nicholas Donin tried to undermine the traditional Augustinian theology of the Jews – that their faith was outdated – by “revealing” that Judaism was not simply an anachronistic prolongation of the religion of the old covenant. On the contrary, Judaism was really based upon a later and much bigger book than the old written law. The oral law of the rabbis, written down on the (Babylonian) Talmud was in practice a New Law, overruling the old. And if that was not serious enough, the Talmud contained outrageous blasphemies concerning Jesus, his Mother, Christians in general, and God himself. Judaism should be transferred from the category of outdated but tolerable religion to the category of intolerable heresy. (2) Paul Christian, a Dominican monk of Jewish stock (his Jewish name had been Saul!), spearheaded a new method of mission towards the Jews, aimed at converting them *en masse* to Christianity by confronting them with irrefutable arguments for the truth of Christianity from their own Talmud. None of these strategies proved entirely successful.

Both of them were tried out in Spain, however, and the second of them had its place of origin in Spain. This new missionary strategy resulted in grandiose public disputations – the most famous that in Barcelona 1263 – as well as unofficial, “private” debates; the most interesting taking place on Majorca (at that time Spanish territory). Again, I present the primary sources in some detail, in Part Five.

It is thus the literature generated by these epoch-making events that receives most attention in this volume. If there is one choice I have never regretted, it is the choice of Spain as the geographical scene for this second volume of Jewish Believers in Jesus.

## ***Part One: Roman Spain until 456***

### *A Short Review*

Before the Roman conquest of Spain in 208 B.C.E., the native population was made up of Iberians, Basques, Celts, and along the Mediterranean coast also of Phoenicians and Greeks. The Romans called the new province Hispania. It was gradually Romanized and became Christianized during the fourth century C.E. and later.

Paul's plan to evangelize in Spain probably indicates the existence of Jewish communities in Spain already in the first century C.E., since Paul's missionary strategy was to begin his preaching in the local synagogues. In the third century, we find a typically Roman tombstone commemorating a little girl named Annia Salomonula and said to be a IVDAEA (Jewess). "The tombstone ... indicates Jewish acculturation to the norms of the ruling classes of Roman society even as it calls attention to the Jewish wish to be buried among one's own and for their religion to be identified."<sup>1</sup>

The Roman province of Spain held many attractions for immigrants of many kinds.

*Hispania* or *Ispamia* was one of the wealthiest provinces of the Empire. Its inhabitants, granted citizenship in 212 by the Emperor Caracalla, participated in a flourishing commerce: rich soil and mild climate made the province into Rome's granary, agriculture and livestock were cultivated throughout the peninsula, while Spanish horses were coveted in the Roman circuses for their swiftness and grace. In addition, a significant portion of the country's wealth came from minerals; its gold and silver mines, heavily dependent upon slave labor, provided a steady annual income to Rome.<sup>2</sup>

Jane S. Gerber, the author of this quote, is probably right in assuming that Jewish immigration into Spain was significant already around the beginning of the first millennium C.E., and that

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin R. Gampel, "Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews," in *Convivencia: Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Medieval Spain* (eds. Vivian B. Mann, Thomas F. Glick, and Jerilynn D. Dodds; New York: George Brazillier, 1992), 11–37; quotation at 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press, 1992; here quoted after the paperback ed. 1994), 4.

the Jewish Diaspora communities, in Spain as elsewhere, “increased rapidly, ... in no small part, as a result of vigorous proselytizing.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, when Christians evangelized in Roman Spain, they may have followed the pattern already described in Acts: addressing their message to Gentile sympathizers with Judaism and to fresh converts to Judaism. Christianity meeting local Jews in Spain would have been a case of two competing proselytizing movements confronting each other. “This competition for converts from among the same pagan population provides part of the background for early Spanish ecclesiastical legislation against the Jews.”<sup>4</sup>

This last statement refers to the canons of the synod of Elvira 306 C.E.,<sup>5</sup> one of the earliest explicit witnesses to the presence of a considerable Jewish community in Spain. In these canons, amicable relations between Jews and Christians in Spain seem to be the rule among ordinary people, even among the lower Christian clergy, whereas Church leaders at the council tried to counteract this by their rulings. The canons are meant to terminate the following social realities: mixed marriages between Christians and Jews (especially Christian girls being given in marriage to Jewish men by their Christian parents); rabbis being asked to bless the fields of Christian farmers; clerics and laypeople sharing meals with Jews.<sup>6</sup>

Within the realm of Spain, similar amicable relations between Christians and Jews are attested a century later, at Minorca 418 C.E., by the local bishop Severus. Again, the church leader is not satisfied with this. He interprets it as loss of evangelistic zeal among the Christians.<sup>7</sup> In general, Roman Spain comes through as an area where Jews and Christians seem to have got along with each other quite well. In this regard, Spain was not an exception from the general rule. Mutual crossings of the border between the two faith communities normally take place under such circumstances. Direct narrative evidence for single cases is rare, but several canons from Church councils all around the Mediterranean coastlands transmit a clear message: on grassroot level, common Jews and common Christians often socialized closely, to the regret of religious leaders on both sides. It is very likely that mixed

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<sup>3</sup> Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> For general histories of the Jews of Spain from Antiquity through the Middle Ages, see Gerber, *Jews of Spain*, 309–317 (well annotated bibliography) and the works listed in note 53 below.

<sup>6</sup> For text and comment on these canons, see Heinz Schreckenberg I (*Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11. Jh.)*); Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe: 23 Theologie 172; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1982), 247–49. See also Oskar Skarsaune, “The History of Jewish Believers in the Early Centuries—Perspectives and Framework,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus—The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 745–81, here at 750.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (OECT; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). See also comments in Skarsaune, “Evidence for Jewish Believers in Greek and Latin Patristic Literature,” in Skarsaune and Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, 505–567, here at pp. 559–67.



marriages led to conversions both ways, in most cases by the female spouse. Slaves were also a “risk” group in this regard, the slave taking the religion of his or her master.

In the centuries treated in this volume, the rulings of the Church and the secular Christian princes of Christendom were passed to curb and control such socializing between Jews and Christians. Since this became a permanent concern for princes as well as bishops – and in Western Christendom the Pope – I shall devote some pages here to outline the main principles behind ecclesiastical and royal legislation concerning the Jews throughout the greater part of the Middle Ages. Before the Visigothic era in Spain (456–711), royal and ecclesiastical laws concerning the Jews of Spain were generally in line with those of the rest of the Latin West. And even for the Visigothic era this material is of relevance, since by comparison it highlights the Jewish laws of some of the Catholic Visigothic kings as deviations from a common tradition within Latin Christendom.

Three sources had shaped the theology and the law concerning the Jews in the Latin West. (1) The normative theology concerning the Jews had been formulated by Augustine. (2) The most influential Roman law concerning the Jews was contained in Book 16 of the *Theodosian Code*. This lawbook clearly translated into legal regulations theological principles very close to those of Augustine. (3) In the West, the Theodosian rulings were applied and got ecclesiastical sanction through a series of letters by *Pope Gregory the Great*. All later codes of ecclesiastical Canon Law embodied Gregory’s rulings.

We shall take a closer look at these sources and the many concrete problems their implementation caused throughout Western Christendom – all of which were recurrent challenges in Spain also.

### 1. Augustine’s Theology of the Jews

Augustine was not the first to formulate a theological interpretation of the fact that the great majority of the Jews rejected the claims of the followers of Jesus that he was the Messiah, fulfilling the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. Already Paul struggled with this question, insisting that the Messiah being rejected by his own people was predicted in the Jewish Scriptures themselves (see especially Rom 9–11). In the second century we find Justin Martyr (active as a writer ca. 150–165) presenting a twofold and very ambivalent portrait of the Jews. On the one hand, they have faithfully preserved and transmitted the words of the prophets, thus guaranteeing the authenticity of the biblical text and the messianic prophecies

contained in it.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, the Jews are described by their own prophets as being hardhearted and by nature unbelievers, whereas the Gentiles are disposed to believe.<sup>9</sup> The Jews therefore do not understand the prophetic writings which they have transmitted and preserved so faithfully, and they therefore also rejected Jesus as the Messiah predicted by the prophets.<sup>10</sup> But this Jewish disbelief in the Messiahship of Jesus only serves to strengthen Christian belief in him, since the prophets foretold this unbelief of the Jews! The Jewish rejection of Jesus as Messiah is not a proof against his messiahship, quite the contrary.

All this recurs in Augustine but imbedded in a far more comprehensive theological framework.<sup>11</sup> For him, the mystery of Jewish unbelief vis-à-vis Jesus versus Gentile belief in him is as much above human understanding as God himself is. Jewish unbelief in Jesus serves a purpose during the time of their denial of him; and will end with their final redemption. Augustine saw the *raison d'être* for a continued existence of the Jewish people during the time of their “hardening” in two functions fulfilled by them. *First*, – as in Justin – they are witnesses to the authenticity and reliability of the Old Testament books and the Old Testament revelation. They have preserved these books faithfully, and they still keep them. The Jewish origin of the messianic prophecies is important because the Jews, being hostile towards Jesus, cannot be suspected of fabricating these prophecies after the events so as to suit what happened to Jesus. *Second*, the Jews are, by their present state, living witnesses of the truth of the Old Testament prophecies as well the New Testament’s narratives of their fulfilment. Here the prophecies that predicted the Jews’ rejection of their own Messiah are of special importance. Their rejection of Christ and their subsequent fate as exiles among all the peoples, and their inferior position compared with the Israel of the New Covenant, the Church, —all this is a most effective testimony to the truth of the Christian understanding of the Old Testament, as well as the truth of the New.

The Jews can fulfill neither of these functions if they vanish. They must therefore not be eradicated or harmed in any way. They should be allowed to remain Jews and to practice their religion. But politically, they are to be kept in a subjugated and inferior position.

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<sup>8</sup> See *1 Apol.*, 31.1–5 in Denis Minns and Paul Parvis (ed. and transl.), *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (OECT; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 162–67.

<sup>9</sup> *1. Apol.*, 31:7 and 53.4–12 in Minns and Parvis, 166–67 and 214–19.

<sup>10</sup> *1. Apol.*, 36.3 and 49.1–7 in Minns and Parvis, 178–79 and 204–5. The same idea is repeated several times in Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*, references and comment in Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 327–31.

<sup>11</sup> For this, see now the magisterial article by Paula Fredriksen, “*Excaecati Occulta Justitia Dei*: Augustine on Jews and Judaism,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 299–324, and her later fuller treatment of the same theme in monograph format: *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday).

Augustine himself makes the following summing up of his understanding of the present fate of the Jewish people:

[T]he Jews who slew Jesus and would not believe in him – because it was necessary for him to die and rise again – were ... miserably wasted by the Romans, and utterly rooted out from their kingdom, where aliens had already ruled over them, and were dispersed through the lands ... and are thus by their own Scriptures a testimony to us [everywhere] that we have not forged the prophecies about Christ. Very many of them believed on Jesus ... but the rest are blinded [as was prophesied in Psalm 69:23–24, quoted by Paul in Rom 11:9–10]. Therefore, when they do not believe our Scriptures [the New Testament], their own Scriptures which they blindly read, are fulfilled in them... Those prophecies suffice which are quoted from the books of our enemies [the Jews], to whom we make our acknowledgement on account of this testimony which, in spite of themselves, they contribute by their possession of these books ...being dispersed among all nations wherever the Church of Christ is spread abroad.

A prophecy about this thing was sent before in the Psalms, which they also read, where it is written, “My God, his mercy shall prevent me. My God has shown me concerning mine enemies, that ‘*you shall not slay them,*’ lest at last they shall forget your law: [but] *disperse* them in your might” (Psalm 59:11–12 Latin).<sup>12</sup>

As Augustine makes plain in his comments on this text, one way to slay the Jews is to deprive them of their Jewish identity by forced conversion to Christianity. This is clearly forbidden in the quoted Psalm verse. On the other hand, they should not be allowed to re-establish a self-governed national home in the Holy Land. Their dispersion and subordinate position under Christian overlordship are also a part of God’s plan for them, and essential to their involuntary service for Christian truth everywhere.

One is struck by the close parallelism between Justin and Augustine in their two main points concerning the involuntary “service” that the Jews do Christians in vouching for the truth of Christianity: They are the guarantors of the authenticity of the messianic prophecies, and their rejection of the promised Messiah when he came, and their present miserable state in having lost their land and being doomed to exile, also prove the truth of both testaments. Both writers invoke the same scriptural verse to justify that Christians (=Jacob, born after Esau) take precedence before the brother born first, Esau, viz. Genesis 25:23. The text says

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<sup>12</sup> *De Civitate Dei* 18.46; trans. *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:389, slightly adapted.

that the elder brother, Esau (=the Jewish people), shall *serve* the younger brother, Jacob (= the Church), as his *slave*.

But for the pre-Constantinian Justin this was only a theological statement concerning the rank of the two peoples within salvation history. In his time, the Christians were not in any sense in a dominating position politically, quite the contrary. Christians were persecuted and became martyrs for the God of Israel, the Jews rarely so. For Justin and other pre-Constantinian fathers, being persecuted and martyred was a sure sign of possessing the truth.<sup>13</sup> Augustine, however, is willing to see Isaac's prophecy realized in the present political dominion of the Christian Emperors, subjugating the Jews by strict rules so as never to dominate Christians.<sup>14</sup> "The people of Jesus rules over the Jews."<sup>15</sup> A theological idea had been translated into political reality by imperial laws. For Augustine, Christian martyrdom was no longer the ultimate criterion of Christians possessing the truth; quite the contrary: the Jews being subjected under Christian domination was another proof of the truth of Christianity and the failure of Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

There is a third element in Augustine's portrayal of the historical role of the Jewish people. Like Paul in Romans 11, Augustine expected a mass conversion of the Jewish people before the second coming of Christ.<sup>17</sup> Augustin invokes the prophecy in Malachi 4:5–6 (=Hebrew 3:23–24) about Elijah coming at the end of days, turning the hearts of the fathers to their sons and the hearts of the sons to their fathers. For Augustine, this prophecy means that when Elijah returns as the herald of Christ's return, his ministry will result in an end-time conversion of the Jews ("the sons" in Malachi's prophecy) to Christ and his heavenly Father. From Augustine this expectation was taken over by a great number of ecclesiastical writers in the West. This idea pointed in the same direction as the concepts laid out above: until this happened, the Jewish people was to be protected, not slain.

I only need to add that this Augustinian theology of the Jews became normative in the Latin West during the entire medieval period and beyond. But I should also add that one aspect of Augustine's theology concerning the Jews was often overlooked, and instead later Christians followed Justin and his likes rather than Augustine. That aspect has to do with the

<sup>13</sup> Tertullian: Socrates, too, was martyred because – like the Christians – he had shown contempt for the city's gods, "for even in the old days, that is: always, has truth been hated" (*Apologeticum* 14.7; my trans.).

<sup>14</sup> *De Civitate Dei* 16.35 and 37; trans. *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:332–34.

<sup>15</sup> *De Civitate Dei* 16.37; trans. *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:332.

<sup>16</sup> For a Jewish response concerning this change in Christian attitudes to being persecuted versus subjecting others, see Judah Halevi (ca. 1140), *The Kuzari (Kitab al Khazari): An Argument for the Faith of Israel* (Translated by Hartwig Hirschfeld; paperback edition. New York: Schocken Books, 1964), pp. 78 and 225–27: Contrary to contemporary Christians, the first followers of Jesus gloried in being persecuted! On Halevi, see pages 84–85 below.

<sup>17</sup> *De Civitate Dei* 20.29, trans. *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:448.

question of *why* the Jews rejected Jesus. For Justin and his followers, the disbelief and non-understanding of the Jews were explained by a fundamental flaw in their national character: They were hard of heart, stiff-necked, and so on. The harsh words of the Prophets when they scolded Israel for their sins and shortcomings were taken at face value as timeless characteristics of the whole people, and of this people only.

The mature Augustine left this tradition. For him, the “hardening” of the Jewish people had nothing to do with a peculiar propensity for sin and unbelief in this people. Instead, it was an example of God’s mysterious and unknowable ways in dealing with human beings. God, not humans, directed their life, their choices, their belief or unbelief, their salvation or perdition, in such a way that no human being could unravel God’s reasons for treating people differently. Augustine had taken to heart the words of Paul: “God has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses” (Rom 9:18).<sup>18</sup>

On this point, it was more often the views of Justin than those of Augustine that dominated among Christian theologians. We have to do with a sinister story of Christians believing there was some basic flaw in all Jews, something wrong with their character, their blood – in modern times re-formulated in the pseudo-scientific idea of degenerated genes. Augustine had no part in that particular history, on the contrary, his theology on this point could have been a healthy antidote.

## 2. The *Theodosian Code*

It was published in 438 by Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) and made effective as Law of the Roman Empire from 1 January 439.<sup>19</sup> It was explicitly said that from then on it was illegal to apply any older law not included in the Code. The Code comprised laws given from the time of Hadrian until the date of its publication, but as far as the Jews are concerned, the relevant laws, most of which are assembled in Book 16, titles 8 and 9, date from the time of

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<sup>18</sup> For an impressive argument concerning this point, see the studies of Paula Fredriksen (referenced in note 11 above).

<sup>19</sup> For a critical text of all the Jewish laws in the *Theodosian Code* and its appendixes, and the supplementary laws of the *Justinian Code* and its appendixes, see Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1987). For an English translation of the *Theodosian Code* with relevant appendixes, see Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (The Corpus of Roman Law [Corpus juris romani] 1; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952; repr. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969).

Constantine the Great and later. Even these laws, however, are partly based on older legislation.<sup>20</sup>

The Theodosian Code with its supplements was valid Imperial law until it was supplanted by the Justinian Code in 529. This substitution was effective only within the realm of the Eastern Empire, however, where the Justinian Code was law until its partial substitution by the *Basilica* code around 529. “The *Justinian Code* had no influence in the West until the twelfth century, when, with the renaissance of Roman law, it displaced the *Theodosian Code* as the main source of information about ancient Roman legislation.”<sup>21</sup> This means that in the West, during the early Middle Ages, the *Theodosian Code* remained the main source of old Roman law, as is clearly to be seen in Pope Gregory’s many rulings on the Jewish issue, and in the early medieval canonists.

The Theodosian is very much in evidence also in the one official replacement it got, by royal decree, in Visigothic Spain. Here the *Theodosian Code* as a whole was officially supplanted by Alaric II’s *Breviarium* in 529. This *Breviarium* was much indebted, however, to the *Theodosian Code*, and as far as Jewish laws are concerned, the *Breviarium* soon had book 16 of the *Theodosian Code* added to it. This was the very book of the *Code* that was of greatest interest for ecclesiastical canonists; it was also the book which contained the Jewish laws.<sup>22</sup>

Having in this way outlined the basic significance of this code of law in the West in the early Middle Ages, let us take a closer look at its contents and the basic guiding principles to be discerned behind it, as far as Jewish policy is concerned. It would be beyond my purpose to go into great historical detail about which laws were given when, since this was of little interest to the medieval users of the Code. But to understand the logic and rationale of the Jewish laws, some words about their historical development are in place.

(1) The basic and most fundamental principle of Jewish legislation by the Roman Emperors prior to Constantine was that Judaism was a *religio licita*, a legal religion whose adherents had legal protection: the right to practice their religion and to follow their ancestral laws. They were also granted inner jurisdiction and some self-rule, centered from the third century in the Jewish Patriarch of the Land of Israel.

(2) Jewish leaders of synagogue communities were exempt from serving as public servants of the Empire, as for example in city councils (*curiae*). This was originally not at all

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<sup>20</sup> For this and the following, see Linder’s extensive introduction to the different law codes, *Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 32–53.

<sup>21</sup> Linder, *Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> See Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, 44.

conceived of as a restriction of their civil rights, but rather as a privilege, shared by other religious functionaries in a similar position. Many of the public offices were burdensome and economically quite demanding.

(3) On one point the old Roman law put a significant restriction on the Jewish community. It was illegal for anyone to circumcise a non-Jewish man. Since this prohibition said nothing about women and Jewish proselytism as such, it was probably not meant primarily to curb the expansion of Judaism nor as prohibiting Jews from winning converts, although this was its inevitable effect. For the Romans, the problem was circumcision itself. Romans regarded circumcision as a reprehensible mutilation of the body, and only allowed it among the Jews themselves, since this was part of their ancestral law. For non-Jews it was illegal.

The Christian Empire continued and developed this legislation, but in part gave it a new theological basis, or a new theological interpretation – viz. that of Augustine. From the fifth century, we also see new laws being added which have mainly theological motives behind them. I shall review the legislation of the *Theodosian Code* in the same order as above.

(1) Judaism is a religion recognized by Roman law (16.8.9). Jewish worship shall not be hindered, Jews not insulted, and their synagogues not destroyed (16.8.9,12,20,21,25,26,27). No Jew is to be harassed because he is a Jew, no adherent of any religion to be treated contemptuously (16.8.21). Jews have the full right of inner jurisdiction among themselves (16.8.8). Jews have the right to fix the prices of their wares themselves; Roman officials should not interfere in this (16.8.10). Jews should not be required to perform public duties during Sabbath in violation of their own laws (16.8.20.1).

In all of this the Christian Empire prolonged and even strengthened the protective elements in the Jewish legislation of the Pagan Empire. But unlike the Pagan Empire, the new Emperors only granted this position of licit religion to the Jews, no one else. Once the Empire had made Christianity its religion, there was in principle no place within its realm for people who had a religion irreconcilable with or hostile to Christianity. In principle, all non-Christian religions fell into this category, including Judaism. In the perception of the early church, Judaism was the sworn enemy of Christianity. This perception often shines through in the laws themselves, in the terms that are used about Jews and Judaism. Even so, the laws in no single case draw the same conclusion about Judaism as they do regarding all other non-Christian religions. The others are outlawed, Judaism is not.

In the legislation of the Christian Empire, there was one concrete point concerning protection of the Jews that proved to be a bone of contention between Emperors and ecclesiastics. Imperial law expressly said synagogues should not in any way be damaged or destroyed. But this happened from time to time, especially during the period 380–420. Bands of marauding monks could occupy synagogues, and either consecrate them as churches, or simply tear or burn them down. This sometimes happened with the active or passive blessing of the local bishop. One of the first cases is also the most famous. In 388 a Christian mob had burned down the Jewish synagogue in Callinicum on the Euphrates. The Emperor, Theodosius I, ordered that the arsonists be punished, and the synagogue rebuilt from church funds. Bishop Ambrose in Milan wrote the emperor and upbraided him sharply for this ruling, saying that the emperor had granted the Jews an undeserved triumph over God's church. Theodosius yielded for a time, but came back to the issue in a law of 393:

It is sufficiently established that the sect of the Jews is prohibited by no law. We are therefore gravely disturbed by the interdiction imposed in some places on their assemblies. Your Sublime Magnitude<sup>23</sup> shall, upon the reception of this order, repress with due severity the excesses of those who presume to commit illegal deeds under the name of the Christian religion and attempt to destroy and despoil synagogues (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.9).<sup>24</sup>

This was to remain the basic principle of Imperial legislation,<sup>25</sup> but the very necessity of repeating this law time and again,<sup>26</sup> and of specifying how compensation was to be given to the Jews whenever a synagogue had been looted or destroyed,<sup>27</sup> is good evidence that the emperor had great difficulties in enforcing this law. Some concessions taking account of actual practice were also given. The Jews were not allowed to build new synagogues,<sup>28</sup> and old synagogues in deserted places should be torn down, provided it could happen without cries of protest. The latter ruling from 415 was not repeated later, and the final summary of current law was given in a law from 423: "No synagogue shall be constructed from now on,

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<sup>23</sup> Addeus, Master of the Soldiers in the East in the years 393–96. See Linder, *Jews in Imperial Roman Legislation*, 190.

<sup>24</sup> Translation according to Linder, *Jews in Imperial Roman Legislation*, 190. Latin text on the same page.

<sup>25</sup> For details, see the excellent review of legislation on synagogues in Linder, 73–74.

<sup>26</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.12 (397); 8.20 (412); 8.21 (420); 8.26 (423).

<sup>27</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.25 (423).

<sup>28</sup> For the first time in 415, *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.22



and the old ones shall remain in their state.”<sup>29</sup> We here see another basic principle of Imperial policy being minted out in a most concrete way: Judaism can exist in its present extension, but should not expand, especially not at the cost of Christianity.

(2) In the Pagan Empire, Jewish leaders had been granted, as a privilege, exemption from the duties of serving as Imperial officers. The Christian Empire continued this policy (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.2,3,4,13), expressly equating this exemption with similar exemptions for Christian clergy:

The Jews shall be bound to their rites; while we shall imitate the ancients in conserving their privileges, for it was established in their laws and confirmed by our divinity, that those who are subject to the rule of the Illustrious Patriarchs, that is the Archisynagogues, the patriarchs, the presbyters and the others who are occupied in the rite of that religion, shall persevere in keeping the same privileges that are reverently bestowed on the first clerics of the venerable Christian Law. For this was decreed in divine order also by the divine Emperors Constantine and Constantius, Valentinian and Valens. Let them therefore be exempt even from the curial liturgies and obey their laws (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.13, given by Arcadius in 397).<sup>30</sup>

For ordinary Jews there were no such privileges, and in 321 Constantine expressly ordered Jews to be called to the curias to serve in them.<sup>31</sup> Around the turn from the fourth to the fifth century we see a gradual shift of perception, however. A practical effect of these privileges was that Jewish leaders because exempt from public offices, would not be in a position to exercise authority over Christians. This effect was not unintentional, it became a fundamental legal principle: Jews should not be allowed to exercise authority over Christians. This had two concretizations: (1) Christian slaves should not have Jewish masters; and (2) Jews in general should not have public offices allowing them to exercise authority over Christians. Both these principles were new in Roman legal tradition, and it took quite some time before they were effectively enforced. One clearly recognizes these laws as expressing Augustine’s theological ideas.

Imperial legislation concerning Jewish ownership of Christian slaves may seem inconsequent and in part contradictory. This is partly because the laws on this point were so

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<sup>29</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.25; Latin text and English translation in Linder, 288.

<sup>30</sup> For Latin text and English translation (quoted here), see Linder, 202.

<sup>31</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.3; Linder, 120–24.

contrary to actual and widespread practice that enforcing a clearly stated prohibition against all cases of a Jew owning a Christian slave would have been impossible. The Jews were not barred from occupations in which employment of slaves was a necessity, e.g., to work a Jewish farmer's land. It was paradoxical to allow the Jews these occupations, and at the same time deny them the necessary manpower to execute them. After centuries of such laws being in force, Jews still owned Christian slaves all over Western Europe.

Another factor was also involved. It seems the laws make a distinction between *buying* a slave and circumcising him on the one hand and *owning* a Christian (i.e., non-converted) slave on the other. In the latter case the only problem was the theological one: a Jewish slave-owner having authority over a Christian. In the former case much more was at stake. When a Jew bought a Christian slave, he would normally circumcise him if he was male, or perform the conversion rites on her, if she was female. Jewish tradition required this, especially of household slaves, since otherwise they would constantly pollute the Jewish home by their Gentile impurity. It was therefore normal practice to make Jewish converts of slaves in Jewish households, and this was the chief means of making proselytes to Judaism. By this practice Jewish buyers of slaves committed two violations of current law: they violated the ban on circumcising non-Jewish males (in force since Antoninus Pious), and they made converts, male and female, to Judaism (banned by Constantine in 329, *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.1.1). On this point no later law made any concession at all.

But Jews might acquire slaves by other means than buying them, e.g., by inheriting them or getting them as a gift. In such cases, if the slaves were still Christian, having served Jewish masters also in the past, it would often be the case that such slaves were not working within the house of their masters, but, e.g., on his fields. In this case only the theological problem of Christians being under the authority of Jews was at stake, not any expansion of Judaism. Here the laws show some wavering during the entire Middle Ages, and already within the Code itself.<sup>32</sup>

Before we leave the topic of conversion, I should add that the Christian Emperors were also concerned with *conversions in the opposite direction, from Judaism to Christianity*. Such converts were especially protected against harassment from their former Jewish coreligionists, and such conversions were encouraged by different stipulations in the laws. It began with Constantine saying in 329:

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<sup>32</sup> For details, see Linder, 176–79.

We want the Jews, their principals and their patriarchs informed, that if anyone—once this law has been given—dare attack by stoning or by other kind of fury one escaping from their deadly sect and raising his eyes to God’s cult, which as we have learned is being done now, he shall be delivered immediately to the flames and burnt with all his associates (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.1).<sup>33</sup>

Constantine found reason to reiterate this law already in 335.<sup>34</sup> In 426 Theodosius II addressed another issue of great relevance to converts. He ruled that if children of Jewish parents should decide to become Christians, and their parents and grandparents responded by leaving them little or nothing in their wills, these wills should be disregarded, and the children inherit as much as if there had been no will. If the children were guilty of criminal acts against their parents, they should nevertheless inherit a fourth of the inheritance, “in order that they shall be seen to inherit this at least, in honor of the religion they have chosen.”<sup>35</sup>

There were problems, however, with every form of economical enticement to conversion. It seems that Jewish slave-owners, for example, could sometimes become Christians in order not to lose their Christian slaves and not be punished for having them. This problem is addressed in a law from 416:

It had been ordained, in the old laws as well as in ours, that, since we have learned that convicts of the Jewish religion want to join the community of the Church in order to escape their crimes and out of various necessities, this is done not from devotion to the faith, but as a false simulation.... [Such people] are to be allowed to return to their own law, for this is of greater benefit to Christianity (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.23).<sup>36</sup>

One of the interesting features of this law is its blatant disregard of a fundamental theological principle, viz. the irreversibility of baptism. The logic of this law is the logic of wise statesmanship rather than theology—opportunist converts are of no use to anyone, least of all to Christianity.

(3) We now turn to the third great theme of the Theodosian Code’s Jewish legislation: Jews and their access to public office. As we have seen, exemption from service in public offices

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<sup>33</sup> Latin and English text (quoted here), Linder, 126–27.

<sup>34</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.5; Linder, 139–142

<sup>35</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.28; Linder, 314–317.

<sup>36</sup> Latin and English (quoted here) in Linder, 275–76.

was introduced in Roman law as a privilege of religious personnel, also among the Jews. This was followed up in the laws of the Christian Empire as well; Jewish leaders being compared with Christian priests as far as this privilege is concerned. But here also a theological principle intervened and influenced Christian legislation. The principle was the same as with slavery: Jews should not be allowed to exercise authority over Christians. It was not, however, until the fifth century that this principle found direct expression in a law barring *all* Jews from having imperial offices that could put them in the position of judges, for example, in cases involving Christians. In 418, Honorius issued the following law:

The entrance to the State Service shall be closed from now on to those living in the Jewish superstition who attempt to enter it. [Jews already serving as either Executive Agents or Palatins are permitted to fulfill their term, but after this, all Jewish participation in these offices is ended.] As for those, however, who ... have entered the Military Service, we decree that their military belt shall be undone without any hesitation... Nevertheless, we do not exclude Jews educated in the liberal studies from the freedom of practicing as advocates, and we permit them to enjoy the honor of the curial liturgies, which they possess by right of their birth's prerogative and their family's splendor. Since they ought to be satisfied with these, they should not consider the interdiction concerning the State Service as a mark of infamy (*Cod. Theod.* 16.8.24).<sup>37</sup>

As one can observe, the barring from public offices was by no means complete, and the question of which offices Jews could have and not have, was to be differently answered from time to time and place to place in the following centuries.

(4) A final word on taxes. The Jewish Patriarch had collected taxes for himself and his household from the Jews of the Diaspora. In 429 a new law was given, immediately upon the cessation of the succession of Patriarchs. Through this law the office of the Patriarch's Jewish tax-collectors was upheld, but from now on the taxes were to be handed over to the Imperial treasury.<sup>38</sup> In this way a Jewish tradition ended up as a special Jewish tax payable to the State.

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<sup>37</sup> Latin and English (quoted here) in Linder, 281–82.

<sup>38</sup> *Cod. Theod.* 16.8.29; Linder, 320–23.

### 3. Pope Gregory the Great and the Jews

There are two reasons why Pope Gregory (590–608) deserves a place in this history.<sup>39</sup> The first is that his legislation concerning the Jews, laid down in some 30 of his more than 800 letters, became normative for the Western church.<sup>40</sup> I say *legislation* because some of Gregory's pronouncements were later incorporated in ecclesiastical Canon Law,<sup>41</sup> although his letters only contain his own commands to ecclesiastical officers under his jurisdiction, or his admonitions to bishop colleagues. But in ancient times, normative law was regularly established this way. All the laws in the *Theodosian Code* were originally given as the emperor's edict to a certain addressee, e.g., an Imperial officer, in a particular locality, and occasioned by a particular legal problem. There was therefore nothing unusual in Gregory's different pronouncements becoming general law by the same process. In the Early Middle Ages there were few if any in the Western church that could compete with Gregory as far as theological, pastoral, and legal authority was concerned.

For the Jews, this was no doubt an advantage, considering most of the alternatives. Among the Fathers of the church prior to Gregory, there were many under whose rulings the Jews could have fared much worse than they did under Gregory's. Relatively speaking, Gregory was fair with the Jews, considering that he based himself on the *Theodosian Code* in everything he decreed in his letters.<sup>42</sup> This fact should be emphasized, because Gregory in practice was the viceroy of the Byzantine Emperor in Southern Italy, and the latest official Jewish policy endorsed by the Emperor in Constantinople was the *Justinian Code* from the

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<sup>39</sup> On Gregory, see the monographs by Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John Moorhead, *Gregory the Great* (The Early Church Fathers; London: Routledge, 2005), esp. 1–48.

<sup>40</sup> The current edition of Gregory's letters is Dag Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni: Registrum Epistularum* (2 vols.; CCSL 140 and 140A; Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), hereafter quoted as CCSL 140 and CCSL 140A. A French edition and translation of Books 1 and 2 (of altogether 14) is Pierre Minard, *Gregoire le Grand: Registre des lettres (Livres I et II)* (in 2 vols.; SC 370, 371; Paris: Cerf, 1991), hereafter quoted as SC 370 and SC 371. An older, complete, edition is Paul Ewald and Ludwig M. Hartman, *Gregorii I Papae Registrum Epistularum Tomus I* (MGH Epistolae in Quart 1; Berlin: Weidmann, 1891). The counting of epistles is not exactly the same in this edition as in Norberg's. In the following I follow Norberg.

<sup>41</sup> For details, see Walter Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews* (Münchener Universitätschriften Juristische Fakultät: Abhandlungen zur Rechtswissenschaftlichen Grundlagenforschung 68. Ebelsbach: Verlag Rolf Gremer, 1988), 91–93.

<sup>42</sup> There is a rich bibliography on Gregory and the Jews; for a quite extensive one, see Schrekenberg I:635–36. I here only mention some major studies, in chronological order: Fr. Görres, "Papst Gregor I. der Grosse (590-604) und das Judentum," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 50 (1908): 489–505; Solomon Katz, "Pope Gregory the Great and the Jews," *JQR* 24 (1933): 113–37; James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study of the Origins of Antisemitism* (London: Soncino Press, 1934), 210–21; Bernard S. Bachrach, *Early Medieval Jewish Policy in Western Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 35–39; Schrekenberg 1: 424–35; Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 76–80.

sixth century, much harsher in its Jewish laws than the *Theodosian Code*. It is possible that Gregory consciously preferred the older Theodosian legislation for at least two reasons. The *Theodosian Code*, published in 432, contained only laws given at the time of the undivided Empire, and valid for all its provinces. The *Justinian Code*, on the other hand, was a law given by the Eastern Emperor only; it did not have the “Old Roman” flavor so much valued by Gregory.

But there was likely a second reason. Gregory seems personally to have favored the milder Jewish policy of the *Theodosian Code*, compared with the Justinian. It is obvious that some of the bishops whom Gregory reprimands for having acted illegally regarding the Jews, could have found a pretext for their behavior in Justinian’s laws. Gregory ignores this and corrects them with reference to “the Roman Laws.”<sup>43</sup> For him, the *Theodosian Code* was quite simply the Old Roman Law, and Gregory never questioned the validity of this Law, he rather took it for granted.

This means his legislation concerning the Jews was two-tracked. The Law, on the one hand, granted the Jews certain rights, and Gregory was almost zealous in protecting these rights—which were often violated by other clerics at his time. When this happened, Gregory did not mince words in his reprimands to fellow bishops who were guilty of actively or passively violating Jewish rights. On the other hand, the Law also withheld certain rights from the Jews, and Gregory was zealous on this front, too. He summarized the basic principle of his Jewish policy in this famous ingress to one of his letters:

*Just as the Jews (sicut Iudaeis) in their communities are not to be allowed to breach the limits which the laws lay down for them, so (ita) to them their rights are not to be violated.*<sup>44</sup>

Since Gregory follows the rulings of the Theodosian Code so faithfully, it would be a needless repetition to summarize his concrete rulings here. I only mention that concerning the question that mattered most to many of the Jews, viz. the question of their possibility to employ slave labor—without which Jewish agriculture was practically impossible—Gregory was willing to forge practical compromises (the letter of the *Theodosian Code* made such slave-holding impossible in principle, as we have seen).

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<sup>43</sup> On this, see Bachrach, *Jewish Policy*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> *Epistle* 8.25; CCSL 140A:546–47. “Sicut Iudaeis non debet esse licentia in synagogis suis ultra quam permisum est lege praesumere, ita in his quae eis concessa sunt nullum debent praeiudicium sustinere,” CCLS 140A:546, lines 2–4. Translation according to Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 77.

#### 4. The Roman Era: Concluding remarks

The three prime sources for ecclesiastical as well as civil legislation concerning the Jews that I have presented here were as relevant for Spain as for the rest of the Latin West. During the two Christian eras of Spain treated in this volume, we can follow the constant struggle of the Jews to having the laws enforced in the most favorable way possible, from their point of view. On the other hand, we see the secular authorities enforcing the laws with strictness or leniency, most often depending on what served their political and economic interests best. The ecclesiastical authorities were not blind to such concerns either, but in general stricter regarding the limitations of Jewish rights contained in the laws. The greatest aberrations occurred under the catholic period of the Visigothic dynasty (589–711) when some of the Visigothic kings legislated that the Jews either accept baptism or leave the kingdom. This constant back and forth in official policy concerning the Jews will accompany us throughout the entire period treated in this volume and continued beyond the year 1300 right until the “Endlösung” of the “Jewish problem” in 1492: The Jews of Spain were given the choice of baptism or exile.

## ***Part Two: Visigothic Spain (456–711)***

*The Visigothic Kingdom in Spain 456–711 C.E.*<sup>45</sup>

Before going into the details of the story of the first Christian kingdom of Spain, a few words should be said about the significance of Spain during this period. For Jewish as well as for Christian history Spain ascended to a position that would have been very difficult to predict during the Roman period, when Spain was very much a land in the periphery, for Christians as well as for Jews. With the crumbling and dissolution of the Western Empire during the fifth century, and the establishment of a durable Christian kingdom in Spain during the same century, this was to change. During the following centuries Jews immigrated to Spain in such numbers that during the Middle Ages there were probably more Jews in Spain than in the rest of what we now call Europe.<sup>46</sup> In the Muslim caliphate from 711 and right into the first centuries of the Christian “reconquest” of Spain, Jewish culture on the Iberian Peninsula was to reach heights not equaled anywhere else.

It may seem that the prelude to this blossoming – viz. the period of the Visigothic kingdom – was the worst thinkable, and a definite low point in Jewish history. But then we are talking about the seventh century only, and even in this century the anti-Jewish legislation of the Visigothic kings may have been effective only intermittently and in some areas. As far as the church is concerned, the seventh century saw the Spanish church rise to become the leading church province in Western Christendom, at least as far as theological effort is concerned.<sup>47</sup> In the first part of the century Isidore of Seville was the towering figure of the

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<sup>45</sup> General bibliography: E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Paul David King, *Law and Society in the Visigothic Kingdom* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972); Edward James (ed.), *Visigothic Spain: New Approaches* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Jocelyn N. Hillgarth, *Visigothic Spain, Byzantium and the Irish* (VCS 216; London: Variorum Reprints, 1985); Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (eds.), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800* (vol. 2 of *The Transformation of the Roman World*; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 117–203; Alberto Ferreiro (ed.), *The Visigoths: Studies in Culture and Society* (The Medieval Mediterranean Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, 20; Leiden: Brill, 1999); Peter Heather (ed.), *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology 4; Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999); Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409–711* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). See also note 61.

<sup>46</sup> For this, see Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Texts and Studies 10; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1–2. I say “probably,” because many of the sweeping assertions of this book should be taken with several grains of salt. See David Nirenberg’s review in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117 (1997): 753–57.

<sup>47</sup> See the excellent review “A Church Triumphant,” in Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain: Unity in Diversity, 400–1000* (New Studies in Medieval History; 2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1995), 58–86.



Western church, in the latter half of the century one could say the same about Julian of Toledo, a bishop of Jewish origin. These two left the Western Church of the later Middle Ages with some of its most widely read handbooks of theology and general knowledge. In many general histories of Medieval Europe, the significance of Spain is underplayed.

In 409 C.E. three “barbaric” peoples passed through the Pyrenees and into the Iberian Peninsula meeting little effective resistance from Roman troops. These people were the Sueves, the Vandals (both Germanic groups), and the Alans (possibly a people from the Iranian steppes). The Sueves succeeded in establishing a kingdom of some duration in the western part of Spain. The Vandals became masters of central and southern Spain, but soon got their hands full with conquering Northern Africa and vanished as a political force in Spain in the 440s. The Alans seem to have been assimilated into the Vandal people, and never established themselves as an independent kingdom.

The Western Roman Empire was in a weakened state during these decades, torn with inner conflicts. It had to rely on mercenary troops, and it is in this role we first meet the Gothic (Germanic) force later to be called the Visigoths, the “Noble” Goths. They seem to have had their origin in what is now Rumania. They were used as mercenary troops by the Romans in an attempt to evict the Sueves, the Vandals and the Alans from Spain. They were not allowed to complete this task, however, and had to content themselves with a province of southern Gaul, near to the southern Pyrenees. It was only when Roman rule collapsed completely in Spain during the 440s and 450s that the Visigoths managed to establish themselves as the new masters of nearly all of Spain. The decisive battles were fought in 456. The last Roman troops as well as the Suevic king were slain. The Visigothic king Theoderic II (453–66) established himself as the new King of Hispania.

We should probably think of the Visigoths not as a people migrating to a new homeland, but as a military force establishing themselves as the new rulers of a foreign land and over foreign peoples.<sup>48</sup> This was the Goths’ own perspective. Seen from the perspective of the native populace it was rather the other way round. The Visigoths were foreigners and newcomers, and they were few. They were made up of the chief warlord—the “king”—and his chieftains and their soldiers. All of these were probably bringing their families with them. Roger Collins estimates they may not have totaled more than 30 000 people.<sup>49</sup> Not much is

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<sup>48</sup> See especially Ana Maria Jiménez Garnica, “Settlement of the Visigoths in the Fifth Century,” in Heather, *The Visigoths from the Migration Period*, 93–128.

<sup>49</sup> Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 25. Based on figures given in ancient histories, Peter Heather arrives at a similar estimate, “The Creation of the Visigoths,” in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period*, 52–55.

known as to what happened on the ground during the early decades of Visigothic rule. It is not known whether the Gothic aristocracy soon took over grand estates and became landed aristocracy, but it is likely that this happened in some measure. It is also likely that many of the old native aristocrats were able to hold on to some of their estates and the privileges associated with them for a long period of time, though under Visigothic lordship.<sup>50</sup> There would therefore have been a double aristocracy in Spain, one Gothic and one Roman.<sup>51</sup> And the Gothic king tried his best to maintain his rule over all these local chieftains. He was in a very precarious position. Local insurrections were the order of the day during the first decades of Visigothic rule.

The Visigothic conquerors were no doubt “barbarians” by Roman standards, but they were not Pagans. Most of them, including the royal dynasty, were Arian Christians. They had got their Christianity from the Roman Empire of Byzantium during one of its Arian periods, and the Christian Empire that the Visigoths tried to establish in the outmost West had the Empire of Byzantium as its model and rival at the same time. The Visigothic kings, their nobles and their soldiers were and remained a tiny minority among the native peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. The native population was Roman in culture and Catholic of religion. In the beginning, the Visigoths kept themselves apart from the Roman population of Spain. Intermarriage between Goths and Romans was prohibited,<sup>52</sup> and different codes of law were valid for Goths and Romans. This meant, in practice, that the Visigoths realized their only chance of ruling Spain peacefully was to leave the populace in peace with their different faiths. Catholics and Jews profited from this.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding the Jews, the only legislation known from the Arian period (i.e., before 589) is a ruling by king Alaric II (484–507) in 506 in which the king basically endorsed the

<sup>50</sup> See Jiménez Garnica, “Settlement,” 109.

<sup>51</sup> See, for this point of view, Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 96–97 and 101–103.

<sup>52</sup> There is solid evidence, however, that this law was often ineffective and that mixed marriages happened all the time. This state of affairs was to become symptomatic of the legislative efforts of the Visigothic kings throughout the entire period of their rule: their laws were often boycotted on a large scale by local dignitaries. On marriage laws, see Giorgio Ausenda, “Kinship and Marriage among the Visigoths,” in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period*, 129–90.

<sup>53</sup> General bibliography on the Jews in Visigothic Spain: Solomon Katz, *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul* (Monographs of the Mediaeval Academy of America 12; Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1937; repr. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970); Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (2 vols.; transl. Louis Schoffman; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961) 1:1–38; Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (18 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952–1983) 3:33–46; Jean Juster, “The Legal Conditions of the Jews under the Visigothic Kings,” *Israel Law Review* 11 (1976), 259–287, 391–414, 563–590; Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Texts and Studies 10; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 7–40; Benzion Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (New York: Random House, 1995), 28–53; Bernd Rother, “Die Iberische Halbinsel,” in *Handbuch zur Geschichte der Juden in Europa* (2 vols.; ed. E.-V. Kotowski, J.H. Schoeps, and H. Wallenborn; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001) 1:325–349.

laws concerning Jews in the *Theodosian Code* of Byzantium.<sup>54</sup> The Jews were granted full freedom to practice their religion, but some social restrictions were imposed on them. I list some of these restrictions here, and in reading through this list one should keep in mind that some or all the prohibited practices were actually taking place, to varying degrees.<sup>55</sup>

- Jews should not marry non-Jews.
- Jews should not hold public offices, or be a *defensor* of a city, or a prison-guard, for in these positions they could exercise authority over Christians.
- Jews could repair synagogues, but not build new ones.
- Baptized Jews could not revert to Judaism without penalty. They were now liable to the same penalty as other converts to Judaism: they lost their testamentary rights and could not act as witnesses in court.
- If a Jew converted his Christian slave or a Christian freeman to Judaism, he was punished with death and confiscation of all his property. If the convert was a freeman, his property was confiscated (he was treated as an ordinary convert), if a slave, he was set free.
- Jews should not molest Jewish converts to Christianity.
- Jews should not own Christian slaves.

As in many places within the Byzantine Empire, these restrictions were no doubt often ignored by local authorities in Visigothic Spain as well. Especially the stipulation of Jews not having Christian slaves—in practice barring Jews from becoming land-owners—would often be circumvented, with the local official turning a blind eye. Also, we do find Jews in prominent positions in society, positions not granted them by law.<sup>56</sup>

The Jewish policy of the Arian Visigothic kings thus differed little from that of the Roman West in general during the fourth and fifth centuries. This policy got ecclesiastical sanction by Pope Gregory the Great (590–604 C.E.) in his many letters on the Jewish issue. As we have seen, Gregory explicitly and emphatically forbade any use of coercion towards

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<sup>54</sup> For the Jewish laws in this code, contained in book 16, titles 8 and 9, see English translation in Clyde Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmonidian Constitutions* (The Corpus of Roman Law [Corpus Juris Romani] 1; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952; repr. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 467–72. See also Amnon Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1987), with edition and translation of all relevant laws.

<sup>55</sup> The list is based on Thompson's summary of those paragraphs in the *Theodosian Code* which were kept by Alaric II, *The Goths in Spain*, 52–54. See also Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 129.

<sup>56</sup> One well-known example is the Jews Theodorus and Caecilianus in Minorca around 418 C.E. Both served or had served as *defensor civitatis*, and Theodorus was *patronus civitatis* at the time of the dramatic events in 418 related in Severus' letter, see above, note 7.

converting the Jews and granted them freedom to practice their religion without fear.<sup>57</sup> There were significant limitations to this freedom, in the Theodosian code as well as in Gregory's letters, but concerning the main point here, a clear no to conversions by coercion, the Pope's letters and the emperor's code were clear enough. We have no positive evidence to suggest that the Arian kings of Visigothic Spain departed from this general policy, and as we have seen, the one piece of evidence we do have, supports the view that they followed it.

What we see happen in Spain after the conversion of king Reccared to Catholicism in 587 is also most easily understood if we assume that the Jews had by then gained access to significant positions of power and influence within Visigothic society.

### 1. The Jewish Policy of the Catholic Visigothic Kingdom: *Lex Visigothorum*

The first Visigothic king to officially make Catholicism his religion was Reccared (586–601). This happened for his own part in 587. It was no sudden and no unprepared change. His predecessor Leovigild (568–586) may not have been a Catholic himself, but under him we hear of four Visigothic bishops who were Catholics, and there are signs that some Visigothic nobles had already embraced Catholicism at that time.<sup>58</sup> This may not be completely unrelated to the fact that since 551 the Byzantine Emperor had reconquered parts of southern Spain and established a Byzantine province there. Leovigild seems to have realized that the religious divide within his own kingdom was unfortunate in that it made him weaker in his attempts to drive the Byzantines out of the peninsula. While he did not openly embrace the Catholicism of the great majority of his subjects, he made a council at Toledo in 580 formulate an Arian creed that went extremely far towards accepting Catholic Christology, far enough for one Catholic bishop to endorse it.<sup>59</sup>

It was this politics of *unifying the kingdom politically and culturally* that was taken to its logical conclusion by Reccared's conversion to Catholicism. Still, it was a move that would be regarded as something close to treason by powerful groups among the Gothic aristocracy, nobles, and bishops. Therefore, Reccared did not flaunt his new creed in the beginning. From his conversion early in 587 it lasted more than two years before he made the

<sup>57</sup> On Gregory's many statements on the Jewish issue in his letters, see Schrekenberg I: 424–35, and my summary above, pp. 16–18.

<sup>58</sup> See E. A. Thompson, "The Conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism," in *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 4 (1960): 4–35. Repr. in *Missions and Regional Characteristics of the Early Church* (vol. 12 of *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*; ed. E. Ferguson; New York: Garland, 1993), 110–35, esp. 114; and Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 64–65.

<sup>59</sup> Because of this, the bishop in question, Vincent of Zaragoza, was accused by some of his colleagues of defecting to the Arians. See Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 64.

Nicene faith the official faith of the kingdom at the Third Council of Toledo (by now the Visigothic capital) in 589. During those years he had to quell several rebellions led by influential members of the high nobility, rebellions at least in part called forth by knowledge of the king's betrayal of "our faith."<sup>60</sup> This shows that the king had powerful enemies within the ranks of high nobility, and that his change of faith was seen by many as defection to the longstanding and well-established enemy: the "Romans." E. A. Thompson has argued persuasively for the view that Reccared's change of faith should be considered a decisive step in a long process of Romanization and unification that went on during the latter part of the sixth century and continued throughout the seventh.<sup>61</sup>

This unification policy was given, with time, a clear theological underpinning. Unlike the Byzantine Empire, which comprised many peoples and different cultures, the Visigothic kingdom aspired to creating one united nation, one people, one faith, one church. In so doing, the Visigothic kings cast themselves in the role of the pious kings of Israel in the Old Testament. Like them, they took it to be their royal duty to purge the nation from the impurity of false faith, false customs, and false ritual. They therefore emulated Old Testaments rituals for enthronement and anointing of the kings to a much larger degree than the Emperors of Constantinople ever did. Somewhat paradoxically, the Jews were the ones who most had to feel the brunt of this new fervor of the new kings of the New Israel of Gothic Spain. In the king's zeal for making New Gothic Israel a purified nation, there was only one role left for the Jews: they were the impure aliens of the land, they were the foreigners polluting land and people.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, the Jews basically had no place in the unified kingdom and the unified people.

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<sup>60</sup> See Collins, *Visigothic Spain*, 67–69.

<sup>61</sup> Thompson, "The Conversion of the Visigoths to Catholicism." I am much indebted here to this study. *Update 2021*: In an interesting study from 2017, Erica Buchberger has analyzed the unification process from the perspective of unifying ethnic Goths with the majority Roman population. She summarizes her analysis the following way: "The early promoters of unity – particularly Leovigild, Reccared, and Isidore – could not have known how successful their vision of a united Gothic kingdom would be. The official promotion of unity on territorial, religious, and political levels redefined the possibilities for being a good, loyal Goth. Reccared's conversion to Catholicism eliminated religious barriers to envisioning the Gothic and Roman portions of the population as essentially different. Isidore drew on the new religious commonality that the conversion had established to solidify a vision of Gothic Catholic Spain, unified under one ruler, one kingdom, and one faith. The deliberate focus on universality of Gothic identity facilitated the renegotiation of residents' various affiliations and the reimagining of identities across the Iberian Peninsula. By 654, when Recceswinth issued his *Visigothic Code*, this renegotiation had progressed to the point that Gothic and Roman identities seemed relics of a distant past. Chindaswinth and Recceswinth eliminated any distinction that may have led subjects to divide themselves into these two groups, presenting one law for one community." Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500–700: From Romans to Goths and Franks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017); on Spain pp. 37–100, quotation at 99.

<sup>62</sup> See for this paragraph Mayke de Jong, "Adding Insult to Injury: Julian of Toledo and his *Historiae Wambae*," in *The Visigoths from the Migration Period to the Seventh Century: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology; ed. Peter Heather; Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999), 373–402; esp. 374–75.

This program, however, could not be implemented overnight. It meant a radical deviation from what had been social realities for quite some time. It also collided with the fact that the Jews were well integrated into Spanish society, widely dispersed throughout the king's realm, often in outlying rural districts. It also collided with the fact that the Jews very often were on friendly terms with their Christian neighbors, and that probably quite many of them were useful trading and financial partners of the Spanish nobility. Even people who did not love Jews very much, could regard them as extremely useful.

It is therefore to be expected that the royal policy of purging Spain of its Jews would meet resistance in many quarters and in different ways. It would also seem reasonable for the kings to proceed slowly with their new Jewish policy.

It is sometimes claimed that already Reccared aggravated the anti-Jewish laws quite significantly, but there is not much in his recorded laws to support this view. The only law recorded as given by Reccared concerning this issue is a ruling against Jews having Christian slaves, and especially against their masters making them Jews by circumcision.<sup>63</sup> This was nothing but a repetition of the same ruling in the Theodosian code, except that the punishment for circumcising a slave was execution in Theodosius (and in Alaric II's law), but only confiscation of property in Reccared's law. At the Third Council of Toledo 589, canon 14, the same injunction against circumcising Christian slaves was repeated, meaning that Jews having Christian slaves was still much of a reality, despite existing legislation to the contrary. In addition, the council ruled against Jews marrying Christian women or having Christian concubines, and ordered that children born in such unions were to be baptized. Jews should not have public offices in which they could be judges over Christians.<sup>64</sup> Here, as so often, the great interest of such laws is that what they prohibited was obviously—in real life—taking place all the time.

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For the same perspective, see also Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *The History of Wamba: Julian of Toledo's Historia Wambae regis* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 7, note 5: "The Jews, as the only remaining non-Catholic group, were from then on exposed to increasing discrimination by the law, and bore the brunt of this interpenetration of church and state."

<sup>63</sup> *Lex Visigothorum* 12.2.12; MGH Legum Sectio I, Tomus I: 417. For full bibliographic reference for this source, see the second next note. The standard edition is Karl Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum* (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1902). This reference is found at p. 417. For an English translation, see Samuel Parsons Scott, *The Visigothic Code (Forum Judicum)* (Boston: Boston Book Co., 1910; repr. Littleton, Colo.: Fred. B. Rothman, 1982), 369. The *Lex Visigothorum* is henceforward abbreviated *LV*.

<sup>64</sup> See Schreckenberg I: 418–19. Latin text in Mansi 9:996.

The formal codification of the new situation as far as law was concerned, came under Chindaswinth in 642–643, being replaced by a revised and fuller version in 654 by his son Recceswinth. It is commonly called the *Lex Visigothorum*, the *Visigothic Code*.<sup>65</sup>

Before we continue the story of royal and ecclesiastical policies concerning the Jews in the seventh century, it is worth while telling the little that is known about Jewish conversions during Reccared's reign. In Merida in Western Spain there was a very able bishop by the name Masona (tenure 573–597). In the *Life* that was later written in his praise, the author claims that “not only did immense love for him burn in the hearts of all the faithful but he drew the minds of all Jews and pagans to the grace of Christ by his marvelous kindness.”<sup>66</sup> The author is very explicit as to how this “marvelous kindness” was expressed in concrete terms.

[H]e built a hospice and enriched it with great estates and, assigning attendants and physicians, ordered that it serve the wants of travelers and the sick, and gave order that physicians should unceasingly make the rounds of the entire city and bring to the hospital in their arms whomever they found sick, slave or free, Christian or Jew, and having neatly prepared beds lay the sick thereupon and provide delicate and excellent food until with God's help they gave back to the sick person his former health.<sup>67</sup>

As E. A. Thompson aptly remarks, the striking feature of this report is that the teller of the story finds nothing reprehensible in such largesse towards Jews, despite council canons forbidding any socializing with them, for laypeople and priests alike.<sup>68</sup> This point is even stronger, should the report be slightly exaggerated for purposes of hagiography.

It deserves notice that the story has some unmistakable similarity to a story told by Pope Gregory of Rome at approximately the same time. In the area around a monastery of

<sup>65</sup> The standard edition is Karl Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum* (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Legum Sectio I, Tomus I; Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1902. For an English translation, see Samuel Parsons Scott, *The Visigothic Code (Forum Judicum)* (Boston: Boston Book Co., 1910; repr. Littleton, Colo.: Fred. B. Rothman, 1982). The *Lex Visigothorum* is henceforward abbreviated *LV*.

<sup>66</sup> For text and translation of the *Vita Masonae*, see Joseph N. Garvin, *The Vitas Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium: Text and Translation, with an Introduction and Commentary* (The Catholic University of America Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin Language and Literature 19; Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1946), 188–259; quoted phrase at *Vitas* 5.2.7, Garvin, *Vitas*, 192, lines 29–32, trans. *ibid.*, 193. I suspect there is a biblical allusion here. When the text says that Masona “*omnium iudaeorum vel gentilium mentes ... ad Christi gratiam pertrahebat*,” it recalls John 12:32 where Christ says: “*omnia traham ad me ipsum*.” I owe this suggestion to my wife.

<sup>67</sup> *Vitas* 5.3.4–5; trans. Garvin, 193–95.

<sup>68</sup> Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, 54. Thompson has the council of Agde, 506, in mind.

nuns near Agrigentum on Sicily, many Jews expressed a desire to be baptized. Gregory does not tell why, so we are left to speculate that perhaps it was the diaconal work of the nuns that made such an impression on the local Jews. One has to keep in mind that in those days, monastic life was still something of a novelty in Sicily, just as a hospital was probably a novelty in Merida. When Pope Gregory in the last decade of the sixth century repeats again and again that the Jews should be won for the Christian faith by words and works of Christian compassion and love rather than by brute force, he may not be speaking pure theory. He may have had examples such as the two here mentioned in mind.<sup>69</sup>

After Reccared his three Catholic successors Liuwa 2., Witterich, and Gundemar (reigning in succession 602–612) seem to have continued the rather tolerant Jewish policy of their Arian forebears.

If we are to believe Isidore of Seville, the real change came with the next *strong* king after Reccared, Sisebut (612–621). During the first year of his reign, he gave two laws that enjoined the rulings of Toledo III. He extended and aggravated them quite a bit and reinstated the death penalty for circumcision of Christians. These laws are quoted in full and attributed to him in the *Lex Visigothorum*.<sup>70</sup> There are therefore no problems with their documentation. But according to Isidore, Sisebut in the beginning of his reign converted the Jews to Christianity by force.<sup>71</sup> Most historians take this to mean that the king gave a specific decree which gave the Jews the choice of baptism or emigration. No trace of such a law is to be found in the *Lex Visigothorum*, however. The reason may be that the king was not able to make a church council endorse this law; it therefore remained the king's own and was not taken up in the later *Lex*. This is the interpretation of most historians, and I will not claim it is

<sup>69</sup> For details and references concerning Gregory, see in this volume, pages 16–18, with notes.

<sup>70</sup> *LV* 12.2.13 and 14. For text, see Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum*, 418–23; transl. Scott, *Visigothic Code*, 369–73.

<sup>71</sup> Isidore speaks about this supposed law in three places. (1) In his *History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi* he says that “in the era 650 (i.e., 612 C.E.) ... Sisebut was brought to royal dignity after Gundemar; he reigned for eight years and six months. *At the beginning of his reign, he led the Jews to the Christian faith* and had indeed an ardent zeal, but not in accordance with wisdom, for *he forced them by power* when he should have roused them by the doctrine of faith. But, as it is written, either at a favorable opportunity or by truth Christ should be preached” (*Hist. Goth.* 60, transl. according to Guido Donini and Gordon B. Ford, *Isidore of Seville's History of the Goths, Vandals, and Suevi* [2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1970], 27–28.) (2) In his *Chronicle* 416 Isidore says that Sisebut “*Iudaeos sui regni subditos ad Xristi fidem conuertit*” (CCL 112:204–205). (3) In his *Etymologies* 5.39.42 Isidore mentions the matter a third time: “*Heraclius septimum decimum agit annum. [Huius quinto et quarto religiosissimi principis Sisebuti] Iudaei in Hispania Christiani efficiuntur.*” See on this latter notice W. Porzig, “*Die Rezensionen der Etymologiae des Isidorus von Seville,*” *Hermes* 72 (1973), 129–70, here at 165–66. In addition to these statements, there is a reference in canon 57 of the fourth council of Toledo 633 to the forced conversions in Sisebut's time (Mansi, 10: 633: “*Qui autem [de Iudaeis] jam pridem ad Christianitatem venire coacti sunt, sicut factum est temporibus religiosissimi principis Sisebuti...*”) It deserves notice that the council does not say that *all* Jews were converted, only that *those* Jews who were converted, should not be allowed to renege their status as Christians, since the sacramental grace was irreversible.



impossible. But in my view, Isidore's different statements are also open to another interpretation. This was observed by Franz Görres, who in an article (now more than a hundred years old) argued that all Isidore was having in mind was the two laws given in Sisebut's first year of reign.<sup>72</sup> The gist of Isidore's saying in his *History* is that Sisebut used force in leading the Jews to the Christian faith, instead of the more proper means of "the doctrine of faith." That Sisebut's laws were the most severe until then, and that their full enforcement would have made Jewish life in Spain nearly impossible, is beyond doubt, and Isidore could have meant this and no more.

Taking a closer look at Sisebut's laws, they reveal not just a little about realities on the ground. Both are about the intolerable situation that Jews have Christian slaves. This was forbidden in Reccared's law, and this law would have been sufficient, "if the depravity of the Jews had not afterwards corrupted the minds of (Catholic) princes, and they [the Jews] had not demanded and obtained benefits for themselves contrary to the principles of justice." This had even resulted in "the edict of the said king [Reccared] being nullified."<sup>73</sup> In other words, Sisebut's law clearly recognizes that several decades after Reccared, his law was of little or no effect. The way Sisebut now tries to amend this situation, is also telling. Half involuntarily, it seems, the second law describes how Reccared's law was circumvented. Jews could sell their Christian slaves to a Christian in a purely pro forma transaction, and then "rent" their services from the new Christian owner. Or the Jews could formally emancipate their slaves but pledge them to continued service for their Jewish masters. Such "fraudulent" selling or emancipation was obviously common, and to curb it, Sisebut's second law encourages informants by promising them substantial economic reward: "Where a freeborn person exposes such a fraudulent transaction, he shall be entitled to all the property of the parties, both vendor and purchaser, who perpetrated the fraud. Should a Christian be concerned in such a proceeding, he shall be given as a slave to whomever the king may direct..."<sup>74</sup> This speaks clearly of to what extent such laws had been circumvented and boycotted until then. Towards the end of the second law, the king disingenuously betrays that his hopes of the new law being obeyed are not very high. "While we are not of the opinion that its provisions will be violated by anyone; nevertheless, should such a person exist, may he who audaciously

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<sup>72</sup> Franz Görres, "Das Judentum im westgothischen Spanien von König Sisebut bis Roderich (612–711)," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 48 (1905): 353–61; esp. 356.

<sup>73</sup> LV 12.2.13; trans. according to Scott, *Visigothic Code*, 369–70.

<sup>74</sup> LV 12.2.14; Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum*, 421; transl. according to Scott, *Visigothic Code*, 372.

disobeys it ... be regarded by all men as the most infamous person of the century...”<sup>75</sup> Not satisfied with this, the king goes on to invoke eternal damnation for any perpetrator.

The second law also includes a decree that could explain all reports on Sisebut giving the Jews the choice of baptism or exile. The Jewish partner in mixed marriages between Jews and Christians were in fact given this choice.<sup>76</sup> This would have involved many Spanish Jews if we assume that mixed marriages were not uncommon. This assumption seems likely, given the insistent repetitions of laws against mixed marriages in the legislation of later kings. The stipulation in the law quoted here is, in my view, fully sufficient to explain Isidore’s criticism of the king for using force where he should have appealed to the convincing power of faith itself.

Taking a step back, let us take in the picture emerging from these features in Sisebut’s law and in his ecclesiastical mentor Isidore. In using force to induce Jewish conversions, the king met opposition from two quarters. Ecclesiastical leaders found such use of force incompatible with established ecclesiastical rulings, e.g., those of Pope Gregory. Secular princes boycotted anti-Jewish laws on a large scale, probably from economic reasons. Benzion Netanyahu assumes that when the king complains that the Jews had “corrupted the minds of princes,” he has more than bribes in mind. He assumes that the Jews were essential to the princes as moneylenders, and that this fact points to the real purpose of the king. He wanted to break the political clout of the princes by depriving them of their Jewish financiers. The decrees against Jews having Christian slaves were also given with the same purpose. Without their slaves, Jewish landowners could not run their estates.

If this is right, the primary purpose of the king would not be to have the Jews converted en masse, but rather to get rid of them. The king might well have preferred a mass exodus to mass conversion.<sup>77</sup> The ecclesiastics might have had even greater qualms about Jewish converts who were made converts against their conviction. Such people often meant trouble in the church; the bishops simply did not want them.

So, what happened on the ground in the wake of Sisebut’s new laws? There is no doubt that some conversions due to pressure did in fact take place. At the fourth council of Toledo, 633,

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<sup>75</sup> Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum*, 422–23; transl. according to Scott, *Visigothic Code*, 373.

<sup>76</sup> Zeumer, *Leges Visigothorum*, 422; Scott, *Visigothic Code*, 372.

<sup>77</sup> Netanyahu may overinterpret Sisebut’s words, however. In later laws there is much talk of Jews bribing Christian judges, and in these cases, it seems the “problem” is bribes, plain and simple, and not Jewish moneylending on a grand scale.

the ecclesiastics indirectly criticized the use of force towards baptism, but at the same time decreed that the sacrament of baptism was irreversible, and that those baptized involuntarily should nevertheless not be allowed to revert to Judaism.<sup>78</sup> So, there can be no doubt that involuntary converts did exist. There were also other laws given later in the seventh century that deal with Jewish converts who appear to have been unwillingly converted.

In the remaining part of the seventh century, Sisebut's successors on the throne followed a zigzag course of relaxing or tightening his anti-Jewish laws. Swinthila (621–631) relaxed the severity that had marked Sisebut's policy toward the Jews. Forced conversion was discontinued. Those who had gone abroad could return and openly resume their practice of Judaism.<sup>79</sup>

Sisenand (631–636), on the other hand, induced the Fourth Toledan Council (633) to suppress Jews and Jewish converts. It was this council that criticized Sisebut's use of coercion towards conversion, but agreed that those already converted, should keep their new faith.<sup>80</sup> In practice, the rulings concerning the Jews at the Fourth Council had the effect of discouraging Jews from ever becoming converts to Christianity. Netanyahu assumes that the reason was that the bishops, unlike the king, were quite uncomfortable with the prospect of *many* Jewish converts. They therefore made life difficult for all Jewish converts and made conversion unattractive for ordinary Jews. Mass conversion was not wanted by the Church.<sup>81</sup> When Pope Honorius 1. of Rome upbraided the Spanish bishops for their lack of zeal in converting the Spanish Jews, they answered that they preferred to have their Jews converted by preaching alone, not by any use of coercion.<sup>82</sup>

Some of the canons of the council reveal a reality on the ground completely at variance with royal laws. Canon 58 addresses a problem apparently not uncommon: Christians were helping Jews, officially converted, to revert to Judaism—for a certain bribe! Canon 62 forbids converted Jews to have any contact with non-converted compatriots. Such contact, in other words, was frequent. This also shows that non-converted Jews did not shun those of their own whom they understood to have converted only as a safety precaution, to be reversed in better

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<sup>78</sup> See pp. 15 and 23 above.

<sup>79</sup> Netanyahu, 37.

<sup>80</sup> Netanyahu, 42. Important discussion of the Council's policy *vis-à-vis* Jewish converts from Sisebut's time in Netanyahu, 43–45.

<sup>81</sup> Netanyahu, 45–46.

<sup>82</sup> Netanyahu interprets this as meaning the Spanish bishops knew that preaching alone was very ineffective, and thus would not result in mass conversions, 46–47.

times. Canon 66 presupposes that Jews having Christian slaves was still the order of the day, despite the repeated laws against it.<sup>83</sup>

Chintila (636–640) made the Sixth Toledan Council (638) take firmer action against Jews and Jewish converts. The king would not allow any non-Catholics in his kingdom. But the means to achieve this were left open. Apparently, no order of expulsion of non-Catholics was enacted. Overall, Collins may be right in saying that the position of the Jews “probably deteriorated little between the death of Sisebut in 621 and the beginning of the reign of Receswinth in 653.”<sup>84</sup> Chindaswinth’s reign (642–652) even meant a marked relaxation from the anti-Jewish measures.

Receswinth (652–672), however, marks a new high of persecution and unification policy. “All heresies have been extirpated root and branch save Judaism, which still defiles the soil of the Kingdom,” this king said at the Eighth Toledan Council.<sup>85</sup> Compulsory conversion, though, was not allowed by the Church, so the king had to try other measures. He forbade any Jewish practice by any Jew, baptized or not. His rulings on Jewish converts who practiced Jewish rites were especially severe, involving capital punishment, and the king ordered converts to inform on each other. Again, the canons of a contemporary council tell a different story altogether about everyday reality. Toledo X (656) complains in canon 7 that even *clergy* are now selling Christian slaves to Jews!<sup>86</sup>

Wamba (672–680) has left no traces in the *Lex Visigothorum*, so we cannot know exactly which stance he took about the Jewish policy. It is commonly assumed that he relaxed, or at least did not enforce, the anti-Jewish laws of his predecessor.<sup>87</sup>

Erwig (680–687) renewed anti-Jewish laws. Now the remaining unbaptized Jews were finally given the choice allegedly already given them by Sisebut: be baptized within a year or leave the kingdom.<sup>88</sup> The latter was probably what the king wanted to achieve. According to Netanyahu’s interpretation, the king also knew the bishops would welcome this result. They would prefer to get rid of the Jews rather than having them converted *en masse*.<sup>89</sup> Erwig’s laws were also harsh on Jewish converts. In fact, the new laws did not count Jewish converts as sincere in the first place, and therefore would also not grant them the full benefits of conversion. Indeed, the laws instituted a kind of probation period, ending with the convert

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<sup>83</sup> For a convenient listing of the relevant canons of Toledo 4, see Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims*, 31.

<sup>84</sup> Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 131.

<sup>85</sup> Netanyahu, 39.

<sup>86</sup> Mansi, 11:37–40, cf. comment in Roth, *Jews, Visigoths, and Muslims*, 32; and Schreckenberg I:446–47.

<sup>87</sup> See Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 132. On Wamba, see more below in chapter 3 on Julian of Toledo.

<sup>88</sup> *LV* 12.3.3; Zeumer, 432–33; trans. Scott, 385.

<sup>89</sup> Netanyahu, 50–51.

proclaiming his or her new faith through an extensive formula of renunciation of everything Jewish and swearing loyalty to the Catholic Church.

The irony of securing sincerity by making the latter the precondition of gaining benefits was apparently lost on the lawmaker. One other telling sign is written all over Erwig's laws. The king cannot trust his secular officers at court to carry out the law's ordinances. Accordingly, he appoints the bishops as overseers to control that the secular judges do not accept bribes from their Jewish defendants. But not even the bishops are to be trusted, so the king appoints the next bishop in line to oversee the first bishop, and if this second bishop also fails, the king threatens that he will intervene himself. One cannot but agree with the verdict of Salo W. Baron that these laws represent an "approach to totalitarian controls, without the means of a totalitarian state," and that "[t]he king actually envisaged the possibility of a concerted sabotage on the part of the Spanish episcopate. As unreliable as the bishops were the nobles and judges, who evidently were the more accessible to Jewish *douceurs*, as they had little heart for enforcing what obviously were unpopular royal whims."<sup>90</sup> It is also clear that the main problem for the king now was not the remaining unbaptized Jews, but the impossible task of policing the large numbers of insincere converts. He was trying to turn his kingdom into a religious police state, without having the necessary means.

Egica<sup>91</sup> (687–702) recalled these laws but replaced them by others intended to break the Jewish economy and make the Jews poor. In fact, at the council Toledo 16 (693), all Jewish converts who had proven themselves sincere, were exempt from a special tax imposed on all Jews, baptized or not, but the taxation of all the remaining Jews was increased to compensate for the economic privilege granted to the sincere converts.<sup>92</sup> "So, for the first time, a financial incentive to conversion was being offered, and one that cost the royal treasury nothing."<sup>93</sup> The climax of anti-Jewish legislation came the year after, at Toledo 17 (694) Here the king, in his *tome* (introductory speech), required of the bishops that they should make the Jews "deprived of justice" (*iustitiae desecati*).<sup>94</sup> The council followed this up in its 8<sup>th</sup> canon which made all Jews slaves whom the king could hand over to anyone he wanted. Christian slaves in the service of Jews were to take over their former masters'

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<sup>90</sup> Baron, *A Social and Religious History*, 3:43 and 45. See further the same point of view in King, *Law and Society*, 139: "The contrast between the theory and the practice of Visigothic government is arguably nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the anti-Jewish legislation."

<sup>91</sup> On this king and his constant, rather desperate, attempts at securing his own tottering grasp of power, see Thompson, *The Goths*, 242–48.

<sup>92</sup> See Thompson, *The Goths*, 246.

<sup>93</sup> Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 134.

<sup>94</sup> *LV supplementa*, Zeumer, 484–85, cf. Schreckenberg I:461–63.

property—and continue paying the tax their Jewish masters had paid!<sup>95</sup> The bishops said, though, that they enacted these rulings “on the order of our most pious and most religious prince Egica.” The main thrust of Egica’s new anti-Jewish laws was that the Jews were now treated as rebels against the kingdom.<sup>96</sup>

Through these laws, one observes a Jewish population that is still numerous, unbaptized, or only formally baptized, many of which are still wealthy, many of which do also have Christian slaves, after two centuries of laws forbidding such practice. Egica’s laws were probably no more effective than those of his predecessors, and they were to become the last attempt in this impossible royal campaign. Under Witiza (702–710) Egica’s laws may have been abandoned completely, but we have no good sources concerning his policy in the Jewish question.<sup>97</sup>

When one overlooks this whole story, several questions come to mind.

(1) Why did the royal policy concerning the Jews waver to such an extent that every second or third king revoked the anti-Jewish laws of his predecessor? The simplest explanation of this wavering in policy could be that the Visigothic nobility was split in two factions, one—perhaps the largest—that saw it profitable to continue using the economical services of the Jews, and one that supported the religious unification policy and considered the Jews too powerful. The Visigothic kings in general had to rely on support from one of the factions within the nobility.<sup>98</sup> None of these factions won the upper hand on a permanent basis, and so royal policy swung back and forth.

(2) What effect did this wavering have on the Jewish attitude to the anti-Jewish laws? Here I am speculating, of course, but it lies near to hand to assume that the Jews, with time, learned to consider the severest anti-Jewish laws as something that did not last forever. Apparent “conversion” under such circumstances could be a way of weathering the storm, waiting for better times in which one could again openly practice one’s Judaism. The laws themselves speak loudly of the fact that this happened ever so often, and it was a strategy that

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<sup>95</sup> Mansi 12: 101–103. German translation in Schreckenberg I:462–63.

<sup>96</sup> The punishment prescribed in the laws was identical with the one imposed on the bishop of Toledo, Sisebert, who had rebelled against the king, and on all others, who tried the same. See Thompson, *The Goths*, 244. In his *tome*, the king motivates the same punishment for Jews in his kingdom by referring to rumors he has heard that they now conspire with Jews “overseas” who have already rebelled against their Christian kings, *LV* supplementa, Zeumer, 484. The council also justifies its rulings by reference to these rumors in canon 8.

<sup>97</sup> A chronicler of 754 “describes him as merciful... [The king] recalled those whom his father had exiled, restored their property and their slaves, publicly burned the statements of debt to the Treasury which Egica had forced them to sign, and gave them back their palatine posts” (Thompson, *The Goths*, 249). It is not said whether this included the Jews who had been subject to the same punishments.

<sup>98</sup> For the relative weakness of the kings, *vis-à-vis* the aristocracy, see Collins, *Early Medieval Spain*, 111–14.

was hardly frowned upon by those Jews who weathered the storm by other strategies, e.g., bribing their Christian nobles or judges. In fact, the latest laws towards the end of the seventh century do not make much of a difference between converts and non-converted Jews. Indeed, one can sometimes be in doubt as to which category is intended.<sup>99</sup>

(3) How many chose this strategy of temporary conversion? This is hard to answer. If the laws themselves are anything to go by, the grotesque informant activity concerning “fraudulent” converts prescribed for every person in the kingdom, including the converts themselves, could be taken to mean that the problem of non-sincere conversion was rather widespread. If so, the very fact that so many chose this strategy must mean that it was not seen upon as anything like fatal betrayal or apostasy, at least not by most rank-and-file Jews.

(4) How are we to understand the interplay between kings and church? In many of their laws, the kings present themselves as zealous guardians of the true Catholic faith and motivate their anti-Jewish measures as part of their over-all program of purging the kingdom of heresy. There is no reason to doubt that this stated motive was also real. But this does not exclude other motives as well.<sup>100</sup> The seventh century was a difficult time for Jews in other places than Spain, but nowhere else do we observe such an extended and intense effort by kings to extirpate Judaism root and branch as here. So, what could this additional motive have been? As we have seen already, B. Netanyahu suspects that an economic factor is at play. The Jews of Spain may have been important financiers of Spanish nobility. If so, the kings could break the economical backbone of oppositional princes by making the Jews poor or making them exit the country. The punitive measures of his laws—confiscation of property—often aim at precisely such an objective.<sup>101</sup> The stated reasons and the real reasons for the laws do not necessarily coincide.

What about the church? There is hardly any doubt that the kings needed all the support they could get from the church, not least in enforcing unpopular anti-Jewish measures. But it is also quite clear that the church gave such support only reluctantly, and not at all when it came to forcible conversion. Insincere converts *en masse* were simply not wanted by the church, and many ecclesiastics felt bound by the rulings of Gregory and others against such practice. Although ecclesiastics at councils where the king took part paid lip-service to his overtly religious zeal, they probably in practice did their part in avoiding forced conversions. Erwig’s laws, with their stated mistrust of bishops, are eloquent evidence of this fact.

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<sup>99</sup> This is clearly seen and stated in Baron, *Social and Religious History*, 3:39.

<sup>100</sup> E. g. King in his *Law and Society*, 131–33.

<sup>101</sup> As King quite rightly notes, *Law and Society*, 131, note 10.

Having made this review of anti-Jewish legislation and actual policy during the seventh century in Visigothic Spain, where does this leave us as far as *sincere* conversions are concerned? One might easily think that discerning who were sincere and who were not among the many converts of this period must be a hopeless project. But here the sources come to our help. In the historical sources from this period a rather clear distinction is made between, on the one hand, those converts who chose outward conversion as a temporary strategy to survive and abide better times, and those who really abandoned Judaism and embraced Christianity as their new way of life on a permanent basis. Many of the latter category did this of their own free will. One way to observe the difference between these two categories is to observe the Jewish reaction to them. Jews who chose formal conversion as a temporary survival strategy, were apparently not harshly judged for this by their Jewish compatriots, and were, we may assume, welcomed back in the fold when better times came. It was something different altogether with those who voluntarily left Judaism and became Christians. These were branded apostates and could be in for rough treatment from their Jewish compatriots. The decisive distinction supported by the sources is that between voluntary and forced conversion, not the one between sincere and not sincere. Most Jews would naturally suspect voluntary converts of not being sincere in the sense that they converted to gain some social or economic profit. But here we are in the inscrutable realm of real motives for any change of faith, and the historian cannot pass judgment. By usual standards, when a person abides by his or her new faith and way of life, and especially when the person actively promotes it, the person is entitled to being regarded as being as “sincere” a believer as anyone else.

For Visigothic Spain of the seventh century, we have the names of a few such converts, and we can with great probability assert the existence of many more nameless ones. Let us look at the ones we know (see also above, pp. 27–28).

## 2. Stories of Jewish Converts

During the tenure of bishop Aurasius of Toledo (603–615), the bishop succeeded in converting a certain Rabbi Isaac, and Joseph and Naphtali, and some other prominent Jews, to the Christian faith. This upset the leader of the local synagogue, Levi Samuel. He suspected that the bishop had deceived them or enticed them in some unknown way, since their conversion was apparently voluntary. He complained about this to the count of Toledo, Froga. The count, himself a Christian, acted on the complaint and ordered that when coming out from their baptismal service in the cathedral, clad in their white baptismal garments, the



baptized Jews were to be beaten. The bishop, not unnaturally, became furious when this in fact took place, and excommunicated count Froga on the spot. The letter in which he informs the count about the incident and his excommunication, is preserved, and is a first-hand source to this fascinating event.<sup>102</sup> It is unlikely that Count Froga would have dared to do something like this under Sisebut, so the event likely took place before the latter's ascension to the throne in 612. The kings of that period, Witterich (603–610) and Gundemar (610–612) were known for their tolerance towards the Jews, and the fact that bishop Aurasius apparently had nothing to hope from an appeal to the king, strengthens the assumption that this event should be placed during their reigns. There is thus every reason to think that no use of coercion was at play here, and that the head of the synagogue, Levi Samuel, was entirely justified in believing that these converts had accepted baptism under no external duress to do so.

Apart from these voluntary converts, there is one person in the story whose actions are truly remarkable. In Count Froga we have a name of one of those Christian princes whose mind had been “corrupted” by the Jews, according to king Sisebut a few years later. The Count of Toledo was willing to execute internal Jewish justice by humiliating in public some Jewish apostates, and he did so at the behest of the head of the synagogue, and right in the face of the bishop of Toledo! This one story is sufficient to show which forces in Spanish society the anti-Jewish legislation of the kings was up against. One could even contemplate the possibility that Froga was one of those Sisebut had in mind when he talked about the unthinkable case of anyone opposing his law (*LV* 12.2.14).

### 3. A Jewish Believer as Head of the Visigothic Church: Julian of Toledo

The next Jewish believer we know by name, Julian, was to become the most prominent of all within the Visigothic church.<sup>103</sup> He was not a convert himself but was the son of Jewish

<sup>102</sup> The text of the letter is edited by W. Gundlach in *Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi* (vol. 3 of MGH *Epistolae* [7 vols.]; ed. Societas Aperiendis Fontibus Rerum Germanicarum Medii Aevi, Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 689–90. A later scholion to the letter by Julian of Toledo (ca. 1155–60) supplies additional information, which is generally considered reliable. See W. Gundlach, “Der Anhang des III. Epistolae-Bandes der Monumenta Germaniae historica: Epistolae ad res Wisigothorum pertinentes,” in *Neues Archiv: Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 16 (1891): 11–48; the scholion quoted at 46–47. See further comments in Katz, *The Jews*, 34, and Thompson, *The Goths in Spain*, 167–68.

<sup>103</sup> For the following sketch of his life and works, I rely heavily on “Chapter II: The Life and Works of Julian of Toledo (642–690)” in Tommaso Stancati, OP, *Julian of Toledo: Prognosticum futuri saeculi, Foreknowledge of the World to Come, Translated, Edited, and Introduced* (Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation 63; New York: The Newman Press, 2010), 33–164. See also Joscelyn N. Hillgarth's “Introduction” in the only published volume of Julian's works, Hillgarth, *Sancti Iuliani Toletanae Sedis Episcopi Opera: Pars I* (CCL 115; Turnhout: Prepols, 1976), X–XXI; and idem, “St. Julian of Toledo in the Middle Ages,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958), 7–26; repr. as no. IV in Hillgarth, *Visigothic Spain, Byzantium*

converts.<sup>104</sup> They may have been converts of the same type as those we have just encountered, but here we are in the dark, since we have no sources. Julian had a thorough theological education and seems to have picked up some Jewish learning as well. Born in Toledo around 642, he was a pupil of Eugenius II of Toledo (bishop 646–57), a well-known author and poet, and later studied under Ildefonsus of Toledo (bishop 657–67), also famous as an author. At the age of 25 Julian was made a deacon, and at 30 a priest. This brings us to the year 672, the year of king Wamba’s accession to the throne (672–680). Wamba, as we recall, was one of those kings who made no new anti-Jewish laws. This in no way hindered Julian from writing his first literary work in praise of Wamba. I mention this because Julian has sometimes been accused by modern scholars of being a main force behind the anti-Jewish legislation of Wamba’s successor, Erwig, but this is without foundation in the existing evidence. His praise for Wamba rather tells against it (see further below).

Very near the end of his reign, Wamba appointed Julian to serve as the bishop of Toledo. He was consecrated 29 January 680. He remained in this office until his death 6 March 690. Julian soon made his mark as a powerful primate of Spain, independent of the kings (Erwig 680–687; Egica 687–702) and independent of Rome as well. He made himself beloved by the people of the church, and soon after his death there developed a cult of him at Toledo, officially sanctioned in 858. Spanish theologians of the eighth century were proud of him and quoted him in letters addressed to the theologians of Charles the Great as “our Julian.” It certainly served to enhance his reputation that he authored several theological and historical works in which he stood forth as one of Visigothic Spain’s most gifted theologians.

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*and the Irish* (VCS 216; London: Variorum, 1985). Another recent sketch of Julian’s and king Wamba’s careers and the interplay between them is Joaquin Martínez Pizarro, “Julian and Wamba: Two Careers,” in idem, *The Story of Wamba: Julian of Toledo’s Historia Wambae regis* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 56–77. See also a valuable but older study: Bernhard Blumenkranz, “Julien de Tolède (environ 642–690),” in Blumenkranz, *Les auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age* (Études Juives 4; Paris: Mouton, 1963), 118–27. The most reliable primary source for Julian’s life and works is *Vita Juliani auctore Felice Toletano etiam Episcopo*, Migne PL 96:444–52. This bishop Felix was Julian’s second successor and wrote the book only three years after Julian’s death. On this and other primary sources, see Stancati, *Julian of Toledo: Prognosticum*, 33–36.

2021 update: Stefan Pabst, *Das theologische Profil des Julian von Toledo: Das Leben und Wirken eines westgotischen Bischofs des siebten Jahrhunderts* (Vigiliae Christianae Supplements 165; Leiden: Brill, 2021) came too late to my attention to be referenced here.

<sup>104</sup> For discussion of Julian’s Jewish ancestry, see Stancati, *Julian of Toledo: Prognosticum*, 39–40. The first biographer, Felix (see preceding note) is silent about Julian’s family background. Later writers, like Isidorus Pacensis in his *Continuatio Hispana* (754 C.E.), say that he was of Jewish descent, but that his parents were already Christian. Both authors admired Julian and wrote very favourably about him. Since Jewish descent was not a positive asset for any cleric in the period of these writers, it is understandable that Felix chose to say nothing about Julian’s origin. And the only reason why Isidore broke this silence and mentioned Julian’s Jewish ancestry – in clearly apologetic terms – must have been that the fact could not be denied anymore. As an admirer of Julian, he had no reason to invent it. For further references to primary sources and secondary literature, see Stancati, loc. cit., and the discussion about how Julian’s Jewish ancestry played out in his own writings and in his contributions to legislation concerning the Jews, in Pizarro, *Story of Wamba*, 61–65.

In other words: Julian's life was in many ways the story of a Jewish man whose ecclesiastical career was a great success. But how did it look from a Jewish point of view? Modern historians have often portrayed Julian as the typical apostate convert who, as a Christian and a leading bishop, turned against his own people and made life difficult for them. This verdict is based on two decisive events in which Julian apparently played a less than noble role.<sup>105</sup>

Seven months after king Wamba had made Julian bishop of Toledo, a *coup d'état* was staged that replaced Wamba by Erwig as king of the Visigothic kingdom. Julian was the one who gave ecclesiastical sanction to this coup. A short time later, January 681, king Erwig convened the twelfth council of Toledo, and in his *tome* for the council asked the bishops to pass very anti-Jewish decrees – which they did (see above, pp. 32–33). Some historians suspect that this royal order was part of a deal between Julian and the king. As a reward for legitimizing Erwig's *coup*, Julian got the king's support for the anti-Jewish laws that Julian so much desired. In this way, Julian is cast in the role of the archetypical apostate, his main concern being to make life sour for his own people.

However, the contemporary or near contemporary sources that have come down to us, are not sufficient to make this portrayal more than a highly speculative proposal. First, there is nothing in the sources that indicates a connection between Julian's role in the *coup* on the one hand, and the anti-Jewish laws passed at the council on the other. As we have seen already, many of Erwig's predecessors had passed starkly anti-Jewish laws without any prodding from the bishops, and in Erwig's own laws one finds clear signs of suspicion that the nobles as well as the bishops would sabotage them (see above, p. 33). The anti-Jewish decrees of the twelfth council were not as harsh as they could have been, so there is also the possibility that Julian did his best to implement the king's order as "mildly" as possible. The sources hardly allow us to pronounce a verdict here either way.

As to the events leading to Wamba's deposition, the uncertainty begins with the facts themselves. What seems reasonably certain is that Wamba, either because of illness or because he was drugged, for a period suffered mental disorder, to the point of unconsciousness. The king being in this state, Julian was called to his bedside. He administered to him "the rite of confession and penitence", which meant that the sick king was in reality made a monk. He was also advised to sign documents in which he abdicated from his position as king. When the king regained his full mental ability, he was confronted

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<sup>105</sup> For this and the following, and for references to primary sources and modern discussion, see Stancati, *Prognosticum*, 74–89.

with the irreversibility of what had happened, and apparently chose to be reconciled to his fate. At the council of Toledo – under Julian’s leadership – the enthronement of the new king was given full ecclesiastical sanction.

Judged by modern standards, there is no doubt that Julian’s involvement in the murky affair smacks of opportunism. Judged by the standards of those days, opportunism on behalf of the Church’s interests was probably what ecclesiastics were expected to exhibit. It was their job to seek solutions that profited the Church. In this case Julian may also have had the kingdom’s welfare in mind. A destructive civil war between the reigning king and a usurper had the potential of becoming very destructive. But concerning the latter motive, of course, we are only guessing. We have no means of knowing exactly what went on in Julian’s mind.

What I said about the standards of those days seems substantiated by the very fact that, as far as our sources go, we have no evidence that Julian’s involvement in the affair put a stain on his reputation as a good, pious, and able bishop. On the other hand, everything we have seen so far indicates that he was an example of such Jewish believers that become so fully integrated in the Church that their Jewishness was practically extinguished. If we are to seek for indications that this was not the case, we shall have to turn to some of his works.<sup>106</sup>

Before as well as during his tenure as bishop Julian was a prolific writer, but only five of his seventeen recorded works have come down to us. One is the *History of Wamba* already mentioned. He here displays “a mastery of rhetoric and knowledge of the classics remarkable for his age.”<sup>107</sup> He also portrays the Visigothic kingship in remarkably biblical terms, paralleling the present king with the pious kings of Judah and the people of the Goths with Israel.

The other works are more theological. Of most enduring popularity was his *Foreknowledge of the coming age*, a kind of dictionary or summary of what the Fathers, first and foremost Augustine, had taught on all kinds of eschatological questions.<sup>108</sup> One is struck by the concreteness with which Julian approaches the difficult questions of how and with what kind

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<sup>106</sup> For an extensive review of Julian’s works, see Stancati, *Prognosticum*, 109–193.

<sup>107</sup> Hillgarth, “St. Julian of Toledo in the Middle Ages,” 8. The standard edition of the Latin text is to be found in Hillgarth’s *Sancti Iuliani Toletanae Sedis Episcopi Opera: Pars I* (CCSL 115; Turnhout: Brepols, 1976). For an English translation with a useful “Introductory Essay,” see Joaquin Martínez Pizarro, *The Story of Wamba: Julian of Toledo’s Historia Wambae regis* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

<sup>108</sup> The standard edition is now Hillgarth’s in CCSL 115:11–126. The work is mostly a mere collage of excerpts from Cyprian, Augustine, Cassian, Gregory, and other later (mostly Spanish) writers. English translation in Stancati, *Julian of Toledo: Prognosticum*, 371–464. An extensive Introduction and commentary concerning this work is found in the same volume, 165–362.

of bodies the dead are to be raised, how the bodies of human beings eaten by animals are to be restored, where the dead lodge before the resurrection, etc. Taking this to be a typically Jewish characteristic of this writing would mean, however, to overplay the evidence, since there is the same concreteness in his sources, first and foremost Augustine. There is another, apparently quite trivial, detail about this work, however, that may tell us something about Julian's relation to his Jewish countrymen. He sent this book to his colleague of Barcelona, Idalius (666–88), by hand of a Jewish merchant. In a letter of thanks for this gift,<sup>109</sup> Idalius expresses his astonishment that Julian dared put this valuable treasure into such hands.

[H]ere comes a certain Jew, named Restitutus, almost without the light of intelligence, ... transporting a matter conforming to the light, that is, the book that, with learned synthesis, not only from the sentences of the ancient and saintly fathers, but also under the inspiration and the teaching of Christ ... you have brought to completion, and that ... Your Holiness took care to send to our ineptitude, and he presented it to me with both hands. The book that ... I snatched rather than received, I most rapidly opened, and I confess to have been astonished upon seeing the title, because Your Holiness had thought to entrust the cause of such and so precious merchandise to a carrier so untrustworthy and outside the faith. But immediately, made aware by that reason for which a treasure is entrusted to earthen vessels... I gave thanks to the aforesaid Jew because he had delivered intact what he had received, considering that you had perhaps acted ... so that he who was accustomed to transporting transient merchandise might be well disposed to the divine and eternal mysteries.<sup>110</sup>

Idalius may be over-stating Julian's reasons for using a Jewish merchant as courier for his book. There was probably not more to it than Julian using the safest and most efficient transport available to him, and that could very well be a close friend among the Jewish merchants. Whether this Jewish man was baptized or not is hard to tell. Idalius did certainly not regard him as a believer. But could it be that his name, *Restitutus*, "The Restored," had been given him at his baptism? Be this as it may; in this period the treatment of baptized and unbaptized Jews was not that different in any case. It is relevant to notice that this Jewish merchant traveled safely in the 680s, and that his services were used by bishop Julian in the

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<sup>109</sup> Edited by Hillgarth, CCSL 115:3–6.

<sup>110</sup> Idalius' letter is translated in Stancati, *Prognosticum*, 363–66, quotation here at 364.

very period of Erwig's most cruel anti-Jewish laws—again a timely reminder that realities on the ground were often quite different from those prescribed in the law.

In the second of those works that concern us here, Julian evinces more Jewish learning than in the one mentioned above. This second work, *Proving the Truth about the Sixth Age*, is explicitly devoted to polemic against Jewish eschatology. Julian argues that the Jews are wrong in claiming that the Messiah cannot yet have come. They say that the Messiah should not appear before the beginning of the sixth millennium of the world's duration, and since we are now only in the fifth millennium, the Messiah cannot have come already. On this point Julian seems to be well informed about opinions among Jewish sages at his own time because this Jewish doctrine is at variance with the one current among talmudic Amoraim of an earlier period. From the third century C.E. the following statement is preserved in the Babylonian Talmud:

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: “The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era.” But through our many iniquities all these years [of the last two thousand years] have been lost [without the Messiah coming as he should have] (*b. Sanh. 97a/b*).<sup>111</sup>

This scheme of six “days” of the world, comprising one thousand years each, was probably developed among Jewish scholars at approximately the same time as it appears in Christian sources (*Epistle of Barnabas* ch. 15, ca. 130 C.E.). In the version quoted here, it was probably geared to the Jewish calendar, which is still followed, and which places the creation of the world at 3762 B.C.E. This gives 239 C.E. as the last year of the first 4000 years, and hence 240 C.E. as the first year of the messianic era. The anonymous author of the talmudic passage seems to be living some years after this date. He knows that the Messiah did not come at the date envisaged by the Tanna; and explains the delay by Israel's sins. The whole passage may thus come from the latter half of the third century C.E., whereas the Tannaitic tradition quoted in it could have originated in the second, perhaps as part of an attempt to deal with Bar Kokhba's failure as the Messiah – he had come too early to be the Messiah! As time went on, it was possible to revise the six-day scheme and assume that the Messiah would come at the

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<sup>111</sup> Trans. according to Isidore Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin 3: Sanhedrin* (London: Soncino Press, 1935), 657.

beginning of or during the sixth day, and it is likely that this process lays behind the Jewish scheme of the world's ages that Julian knew.<sup>112</sup>

His counterargument is based on the premise that the Jews are right: the Messiah should indeed come at the beginning of the sixth age. But the Jews are wrong when they say that we are still only in the fifth. He here elaborates on arguments taken from discussions of the issue in Eusebius and Augustine. According to these fathers, the Jews in their calculations were wrong on two counts: (1) they preferred the numerical figures of the Hebrew text to those of the Septuagint, and (2) they took the six days or ages to be exactly one thousand years each, whereas a more flexible definition of the length of the ages was required to understand them correctly. They should be defined by generations rather than by years. Rightly understood, the fifth age ended with the birth of Christ; his birth thus actually marked the beginning of the sixth age.<sup>113</sup> Julian underpins this point by quoting three prophecies that have the time reference “in the last days” as a common feature, Genesis 49:10, Isaiah 2:2–4, and Micha 4:1–5. (This phrase was not used in Jacob’s oracle on Judah, Genesis 49:10, but in the introduction to all the oracles: “Gather, so that I may proclaim to you what will happen to you in the last days [*in diebus novissimis*].”) The Judah oracle explained when these last days would come: “The Prince of Judah and the Ruler from his loins until he comes, for whom [the kingdom] is reserved, and he will be the expectation of the Gentiles.” The end of rulership by Judah’s offspring took place when the foreigner Herod became king, and it was under his rule that the Messiah Jesus was born, he for whom the kingdom of the last days had been reserved.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> In his review of such schemes, Abba Hillel Silver argues that the opinion that the Messiah was to appear at the turn from the fifth to the sixth day was in fact also the first and oldest version. See his *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel from the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927; repr. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 16–22. When combined with the rabbinic world era this would mean the advent of the Messiah was to be expected *anno mundi* 5000, that is, 1240 C.E. In Julian’s days, let say in the year 680 C.E. = *anno mundi* 4440, one would indeed be in the middle of the fifth day, exactly the view attributed to contemporary Jews by Julian.

<sup>113</sup> Augustine’s scheme of six ages of the world, corresponding to the six days of creation, was based on the Old Testament for the first two ages: day one was from Adam to Noah, day two from Noah to Abraham. The next three ages were based on Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus: day three from Abraham to David, day four from David to the deportation to Babylon, day five from the deportation to Jesus’ birth. Age (or day) six was of unknown length and stretched from the birth of Jesus to his return at the end of the world. See the very instructive review of this and other similar periodizations in Roderich Schmidt, “Aetates mundi: Die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte,” *ZKG* 67 (1955–56), 288–317; and the very extensive treatment of Augustine and the heritage from him in Auguste Luneau, *L’Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l’Eglise: La doctrine des ages du monde* (ThH 2; Paris: Beauchesne, 1964), 285–407.

<sup>114</sup> See the German translation of this and other relevant passages of Julian’s *Prognosticum* in Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre. Erster Teil: Die Auslegung von Genesis 49,10 im Altertume bis zu Ende des Mittelalters* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904), 303–313. This argument from Gen 49:10 was, in different variations, a classic in Christian anti-Jewish works, beginning with Justin Martyr’s so-called *First Apology* (ca. 150–55 C.E.): “A ruler shall not fail from Judah... until the one for whom it [the kingdom] lies in store should come...’ The task of you [Roman Emperors] is to investigate accurately and to learn how long the

But even if one took the Jewish view that the six days equaled thousand years each, Julian thought he could still prove the Jewish view impossible. Basing himself on the year-count in the LXX (rather than the MT), Julian fixed the birth of Jesus at year 5325 after the creation. This would place Jesus' birth well within the sixth day. But it would also mean that the end of the sixth day, and with it the end of the world, had already taken place in 675 C.E.—an obvious contrary-to-fact statement since Julian was writing around 686. Accordingly, the Jewish notion of the six ages being six thousand years each is once more proven absurd.<sup>115</sup>

Let me add here a general observation that will be relevant later in this book (pp. 205–220). Julian discusses his theme without mentioning even once the talmudic tradition I quoted above. This is an indication of a fact that has increasingly been clarified in quite recent research: The dominant position of rabbinic Judaism as the one normative form of Judaism was not a position it enjoyed right from the publication of the *Mishnah* at the beginning of the third century C. E. and onwards. Nor was it inaugurated with the publications of the two Talmuds in the fifth and sixth centuries. Quite the contrary – the dominance of the rabbinic variety of Judaism took many centuries to become a fact; and this process took more time the further away we are from the rabbinic academies of the Land of Israel and of Babylonia. There is no reason to assume that the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were all “rabbinic” Jews in the seventh century C.E., and the same applies to most of the European Jewries, especially in the West and North. This is of high relevance when it comes to the Christian “discovery” of the existence of the Talmud as late as in the thirteenth century.<sup>116</sup>

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Jews had their own ruler and king. It was until the appearing of Jesus Christ, our teacher... And you, after his appearing occurred, came to rule over the Jews and achieved mastery of all their land” (*1 Apol.* 32.1–3, translation according to Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies, edited with a Commentary on the Text* [OECT, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009], 169, slightly modified). For an exhaustive review of Christian interpretation of Gen 49:10 between Justin and Julian, see Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 51–65; 71–98; 288, 302–303.

<sup>115</sup> In an otherwise interesting comment on Julian's treatise, Richard Landes seems to have overlooked that when Julian employs this chronological argument, he is arguing *ad hominem*. The equation of an age with thousand years is not Julian's own, but that of his Jewish opponents. Julian is therefore hardly in disagreement with himself, as claimed by Landes. I therefore also see no reason to think, as Landes does, that Julian really has Christian opposition in mind, and not Jewish. See Landes, “Lest the Millennium Be Fulfilled: Apocalyptic Expectations and the Pattern of Western Chronography 100–800 CE,” in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages* (Mediaevalia Lovaniensia, Series 1: Studia 15; ed. Werner Verbeke, Daniel Verhelst, and Andries Welkenhuysen; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–211, esp. 171–174.

<sup>116</sup> See the groundbreaking study on this whole question, Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008). An interesting study of the Iberian Peninsula is contained in her “Epilogue: Toward a History of Jewish Heresy,” pp. 347–55.



In the third preserved writing of Julian, he is also first and foremost a biblical theologian. The *Antikeimenon* is a compendium in which apparent contradictions in the biblical texts, especially between passages in the Old and New testaments, are discussed and resolved. In many of his solutions to the problems Julian relies on patristic predecessors, but the brevity of his explanations, and his way of resolving apparent contradictions by distinguishing between different meanings of the same word, point forward to the method of scholastic theologians of a much later date (from the twelfth century onwards).

Julian's literary output could not compete with that of Isidore of Seville, the greatest polyhistor of Spanish theology in our period. But many scholars put Julian before him when it comes to preciseness and rigor of argument. He may well have been a greater thinker than the more famous Isidore.

So, what kind of Jewish believer in Jesus was Julian? In many ways, he represents those many Jewish believers in the medieval period who may be characterized as well integrated and well assimilated Christian Jews. His successful ecclesiastical career, which culminated in his position as leader of the entire Spanish Church, was in no way impeded by his Jewish origin. Things would probably not have gone so smoothly, had he made a point of being Jewish, and of continuing any Jewish observance. It seems likely that Julian did not feel any inclination towards doing so. His Christian theological convictions seem deep-seated and integer. The only way his Jewish background shines through, is in his knowledge of Jewish Messianology and eschatology, and in his friendly relations with at least some Jews.

Julian can hardly be characterized as a typical "convert", since the sources credibly say he was the son of converts. In this respect, he could rather be said to have interest as an example of the tendency to full integration into Christian society, and hence gradual loss of Jewish identification, among offspring of Jewish converts. Julian himself probably had no offspring, but if he had had, they would probably have had minimal if any consciousness of being Jewish. We do not know how and why Julian's Jewish parents converted to Christianity, we even do not know whether they did so due to the pressure of the anti-Jewish laws enacted by some of the kings, or whether this was the case of an entirely voluntary conversion.

Were there many cases like Julian's in other Jewish families that converted to Christianity, without any members achieving Julian's fame? That is beyond proof, but perhaps not unlikely.

#### 4. The Visigothic Era: Concluding Remarks

In conclusion I would like to make the following points concerning Jews and Christians during the Visigothic period of Spanish history:

1. The "normal" situation at the beginning of this period seems to have been one of close and friendly social relations between Jews and Christians. Some Jews attained considerable wealth, and even positions of some influence within society.
  
2. Spanish ecclesiastics largely followed the lead of the Theodosian code and theologians like Gregory the Great, in frowning upon the use of force in converting Jews. But they also had a sacramental theology which made them regard the imprint given to the individual in baptism as irreversible. Therefore, they tried their best to hinder baptized Jews in sliding back to Judaism. This was not a unanimous strategy, however. Council canons were given that reproached clergy who helped the Jews to backslide. Such assistance was probably not a rare phenomenon.
  
3. The royal laws curbing the possibility of living as a Jew in Spain, given from Sisebut onwards, were nullified or disregarded by every second or third king, and obviously boycotted on a large scale by parts of the nobility and the lower and higher clergy. This would naturally lead the Spanish Jews to accept enforced conversion as a temporary strategy to go underground, awaiting better times. These facts would explain why, at the Muslim conquest in 710–11, Spanish Jewry seems to have been for the most part intact.
  
4. The royal policy of enforced conversions had, no doubt, a negative effect on Jewish-Christian relations in general and exacerbated the situation of voluntary converts. They would now more easily be regarded as national traitors. Even so, voluntary conversions did happen, but one would suspect on a smaller scale than in more peaceful times. It is interesting to observe how differently voluntary and involuntary converts were treated by their Jewish

compatriots. It seems we have here, in the sources themselves, a useful criterion for distinguishing between them.

5. It is unlikely that any mass conversion of the majority of Spanish Jews, with permanent effect, took place during the entire period of Visigothic reign, despite nearly desperate royal efforts to achieve it. The few Jewish converts that appear to us by name in the sources seem, all of them, to have been voluntary converts, and they therefore rightly have their place within a history of Jewish believers.

6. There is no doubt that as far as legislation was concerned, the Muslim conquest radically improved the legal standing of the Jews. It also made Jews and Christians equal within the Spanish caliphate. Both peoples were subject to the laws concerning *dhimmi*. This included the payment of a special poll tax for *dhimmis*, deference to Muslims whenever *dhimmis* met them, and other restrictions which could vary with time and place. But the position of the *dhimmis* was a rather clearly defined one, and the behavior of Muslim officials was predictable, most of the time. Jewish life in Muslim Spain entered one of the great periods of Jewish life anywhere, and during the Middle Ages there came to be more Jews in Spain than in the rest of what we now call Europe.<sup>117</sup> A Judaeo-Arabic culture developed, alongside a Christian-Arabic culture. Our available sources tell of Jewish and Christian conversions to Islam during this period, but not, to my knowledge, of any documented Jewish conversions to Christianity.<sup>118</sup> There is one possible exception, however, to which we shall return below.

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<sup>117</sup> See the next Part in general, esp. p. 49.

<sup>118</sup> See Bernhard Lewis' chapter "The Judaeo-Islamic Tradition," in his *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 67–106.

### ***Part Three: Muslim Spain (711–1031)***

#### *Muslim Conquest and the Umayyad Emirate and Caliphate of Cordoba (711–1031)*<sup>119</sup>

In 711 the Muslim governor of Africa, Musa, sent his general Tarik ibn Ziyad across the sea from Ceuta in Morocco. He landed on the shores of the cliff that still bears his name: Arabic *Jebel al-Tarik*, cliff of Tarik, later pronounced Gibr-al-tar. In a surprisingly short time, due to a state of civil war among the Goths, the Muslim armies, mainly made up of Muslim Berbers, won control of the entire Iberian Peninsula, except for the northern coast. Already in 716, they had also conquered Septimania north of the Pyrenees. After a period of inner rivalries between Muslim warlords, and the end of Muslim expansion in the battle at Poitiers 732, the first stable Muslim dynasty was established in Cordoba in 756 by a son of the last Umayyad caliph in Damascus, Hisham. This son, Abd al-Rahman, had survived the coup by the Abassids in Damascus 750. So, while the Umayyad dynasty came to a complete end in Damascus, it had an afterlife in Spain, lasting until 1031.

Abd al-Rahman was wise enough not to proclaim himself Caliph (Arabic *kalifa*, successor [of Muhammad], leader of all the faithful); he opted for the more modest role of governor, *Emir*, while pretending to recognize the new Abbasid Caliph in Damascus. During his long reign (756–788) the Umayyad Emirate succeeded in establishing itself as the unifying central power of all the Muslims of the greater southern part of the Iberian Peninsula which they already had named Al-Andalus. (See Map 1, p. 461).<sup>120</sup>

After the death of Abd al-Rahman in 788 many of his successors had a hard time keeping all the territory of Al-Andalus under their control. Several rebellions and court

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<sup>119</sup> For the historical surveys in this chapter, I rely heavily on Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975; my references are to the paperback edition 1983). For a map of the period, see map nr. 1, p. 461.

<sup>120</sup> First attested in Arab coins from ca. 715. The traditional explanation of this name was that it derived from the short period (409–29) when the Vandals, a Germanic tribe, colonized parts of Spain, but this theory is now abandoned by most scholars. None of the alternative etymologies, like Visigothic *landahlauts*, “lot-lands”, or Latin *Atlantic*, have won widespread acceptance. The most recent proposal is that the name is of pre-Roman origin and probably of archaic Basque background. According to an anonymous chronicle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a Berber reconnaissance group, preparing the Muslim invasion, landed in 710 on a small island named Isle of Andalus. The island was soon given a new name, Isle of Tarif, after the leader of the troop. This name has stuck to the island to this day, the southernmost point of Spain: Tarifa. The original name Andalus was then applied to the land behind the island, and it became the Muslim name of the conquered part of the Iberian insula. The element *anda* could mean a steep cliff scarp, and *luz* could mean long, which seems to fit the 600-meter-long cliff wall rising from the sea at the Isle of Tarif. For an extensive presentation of this theory, see Georg Bossong, “Der Name *al-Andalus*: neue Überlegungen zu einem alten Problem,” in *Sounds and Systems: Studies in Structure and Change. A Festschrift for Theo Vennemann* (ed. D. Restle and D. Zaefferer; Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 141; Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002), 149–64.

conspiracies occurred, and especially the Emir al-Hakam (796–822) became notorious for his ruthless suppression of many of these. His son, Abd al-Rahman II, however, was “learned and pious, [and] he quickly gained renown as a patron of scholars, poets, and musicians, and his court became the cultural center of western Islam.”<sup>121</sup> During his tenure (822–852), we see the first beginnings of the “golden age” of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian interaction, mutual influence, and the resulting cultural creativity that would characterize the tenth and the eleventh centuries in particular. Later this “*convivencia*” between the three faiths would be continued in the Christian Spain that began its ascendance in the north of the Iberian Peninsula, but that story will be told in Part Four.

What did this new order of things mean for Jews and Christians, now under Muslim rule? There is little if any evidence-based knowledge about the conditions of Jews and Christians during the first hundred plus years under Muslim rule in Spain, but when the preserved sources begin to speak about Jewish and Christian life in the emirate during the ninth century, the picture they paint is only consistent with the assumption that the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century was a comparatively good period for the Jews, even more so for them than for the Christians.<sup>122</sup> There must have been considerable Jewish immigration, and in the ninth century we meet wealthy Jews in prominent positions within Muslim society. Jews and Christians were no doubt subject to standard laws for *dhimmis*, subjected peoples. These laws were expressed in different versions of a legendary “pact of Umar”, which allegedly was offered him as terms of surrender by the Christians of Syria (Jerusalem).<sup>123</sup> An Andalusian version, penned by the jurist al-Ṭurṭuṣhī in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, probably reflects those regulations that were in force in Al-Andalus in the period treated here. I quote the whole text, except for the historical introduction, because it makes the everyday life of Christians (and Jews, *mutatis mutandis*) under Muslim rule stand out in graphic detail.

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<sup>121</sup> O’Callaghan, *History of Medieval Spain*, 107.

<sup>122</sup> For an extensive history of the Jews of Muslim Spain, see Eliyahu Ashtor, *The Jews of Moslem Spain* (2 vols.; trans. Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973–79). A shorter account is found in Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula Texts and Studies 10; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 73–233. For English translations of select sources, see Olivia Remie Constable (ed.), *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (Second Edition; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 31–100.

<sup>123</sup> This ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb reigned 634–44, but most scholars doubt that the pact in any of its many versions is as early as this. It could have achieved its “normative” form under the Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar II who reigned 717–20, later to be back-dated to the first Caliph ‘Umar whose many accomplishments are anyhow embellished in numerous legends. For instructive analyses of the pact and its historical implementation in different places and periods, see Norman A. Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands: A History and Source Book* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 25–63 (concerning Spain in particular, see pages 53–61); Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 21–66.

We shall not build, in our cities or in our neighborhood, new monasteries, churches, convents, or monks' cells, nor shall we repair, by day or by night, such of them as fall in ruins or are situated in the quarters of the Muslims.

We shall keep our gates wide open for passersby and travelers. We shall give board and lodging to all Muslims who pass our way for three days.

We shall not give shelter in our churches or in our dwellings to any spy, nor hide him from the Muslims.

We shall not teach the Qur'ān to our children.

We shall not manifest our religion publicly nor convert anyone to it. We shall not prevent any of our kin from entering Islam if they wish it.

We shall show respect toward the Muslims, and we shall rise from our seats when they wish to sit.

We shall not seek to resemble the Muslims by imitating any of their garments, the *qalansuwa* [a tall hat], the turban, footwear, or the parting of the hair. We shall not speak as they do, nor shall we adopt their *kunyas* [the *Abu* (father) or *Umm* (mother) prefixes in names].

We shall not mount on saddles, nor shall we gird swords nor bear any kind of arms nor carry them on our persons.

We shall not engrave Arabic inscriptions on our seals.

We shall not sell fermented drinks.

We shall clip the fronts of our heads.

We shall always dress in the same way wherever we may be, and we shall bind the *zunnar* round our waists.

We shall not display our crosses or our books in the roads or markets of the Muslims.

We shall only use clappers in our churches very softly. We shall not raise our voices in our church services or in the presence of Muslims, nor shall we raise our voices when following our dead. We shall not show lights on any of the roads of the Muslims or in their markets. We shall not bury our dead near the Muslims.

We shall not take slaves who have been allotted to the Muslims.

We shall not build houses overtopping the houses of the Muslims.

(Added by 'Umar: We shall not strike any Muslim.)

We accept these conditions for ourselves and for the people of our community, and in return we receive safe-conduct.

If we in any way violate these undertakings for which we ourselves stand surety, we forfeit our covenant (*dhimma*), and we become liable to the penalties for contumacy and sedition.

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab replied: Sign what they ask but add two clauses and impose them in addition to those they have undertaken. They are: “They shall not buy anyone made prisoner by the Muslims,” and “Whoever strikes a Muslim with deliberate intent shall forfeit the protection of this pact.”<sup>124</sup>

This is not the right place to get involved in an in-depth analysis of these regulations, the details of which could vary somewhat with time and place, but whose basic principles were rather stable. Some principles can easily be discerned: (1) the *dhimmis* are treated as a *conquered enemy*, if they obey these regulations, they pose no threat any more to the conqueror; (2) the *dhimmis* should clearly display in public their *subordinate position vis-à-vis Muslims*. In a shame/honor culture the latter point was of the utmost importance. The same had been the case with the rulings concerning Jews in the Byzantine Theodosian code, even in some details. One should probably not exclude the possibility that Muslim legal tradition on this point owed more than just a little to the Byzantine tradition.<sup>125</sup> (3) For the rulings of the pact to be observed, the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims should in all ways be easily perceptible through different clothing, language, names, knowledge of the Qur’an etc. A certain degree of social apartheid was no doubt intended but was not always very practical in everyday life and dealings.

Another practicality often overruled an important implication of the pact: Muslims could in practice be ruled over by non-Muslims whenever Christians or Jews had high offices in the Caliph’s administrative apparatus. This, of course, was clearly against the spirit as well as the letter of the pact. In practice, however, it was the rule rather than the exception in newly conquered territories and was a reality of life during more than four centuries in Al-Andalus. From the beginning of the Muslim conquest, it could hardly be otherwise because almost all Arab-Muslim manpower was necessary to secure the military control of the vast territories that had so rapidly been conquered. In addition, the old Christian bureaucrats had long experience and competence. Therefore, they were extremely useful, and in the beginning

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<sup>124</sup> Translation according to Bernard Lewis in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 43–44.

<sup>125</sup> As pointed out by Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 26.

indispensable, for the new rulers in Al-Andalus. Men of the Jewish elite also made their way into high positions at the Muslim courts. Some of them had reputedly collaborated with the Muslim invaders against the last Visigothic rulers.

But this situation was a source of conflict also, first *vis-à-vis* the Muslim experts of law, who found this dominance over Muslims by non-Muslims theologically and legally wrong and in flagrant contradiction to the Pact of Umar. It was also problematic *vis-à-vis* the Muslim subjects in general, who found it simply humiliating to be dominated by Christians or Jews. In periods during which the Umayyad rulers felt their hold of power was strong, and felt free to make pragmatic political dispositions, the practical necessities overruled the more restrictive regulations of the pact of Umar. But in times of weakness, when they needed the support of theologians, jurists, and the Muslim subjects in general, the treatment of non-Muslims in high positions could suddenly turn for the worse. The remarkable life and career of one Jewish man, Ḥasdai ibn Shaprūt (905–70) embodies this Jewish predicament in an emblematic way. We shall return to him below (pp. 54–55).

As far as the Christians are concerned, their conditions in Umayyad Spain were on the one hand quite similar to that of the Jews, on the other hand the same conditions were felt much more oppressive by the Christians, since they were accustomed to being in the dominant position. This created more resentment and bitterness among some Christians, especially those who descended from the old Visigothic royalty and nobility and were proud representatives of the Visigothic Christian tradition. For them, adherence to the Latin language, the Latin Bible (Jerome's Vulgate) and the Latin Fathers, like Augustine, Jerome, and their own Isidore of Seville (ca. 560 – 636), was essential to their Christian identity.<sup>126</sup>

For some of them, this inheritance was challenged and seemed threatened when some of their flock began to adopt Arabic language and Arabic customs and tried to express their Christian faith in Muslim garb. Arabic-speaking Christians would soon be called “Mozarabic,” meaning “arabicized.” The threat of complete assimilation was not wholly imaginary, because from the midst of the ninth century, the pace of full conversions to Islam by Christians increased. This could be seen as the logical end of the road that the “Arabicizers” had taken, and sometimes this was no doubt the case. The alluring power of Muslim-Arab culture, its Arabic language and literature, was often described by outsiders as

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<sup>126</sup> For this and the following, see Charles L. Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Studies on the Children of Abraham 3; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 21–144.



irresistible, as in the following quote from the Jewish poet Moses ibn Ezra (ca. 1055–after 1135):<sup>127</sup>

Because the Arab tribes excelled in their eloquence and rhetoric, they were able to extend their dominion over many languages and to overcome many nations, forcing them to accept their suzerainty.<sup>128</sup>

This goes some way towards explaining an acute conflict between some of the Christians of Cordoba and their Muslim overlord, the Emir, during the years 850–59. This conflict had antecedents earlier in the same century. Early in the reign of Abd al-Rahman II the Christians of Mérida and Toledo rebelled against him, but despite promises of military assistance from the Frankish king, the Emir had no problems in crushing the rebellion. But it is in the Cordoban martyr's movement 850–59 that the tension between the Umayyad Emirate and its Christian subjects escalates into violent confrontation, producing some 48 Christian martyrdoms during these years.<sup>129</sup>

The affair with the martyrs in Cordoba did not die quietly away as we enter the following decades. Some of the martyrs belonged to families who had formally converted to Islam and were consequently treated as apostates from Islam. With time, the offspring of such families, those “born [into the faith of Islam]”, the *muwalladun*, would continue a line of protest and occasional uprisings, because the “old” Arabic and Berber Muslims did not recognize them as their equals, and put obstacles to their social and political advancement. This proved to be a source of permanent instability and crisis for the first five decades after 860, and by 912 the Umayyad rule was on the very point of complete collapse.

In that year, however, a new and energetic Emir entered his reign, Abd al-Rahman III (912–961). His tenure and that of his son and successor, Hakam II (961–976) mark the very high-point and the golden age of Umayyad rule in Al-Andalus. Abd al-Rahman III managed to negotiate treaties with all the rival factions within his reign. The Christians got back their traditional rights under *dhimmi* law, and were even, beyond that, guaranteed equal rights with the Muslims. So were all the *Muwalladun*. In this way, Abd al-Rahman's long reign became a

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<sup>127</sup> The use of Arabic was also controversial, although in practice unavoidable, among the Andalusian Jews. See in general Esperanza Alfonso, *Islamic Culture Through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to the twelfth century* (London: Routledge 2008), esp. ch. 1: “Attitudes toward language: Hebrew vis-à-vis Arabic,” 9–33; on Moses ibn Ezra in particular, 17–21.

<sup>128</sup> Quoted here after Stillman, *Jews of Arab Lands*, 58.

<sup>129</sup> The bibliography concerning this episode will be given below, when we return to the role played in it by Paulus Alvarus, see below, p. 59.

new era of peaceful co-existence between members of the three faiths of Spain, and Cordoba acquired the position of the leading European city of philosophy, science and all the arts.

It helped boost the prestige of Cordoba that Abd al-Rahman III in 929 ended the theoretical recognition of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad and proclaimed himself Caliph and the leader of all the faithful. He manifested this high dignity by building a magnificent palace outside Cordoba, the Madinat al-Zahra, where he received diplomatic envoys from the Muslim and Christian courts all around the Mediterranean world. Cordoba itself was adorned with buildings that rivalled those of Constantinople and Baghdad, and a steady influx of Muslim scholars and artisans from the East soon made Cordoba a worthy rival to the other two imperial capitals. “[Al-Hakam’s] court was filled with philosophers, poets, grammarians, and artists, and his library is said to have included as many as 400.000 volumes. Nowhere in Western Europe was a similar collection to be found.”<sup>130</sup>

Also, non-Muslim scholars were attracted to this new center of learning, and an inter-religious and international milieu of creative scholarship emerged. A Jewish man embodies this in his own person and in his remarkable career. Ḥasdai ibn Shaprut (915–70) was born in Cordoba; his father being known for endowing synagogues and subsidizing Jewish scholars.<sup>131</sup> Ḥasdai received a comprehensive education in Jewish-Hebrew as well as Christian-Latin learning, and of course in all aspects of Muslim science. Like so many Jewish scholars, he first made his mark as an excellent physician, and in the history of medicine he is credited with having rediscovered an antidote against poison, known in Antiquity – very valuable knowledge in a Caliph’s court where poisoning was an expedient way of getting rid of rivals. Ḥasdai won the trust of Caliph Abd al-Rahman III, who in turn appointed him prince, *nasi*, of the Jewish community in Al-Andalus. The Caliph also found him an excellent and useful diplomat. In his home, Hasdai gave lavish parties in which young and aspiring people of all three faiths met and exchanged knowledge and ideas. In his diplomatic missions, he transcended the religious divides in astonishing ways. One of his famous diplomatic feats illustrates this.

During the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Constantinos VII Porphyrogenetos (945–959) the Byzantines and the Umayyads found a common enemy in the Fatimid dynasty which by now had established a new Caliphate along the North African coast from the Atlantic to Libya. Ḥasdai was a key figure in the diplomatic missions and negotiations that now took

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<sup>130</sup> O’Callaghan, *History of Medieval Spain*, 158.

<sup>131</sup> For a succinct review of his life and career, see Jane S. Gerber, *The Jews of Spain: A History of the Sephardic Experience* (New York: The Free Press [Simon & Schuster], 1994), 46–52; for a much more extensive and detailed treatment, see Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* I:155–227.

place between the Emperor at Constantinople and the Caliph at Cordoba. Envoys were sent both ways. When a Byzantine mission arrived in Cordoba in September 949, they brought precious gifts from the emperor, among them some rare and valuable books. Perhaps the most valuable of these was a famous handbook of pharmacology, *On healing substances* by Pedanios Dioscorides (1<sup>st</sup> cent. C.E), in which more than six hundred plants, oils and stones good for health were listed and their use and effects described. The book was, for fifteen centuries after its publication, regarded as the foremost textbook in its field, and several translations, also into Arabic (middle of ninth century in Baghdad), existed. But they were all in part faulty and incomplete, because when these translations were made, no one had sufficient knowledge of Greek to understand all the Greek names of plants. And now the Caliph of Cordoba had in his possession a splendidly adorned copy of the Greek original, but no one who could read and understand it. Accordingly, he asked the Emperor in Constantinople to send an expert in Greek, so that a new translation into Arabic could be made. The emperor sent a monk named Nicholas, and he was soon joined by the expert physician Ḥasdai. “With youthful energy Ḥasdai set to work translating, with Nicholas, the names of those remedies hitherto not understood by the Arabs, and in particular coordinating the translation with the correct idiomatic usage in Arabic Spain.”<sup>132</sup> So, here we have a Muslim Caliph sponsoring a translation carried out by a Christian with expertise in Greek and a Jewish doctor fluent in Arabic!

With the death of Abd al-Rahman’s son and successor Al-Hakam II in 976, the golden period of the Umayyad caliphate came to an end, and in 1031 it was abolished altogether. But regarding the flowering of Andalusian culture, among Muslims as well as Jews and Christians, this continued unabated until the arrival on the Iberian Peninsula of a new Berber dynasty in 1086, the so-called Almoravides. Their brand of Islam was of a new and different kind, drastically narrowing down the rights and the security of Christians and Jews. With this, a steadily increasing stream of Jewish and Mozarabic Christian emigrants to the Christian North began, and this opened a new chapter in our story, which will be treated under the heading “Christian Spain (1031–1212)” (= Part Four) below.

Looking back at the Umayyad period and its aftermath let me add some general remarks on the question of conversions between the three faiths in this era of Muslim dominance. It goes without saying that the “normal” conversion of a Jew in Muslim Spain would be a conversion to Islam. A considerable number of such conversions must have happened, in Spain as

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<sup>132</sup> Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* I: 168.

elsewhere, but there is little explicit evidence.<sup>133</sup> This is not surprising. “Jewish writers preferred not to dwell on so painful a subject, while Muslim authors deemed it hardly worthy of mention. For the Muslims, unlike Christians, the conversion of the Jews to their faith had no special theological significance.”<sup>134</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that conversions to Islam took place during the Umayyad period, among Jews as well as among Christians.<sup>135</sup> These conversions were, as a rule, entirely voluntary. Coercion towards conversion was the exception, not the rule. And since voluntary conversion under such circumstances represent a distinctive type of conversion, to be met with in other places and in other periods as well, I shall try to characterize it a little further. I believe the mechanisms behind the conversions that did happen, with Jews and Christians, during the relatively tolerant Muslim rule, have considerable explanatory potential in other contexts also.

One important incitement to this type of conversion is a perceived *superiority in culture* of the faith to which one converts. If this is combined with some tolerance from the government, and opportunities of successful *assimilation* offered to minorities, not a few will take the full step of assimilation and convert to the faith that is culturally and politically in the front seat.<sup>136</sup> This does not mean, however, that this process is legally unproblematic. Conversions by Jews and Christians to Islam often resulted in mixed marriages and families, which meant that close social and familial contacts existed between *dhimmi*s and converts to Islam: husband /wife, parents/children, siblings of different faiths, etc. Such mixed families were a constant challenge to religious legislators: how should the Muslim members behave to keep their religious purity uncontaminated?<sup>137</sup>

Despite such obstacles, there were many advantages in joining the politically dominant faith, especially for ambitious individuals seeking high positions in society, e.g., as courtiers of princes and kings, and especially when the politically dominant faith was also perceived as culturally superior, as mentioned. This latter perception was widespread in Spain during most of the Umayyad period. The Muslim Berbers who conquered Spain in the 710s and 720s were hardly culturally superior to Spanish Christians, rather the contrary. But with

<sup>133</sup> On Jewish converts to Islam in general, see Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 92–102.

<sup>134</sup> Lewis, *Jews of Islam*, 92.

<sup>135</sup> The only quantitative study is Richard W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979). He estimates that around 850 C.E. some 20 or 30% of the total population in al-Andalus were Muslims; in 960 ca. 50% and by 1200 more than 90%.

<sup>136</sup> The process is well described in Jessica A. Coope, *The Martyrs of Córdoba: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 2–4.

<sup>137</sup> On the juridical problems involved in regulating family and everyday life in mixed families comprising *dhimmi*s as well as converts, see Janina M. Safran, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 125–67.

the influx of Eastern Muslims under the Umayyads, this changed. These Muslims brought with them the rich Muslim culture that had developed in Syria and in Mesopotamia under the Umayyad caliphs. In this process the mediatorship of Nestorian Christians had been of paramount importance. Before and after the Muslim conquest the Syrian Christians had translated the essential texts of the classical Greek heritage into Syriac, and then into Arabic, and by so doing, had become the cultural tutors of the new Muslim rulership. The Muslim scholars soon took the lead, and in the East and in Spain there developed a Muslim science and philosophy superior to anything known elsewhere at that time.

The most pioneering effort was the development of a religious philosophy, the so-called *Kalam*, which underpinned the theological metaphors of the Qur'an with strictly rational arguments taken from Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. It was especially the doctrine of God's unspeakable unity that was at the heart of this attempt at rational theology.<sup>138</sup> This, of course, was a formidable challenge to Christian trinitarianism, but also proved an incentive to Jewish theologians. In the wake of Muslim *Kalam*, a Jewish philosophical theology was developed for the first time,<sup>139</sup> and from the 11<sup>th</sup> century this school of thought had its center in Spain, finding an early master in Solomon ibn Gabirol (1026–1050 or 1070), an early critic in Judah Halevi (1085–1141), and its crowning figure in Maimonides (1135–1204).

Spanish Christians under Muslim rule, the so-called *Mozarabs* ("Arabicized [Christians]") and Latin theologians in Christian Europe, had their hands full in developing a religious philosophy on the same level as their Muslim challengers.<sup>140</sup>

In a situation in which Muslim culture, Muslim theology and Muslim philosophy were perceived as superior, as indeed they were in Muslim Spain during the ninth and tenth centuries and even beyond, conversion to Islam of Jews and Christians can be seen as "complete" or "full" assimilation into a dominant culture which was tolerant enough to let

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<sup>138</sup> The standard monograph is still Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976). See also Richard M. Frank, *Texts and Studies on the development and history of kalām* (VCS 833; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2005).

<sup>139</sup> See especially Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); and Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism: A History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig* (New York: Schocken, 1973), 53–291.

<sup>140</sup> On the Mozarab Christians in Spain, the most recent and extensive monograph in English is Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 52; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1–211. In Spanish, see Manuel Gonzalez Jiménez and Rio Martín, eds., *Los Mozárabes: una minoría olvidada* (Colección Ciclos 22; Seville: Fundación el Monte, 1998). Christian theologians responding to Muslim and Jewish challenges are exemplified, e.g., by Pierre Abelard; see, e.g., Stefan Seit, "'Dilectio consummatio legis'—Abaelards 'Gespräch eines Philosophen, eines Juden und eines Christen' und die Grenzen eines rationalen Gotteslehre," in *Juden, Christen und Muslime: Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter* (eds. Matthias Lutz-Bachmann and Alexander Fidora; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 40–95.

such assimilation be a voluntary option. We shall see more examples of this type of conversion later in this volume. The typical convert has been described as “ambitious, upwardly mobile, literate enough to become proficient in Arabic... [C]onversions were stimulated in part by economic opportunities in urban areas... [T]he best and brightest Christian men were being drawn to work for Muslims, to become fluent in a foreign culture, and eventually to abandon their faith altogether.”<sup>141</sup>

This process did not take place unchallenged. There were Christians who deeply resented that so many of their coreligionists abandoned the faith of their fathers and betrayed Christ and the Church so easily. This conflict came to a peak in the famous Martyrs’ Movement in Cordoba during the 850ies. Some Christians openly provoked the Muslim authorities by publicly denouncing and defaming Muhammad. Some of the Christians who had converted to Islam, repented of their choice, and reverted to Christianity, publicly denouncing Muhammad and thus joining the other confessors in martyrdom.<sup>142</sup> Altogether some 48 martyrdoms are recorded by two chroniclers who were themselves leaders of the martyr movement: the priest Eulogius who ended up a martyr himself, and a layman of high standing, Paulus Alvarus, who wholeheartedly supported the martyr movement. Paulus Alvarus is a significant person in our context because in one of his letters he makes a point of having Jewish ancestors who encountered Jesus and recognized him as their Messiah. He therefore may qualify in some sense as a Jewish Believer in Jesus. It is to him and his son that we now turn our attention.

### 1. Jewish Believers in Jesus in the Muslim Period: Paulus Alvarus and Son.<sup>143</sup>

As I said earlier, one would expect conversions from Judaism to Christianity to be few in this period. There was hardly any social, economic, or other non-theological incentive at all to such conversions. Therefore, many scholars assume, as self-explanatory, that when Alvarus presents himself as of Jewish stock, the conversion of his forefathers to Christianity must have taken place during the forced conversions of the Visigothic period, more than 130 years

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<sup>141</sup> Coope, *The Martyrs*, 10–11.

<sup>142</sup> On the martyrs of Cordoba, see Franz Richard Franke, “Die freiwilligen Märtyrer von Cordoba und das Verhältnis der Mozaraber zum Islam” (Diss. Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main, 1958); Edward P. Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba (850–859): A Study of the Sources*. The Catholic University of America Studies in Medieval History, New Series 17. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1962; Coope, *The Martyrs*; Janina M. Safra, *Defining Boundaries in al-Andalus: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Islamic Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 91–99.

<sup>143</sup> Because Paulus Alvarus was a spokesman for Latin as the literate language of Christians in Spain, I prefer to call him by the Latin version of his name. Other scholars prefer the Spanish version, Paul Albar.

earlier.<sup>144</sup> This, of course, cannot be ruled out completely, but in my view, it is not very likely. I shall return to the question shortly.<sup>145</sup>

The reason we know about Alvarus' Jewish descent at all is that he became involved, not only in a debate about the martyrs of Cordoba, but also in a debate with a Christian convert to Judaism. The Christian name of this convert was Bodo; he was a deacon at the court of Louis the Pious. At his conversion to Judaism—in 838, probably at Saragossa in Spain—he took the Jewish name Eleazar. He became an effective and zealous missionary for his new faith and wrote several tracts in which he attacked his former Christian faith as untenable.<sup>146</sup> In order to have full freedom of speech, he had found his way to Muslim Spain, and later came to Cordoba. According to Christian sources, the convert showed his zeal for his new faith in urging the Muslim Emir to give the Christians of his realm the choice of conversion to Islam or Judaism or be executed.

Among Christians, the conversion, and the missionary activity of Eleazar caused great consternation. In the 840s, when his activity was at its peak, Christians were already very concerned by a steady “brain-drain” of ambitious Christians who assimilated into the Muslim culture of the social elite, some to the point of full conversion.<sup>147</sup> Eleazar's campaign did nothing to improve this situation, seen from the Christian side, and, in general, the arguments of a former believer against his former faith often appear weighty. Whether Eleazar's presence in Cordoba immediately before the outbreak of the martyr movement among Christians in the 850s in any way precipitated the latter is not known. What is known is that

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<sup>144</sup> This is taken for granted by Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* 1: 74, “... apparently [Alvarus was] a descendant of those Jews who were forced to be converted to Christianity during the rule of the Visigoths.” Blumenkranz, *Auteurs chrétiens*, 184, n. 2: “One should not think of a conversion by Paulus Alvarus himself; the adoption of Christianity should rather be seen as having been accomplished by distant ancestors” (my translation).

<sup>145</sup> On Alvarus in general, see Carleton M. Sage, *Paul Albar of Córdoba: Studies in His Life and Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1943); Allen Cabaniss, “Paulus Albarus of Muslim Cordoba,” *Church History* 22 (1953), 99–112; Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, 7–9, 35–66, 148–66, 305–32; Blumenkranz, *Auteurs chrétiens*, 184–191; Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* 1: 74–79; Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (I.–II. Jh.)*, (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23 Theologie 172; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), 485–88; Coope, *The Martyrs of Córdoba*, esp. 35–54; Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam*, 45–144. Alvarus' preserved letters and works are edited in Ioannes Gil, *Corpus Scriptorum Muzarabicorum* (2 vols.; Madrid: Instituto “Antonio de Nebrija”, 1973)1: 143–361. On Alvarus' son, Hafṣ Ibn Albar, the basic study is still Douglas Morton Dunlop, “Ḥafṣ b. Albar—the last of the Goths?” *JRAS* nr. 3/4 (1954): 137–51; supplemented by an important correction regarding Hafṣ' date in idem, “Sobre Ḥafṣ Ibn Albar al-Qūṭī al-Qurṭubī,” *Al-Andalus* 1955: 211–13; see also P. Sj. van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature from Medieval Spain: An Attempt at Periodization” in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Studies in the History of Religions 63; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 203–24, esp. 206–212; Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 14–15, 35–36, 158–60; Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 108–109

<sup>146</sup> On Bodo-Eleazar, see Blumenkranz, “Du nouveau sur Bodo-Eleazar?” *REJ* 112 (1953): 35–42; Allen Cabaniss, “Bodo-Eleazar: A Famous Jewish Convert,” *JQR* 43 (1953):313–28; and Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* 1: 70–81.

<sup>147</sup> See above, p. 56.

Paulus Alvarus, very active in supporting the martyr movement, was also literary active in polemics against Eleazar. Alvarus' letters to Eleazar, dating from around 840, are preserved; Eleazar's only in fragments.<sup>148</sup> Their contents can, however, to a large extent be reconstructed from Alvarus' letters.<sup>149</sup>

It is in the third letter to Eleazar that Alvarus comes to speak of his own origin. This is because his Jewish ancestry plays a role in his theological argument. The passage is of sufficient interest to be quoted here in full:

[Eleazar had argued, based on Isaiah 40:15.17, that the “nations”, i.e., the Christians, were only nothing in the sight of God]. [T]he prophet spoke well when he said that “*all* the nations” [are non-existent] ... because he included the people of Israel among the nations. When he said “all”, he made no exception. But if all nations in the sight of God are “as if they did not exist and as nothing and emptiness”, then Israel is included in “all nations.” Accordingly, Israel, too, is as if non-existent, nothing and emptiness. I say this to break your pride and undermine the cunning of your assertion. Or else—could I not more freely, shorter, and more clearly give an answer, applying to myself with more right all that pertains to one who is of Israelite stock, rather than what you have picked for yourself. Understand wisely, conclude with insight, judge fairly: Who do you think is most worthy of the name Israel—you who, as you say, have turned from idolatry to the worship of the Highest God and are now a Jew not by race, but by faith—or I, who am a Hebrew as well by faith as by race. But I do not call myself a Jew since I have been given “a new name, given to those whom the Lord names” [Isa 62:2]. Yes, Abraham is my father, for my forefathers were saplings from his vine. They awaited the coming Messiah, and by receiving the Messiah when he came, they had a greater claim on being Israel than those who waited him but rejected him when he came and still expect him... But the Gentiles who turn to the faith of Israel are day by day added to the people of God, just as you appeared to join the error of the Jews. And if you inquire why we do not observe the ceremonies of the Law, listen to Isaiah's full trumpet blast: “Do not remember the former things, do not consider things of old. I am doing something new” [Isa 43:18–19]. So as not to give you any pretext of evasion, he spoke

<sup>148</sup> In Gil, *Corpus Scriptorum*, the relevant letters (nrs. 14–20) are found on pp. 227–70.

<sup>149</sup> Blumenkranz even tried his hand in reconstructing a missionary tract by Eleazar, based on Alvarus' correspondence: “Un pamphlet juif médio-latin de polémique antichrétienne,” *RHPR* 34 (1954): 401–13; repr. in Blumenkranz, *Juifs et Chrétiens: Patristique et Moyen Age* (VCS 70; London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), nr. XII.



about the future, not the past. And to point out that this was said not only to the Gentiles, but also to us Jews, he continued: “Now it springs forth, so that *you* will know it” [Isa 43:19b]. On purpose he thus confirmed that “we”, the Jews, would know the new things. But to demonstrate as clear as possible the salvation of the Gentiles, he added: “I will make in the wilderness”—signifying [by “wilderness”] those who were not cultivated by the plough of the Lord—“a way” [Isa 43:19b], that is Christ who said, “I am the way...” [John 14:6].<sup>150</sup>

One reason for quoting this whole passage is to let the reader observe the impossibility of a purely metaphorical interpretation of Alvarus’ sayings about his own Jewish descent. Jessica A. Coope says that “[t]he point of the letter is that Christians are the true Jews because they recognized the Messiah when they saw him so it is difficult to say whether Alvarus is claiming literal or only metaphorical Jewish ancestry.”<sup>151</sup> In my view a non-literal understanding of Alvarus’ sayings about his own ancestry destroys the very logic of the whole passage. The decisive difference between himself and Eleazar is that the latter could only claim Jewishness by his faith, *not* by his ancestry (*non gente, sed fide*), whereas Alvarus could claim true Jewishness on both counts (*et fide et gente*): he was a descendant of Abraham in a literal sense, but also in a spiritual sense, since Abraham’s true seed among the Jews were those who received Jesus as their Messiah (e.g., Rom 9:6–8; Gal 3:16).

But how far back should we place his *maiores*, his Jewish forefathers, who had recognized Jesus as the Messiah? In principle they could be anyone from his parents right up to the first generation of Jewish disciples.<sup>152</sup> Since, however, the consciousness of being Jewish usually did not survive many generations among converted and fully assimilated Jews, it seems reasonable to assume that Alvarus is speaking of forebears not many generations back. It could well be his grandparents. The way he speaks about their receiving the Messiah once they met him does not accord well with forced conversion on their part. We should therefore in all probability think of them as voluntary converts.

<sup>150</sup> *Ep.* 18.5.1–36; Gil, *Corpus Scriptorum* 1: 249–50, my own translation.

<sup>151</sup> Coope, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, 37–38.

<sup>152</sup> A sample of opinions: Blumenkranz: “One should not think of a conversion by Paulus Alvarus himself; the adoption of Christianity should rather be seen as having been accomplished by distant ancestors. But the memoir had remained alive in the family to the point of influencing the choice of his first name, Paul, in memory of Saul who had become Paul,” *Auteurs chrétiens*, 184, n. 2, my translation. Ashtor: Alvarus’ ancestors were forcefully converted in the seventh century, some 200 years (six to eight generations) before Alvarus, *Jews of Moslem Spain I*: 74 with note 19, p. 412. Enrique Flórez in *España Sagrada* 2: 11: Alvarus is referring to the first years of Christianity, in which period many Jews became believers in Jesus (rendered here according to Ashtor 1: 412, n. 19). Compare Ashtor’s remark: “... it is unthinkable that a Christian family remembered its Jewish origin over a period of eight hundred years and took pride in it” (*ibid.*).

Towards the end of the eighth century, two generations before Alvarus, we get an interesting glimpse of relations between Christians and Jews in Muslim Spain that could be of relevance concerning this issue. In 795 pope Hadrian 1 wrote the Spanish bishops from Rome, complaining that he had heard that in Spain there was much socializing between Jews and Christians. “Many who call themselves Catholics live together with Jews and unbaptized Pagans. They eat and drink with them and commit other errors, saying they are not thereby polluted.”<sup>153</sup> This, I believe, is evidence of precisely that level of social contact and rather harmonious living together in which voluntary conversions may happen, in both directions. Perhaps we should place Alvarus’ Jewish forebears who converted to Christianity in such a setting, rather than in the turbulent years of the coercive measures of the Visigothic kings of the seventh century?

There is one apparent obstacle to Alvarus’ claim of Jewish descent, however. In his last letter to Eleazar, Alvarus also boasts of *Gothic* (i.e., Visigothic) descent:

But that you may know who I am, and that you should avoid [confronting] me even when I keep silent, hear Virgil, “The *getae* scorn at death and praise the wounds,” and again, “The horse on which the Getan charges,” and the words of the poet, “On this side the Dacian, and on that presses the Getan.” I am, I tell you, of the race whom Alexander declared should be avoided, whom Pyrrhus feared, and Caesar trembled at. Of us too our own Jerome said: “He has a horn in front, so keep away.”<sup>154</sup>

Alvarus’ point here is that Eleazar, a man from Gaul, has been foolish enough to engage a true Goth in battle.<sup>155</sup> The Christians of al-Andalus in general made a point of holding on to the traditions of Visigothic Spain and its Church, and “Goth” soon became a term of ethnic and cultural honor as well as martial prowess. It is especially the latter aspect which Alvarus refers to here.

While Coope suggested we take Alvarus’ claim of Jewish descent as only metaphorical, Sage seems to claim the same concerning Alvarus’ Gothic descent. Spaniards (“Goths”) bragging about being more proficient in battle than Gauls (in this case Eleazar) was

<sup>153</sup> PL 98:385; for comments, see Blumenkranz, *Auteurs chrétiens*, 143–44; and Schreckenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte* 1:478.

<sup>154</sup> Gil, *Corpus Scriptorum* 1: 270, lines 8–16; translation according to Dunlop, “Hafs b. Albar,” 150, modified.

<sup>155</sup> 2021 update. On the whole issue of Gothic identity for all Catholic Christians in Spain, regardless of Roman or Gothic ethnicity; and the same issue in Gaul (Frankish versus Roman ethnicity), see now Erica Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500–700: From Romans to Goths and Franks* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017).

a standard *topos* among Spanish writers, and since antique poets and writers were called in as witnesses of the fact (as they are in Alvarus' letter), the Spaniards called themselves by the name used in the antique writers: *Getes*. No claim of Gothic descent need be involved. The name simply signifies Spanish nationality.<sup>156</sup>

There is one medieval Spanish source, however, that stands in the way of this interpretation. The Spanish-Arabic historian Ibn al-Qutiyya (beginning of eleventh century) refers to Alvarus' son as one of the descendants of Romulos, the third son of the Visigoth king Witiza (702–10).<sup>157</sup> I therefore think one should follow Blumenkranz and Ashtor in taking both ancestries at face value and harmonizing them by supposing a mixed marriage somewhere in Alvarus' pedigree.<sup>158</sup> Concerning the connotations attached to the word Goth, Sage's remarks are very relevant and illuminating, however.

In any case, Alvarus presents himself as a fully assimilated Christian, and the only reason he comes to speak of his Jewish ancestry is to make a polemical point against a Christian convert to Judaism. The extent of his successful assimilation is indirectly shown by his pride in being also a genuine Goth.

Having established this much concerning Alvarus' double ethnic background, let us look a little closer at his literary efforts. The little we know about him is all gleaned from his own writings—13 letters and the following four works: (1) *Indiculus luminosus*, "The Illuminating Tract," a report on and defense of the Cordoban martyrs;<sup>159</sup> (2) *Confessio*, "Confession", a kind of theological prayer manual; (3) *Vita Eulogii*, "The Life of Eulogius," a hagiographic praise of Eulogius, the great ideologue and historian of the Cordoban martyrs; and (4) a collection of 14 Poems.<sup>160</sup> Alvarus was probably a layman, but his proficiency in theological discourse made him a prominent figure among Cordoban Christians. He was an eager advocate of the Cordoban martyrs, and he did not mince words in his quite vitriolic attacks on Islam. That may be the reason why his *Indiculus luminosus* appears anonymously in the tenth century codex containing his works.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Sage, *Paul Albar of Cordoba*, 4.

<sup>157</sup> For this, see van Koningsveld, "Christian Arabic Literature," 207–8.

<sup>158</sup> Blumenkranz, *Auteurs chrétiens*, 190, n. 34, and Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* 1: 412, n. 19.

<sup>159</sup> See the extensive study of this work in Colbert, *Martyrs of Córdoba*, 266–304; and in Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam*, 75–94. The latter part of Alvarus' work is an extensive and rather hostile polemic against Islam and Mohammed.

<sup>160</sup> For an extensive review and analysis of Alvarus' letters and literary works, see Colbert, *Martyrs*, 148–166; 174–184; 199–200; 209–10; 266–332.

<sup>161</sup> See Colbert, *Martyrs*, 148, n. 1.

In our context it is his exchange of letters with Bodo-Eleazar that is of the greatest interest. The third of the four preserved letters is dated 840, which gives us the approximate date for the whole correspondence. I here summarize the argument of Alvarus' letters.

In the first he addresses Eleazar in a very polite way. The discussion is to be based upon the Scriptures alone, not on profane authors. It is of no use to discuss the merits of the Hebrew text versus those of the Septuagint; it is also of little use to discuss the Scriptural sayings about the election of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, since these sayings have been sufficiently presented by the ecclesiastical writers before him. The main point in the discussion between Jews and Christians is the time of the Messiah's coming. Gen 49:10 must imply that the Messiah has come, since a ruler of Judah should not be lacking until the coming of the Messiah. It is of no use, as some Jewish teachers do, to invent a Jewish king and a Jewish kingdom in some remote, unknown place across the sea. Also, according to the Law a king of Judah must be anointed in Jerusalem and nowhere else. Dan 9:26 implies that Jerusalem is to be destroyed only after the Messiah's coming and his death. If the Jews are still awaiting the Messiah's coming, it also means that there is a future destruction of Jerusalem to be expected, probably worse than the one that occurred in the days of Titus and Vespasian. The seventy weeks of Dan 9:24 equal 490 years, and whatever historian you consult, you will find that this was the time span between Daniel's prophecy and the time of Jesus.

In his response, Eleazar seems to have pointed out that a ruler of Judah was already lacking during the Babylonian exile. Apart from that, the words in Gen 49:10, *shebet* and *mechoqeq*, do not mean "scepter" and "ruler", but "tribe" and "teacher", and the Jews still have those.<sup>162</sup> Eleazar also proposed a different chronology for the coming of the Messiah, resulting in his coming 27 years from the time of writing (840), i.e. in 867.<sup>163</sup> On the other

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<sup>162</sup> This was hardly a new interpretation taken out of thin air by Eleazar. Already in the days of Judah the Prince (first decades of the third century), Gen. 49.10 and Davidic ancestry was ascribed to the Jewish Patriarch of the Land of Israel, later to be transferred to the Exilarch in Babylon. See Martin Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen: Eine quellen- und traditionskritische Studie zur Geschichte der Juden in der Spätantike* (TSAJ, 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 212–24, esp. 218–21, with references to *b. Hor.* 11b; *b. Sanh.* 5a, and *Gen. Rab.* 97.10. In Targum Onqelos Gen 49:10 is rendered like this: "The ruler shall never depart from the House of Judah, nor the scribe/teacher from his children's children for evermore—until the Messiah comes...." (transl. according to Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onqelos on Genesis 49* [Society of Biblical Literature Aramaic Studies 1; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976], 12. On the "ruler from Judah" Aberbach and Grossfeld have the following useful remark: "Since Judah could be regarded as both an individual and a tribe, T[argum] O[nqelos] emphasizes that the text refers to the tribal dynasty of Judah" (p. 12, note 21). The interpretation of *mechoqeq* as "teacher" or halakist is based on etymologizing: the *mechoqeq* is the one who establishes or teaches *choqim*, halakic rulings. This is paralleled in *b. Sanh.* 5a: "... the ruler's staff...", this alludes to the descendants of Hillel, who teach the Torah in public" (see Aberbach and Grossfeld, 13, note 22).

<sup>163</sup> According to Alvarus' second letter, Eleazar based this on Dan 12:12. The 1335 "days" spoken of there were taken to be years by Eleazar, he also took the last five years to be a period after the coming of the Messiah in

hand, Eleazar seems to have conceded that the Messiah was in fact born at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem,<sup>164</sup> but that he had been and was still hidden, and would appear as Messiah only in the near future. Christians were not only wrong in their translations of Gen 49:10; they were also wrong in translating *alma* in Isa 7:14 as “virgin,” the correct translation being “young woman.”

Alvarus in his second letter betrays that Eleazar’s argument concerning Gen 49:10 has taken him off-guard. He says that the Jews until now had never disputed the traditional Christian interpretation of “ruler” and “staff” as referring to a succession of kings (which was not interrupted during the Babylonian exile, as shown by Hag 1:1), and that Eleazar here claimed to have found something in the Hebrew text which no one before him had found. It is evident here that Alvarus was ignorant of a long-standing Jewish tradition of interpretation, and that Eleazar in general had a more thorough Jewish learning than Alvarus. Paulus Alvarus further argued that Jerome had already refuted the Jewish arguments concerning the *alma* of Isa 7:14, and that this was not the only text the Jews had changed or deleted to undermine the Christian argument from prophecy. They had, for example, excised the whole book of Wisdom from the biblical canon, because of the clear references to Christ contained in it. On the other hand, in Deut 21:23 they had *added* the words “of God” in the saying that anyone hung on a tree is cursed. In this way this saying was turned against Jesus. Alvarus’ contention here may appear strange, since the disputed words occur not only in the Hebrew text, but also in the Septuagint and the Vulgate. Quite likely, however, Alvarus’ argument is based upon Paul’s (the Apostle’s) omission of these words in the quotation in Gal 3:13, and on Jerome’s comments on this verse.

Concerning Eleazar’s argument from Dan 12:12, Alvarus seems unprepared for it, and counters it with a rather strained alternative calculation. His main argument, however, is that Josephus clearly understood Daniel to predict the Messiah’s coming as coinciding with the age of the Temple’s destruction.

In his second response, Eleazar seems to have changed his argumentative strategy. He now focused on the question of God’s elected people, and quoted prophecies to the effect that

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which Gentiles would serve the Jews. This would mean that he dated the Daniel prophecy to 464 B.C., and the coming of the Messiah as happening 1330 years later, i.e., A.D. 867. On similar calculations among Jewish sages a century later, esp. Saadia Gaon, based on Daniel 12, see Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel from the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927; repr. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 50–54.

<sup>164</sup> This assertion was probably based on the same passage in *Lam. Rab.* 1.16 § 51 that was—four hundred years later—to cause Moses ben Nahman some problems in the disputation at Barcelona, 1263. See below, pp. 238–39 and 243–45, and also Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 18.

Israel would be saved and assembled (e.g., Isa 49:5), whereas the Gentiles were as nothing before God (Isa 40:17).

The third letter of Alvarus responds to this, and the main line of his argument here is exemplified in the excerpt quoted above, pp. 60–61. Concerning Isa 49:5 he remarks that one should not read the Hebrew as “Israel will be gathered *to him [God]*,” reading *lo* as *lāmed wāw*. One should rather read “will *not* be gathered,” reading *lo* as *lāmed aleph*, “not” (as in the massoretic consonant text). Again, Alvarus depends on Jerome; he confesses in the same letter that he himself has no knowledge of Hebrew. The letter is quite long, and partly repeating arguments advanced earlier. Since Eleazar had interspersed his last letter with invectives against the Christian faith, Alvarus feels justified in turning these invectives against Eleazar himself and his Judaism. The debate therefore ended very much on a note of mutual insults. Nevertheless, Alvarus tried to end on a conciliar note: “May God open the eyes of your heart, he who always reigns in ages without end. Amen.”

It appears that Eleazar in his response accused Alvarus of being unoriginal in his arguments, and only repeating things he had found in earlier Church Fathers.<sup>165</sup> Alvarus responded with a noticeably short fourth letter, in which he said that Eleazar, a Gaul, had been stupid to engage Alvarus, a Goth, in a battle of words, since everyone since Antiquity knew that the Goths were more valiant in war than anyone else.

Reviewing the whole correspondence, one can hardly escape the impression that neither of the combatants were very original in their arguments, and that the few points at which they said something new, were among their weakest. This is true especially about their respective speculations on the different end-terms in Daniel. Perhaps the most sensible remark on this topic is Alvarus’ short retort to Eleazar’s prognosis of the Messiah’s coming 27 years after their present year: Let us both wait and see!

The correspondence took place around 840; possibly at a time when Eleazar had not yet settled in Cordoba. In 847 we see the Christians of Cordoba complain about his anti-Christian activity in their city, urging the Frankish king to call Eleazar back to Gaul.<sup>166</sup> This is the last we hear of Eleazar, but concerning Alvarus, most of his literary output derives from the following decade, the 850s. Here we can see that he took a very active part in the Muslim/Christian conflict that developed in Cordoba during this decade. Whether this conflict

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<sup>165</sup> In great measure, this is true. Alvarus’ main argumentative source is Jerome; in his apocalyptic calculations he depends heavily on Julian of Toledo.

<sup>166</sup> See Ashtor, *Moslems of Spain* 1: 80.

was in any way instigated by the activity of Eleazar is not known. Ashtor may seem to indicate that such was the case: “The Jewish leaders saw this [Eleazar’s activity in Cordoba] as an opportunity to attack the Christians, to make them odious to the Moslems and impress the ruling powers. They intended to take as much advantage of the conversion of the distinguished priest as possible... According to the Christians, the convert proposed that the Moslem government compel the Christians, on pain of death, to forsake their faith and become Jews or Moslems.”<sup>167</sup> These may be reasonable surmises, but the direct evidence supporting the first part of this statement is slim at best. But there is no way of contradicting Ashtor when he says that “one of the ironies of history was that this Christian spokesman [Alvarus], who rose to do battle with the German priest who had become a Jew, was himself of Jewish derivation...”<sup>168</sup> It seems as if Alvarus’ own Jewish descent was perceived by him as giving him a special responsibility of defending his Christian faith against Jewish attacks. He wanted to do it in a friendly manner which could win his opponent but allowed himself to fall back on base invectives when this failed.

In general, Alvarus comes through in his written works as a rather irritable and contentious person, who was also strongly involved in some inner-Christian conflicts, and some private ones. For some unmentioned offense, he submitted to penitence, and had difficulties in obtaining a revocation of the penitentiary restrictions.<sup>169</sup>

In his own time, however, many Christians valued his polemical skills and knowledge, and sought his advice on how to behave during the Cordoban persecutions. And while supporting the choices of the voluntary martyrs and defending them against other Christians who criticized them for seeking the glory of martyrdom at the expense of other, more sensible Christians, Alvarus nevertheless warned believers who sought his advice that they should not rashly and inconsiderately run towards martyrdom.

Alvarus is a significant figure also in another respect. All his writings are in Latin, and he warned against adopting Arabic as the language of Iberian Christians, a tendency he observed among the young Christians of his own day. In chapter 35 of his *Indiculus*, he complains that “Christian youths are abandoning the sacred writings of the Church, the Scriptures and the Fathers, in favor of the Arabic rhetoric of the Muslims.”<sup>170</sup> Colbert remarks that in Alvarus’s time, Latin may not have had such a weak position among the Iberian Christians as historians have often assumed.

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<sup>167</sup> Ashtor, *Moslems of Spain* 1: 80.

<sup>168</sup> Ashtor 1: 74.

<sup>169</sup> See in detail Colbert, *Martyrs*, 305-32.

<sup>170</sup> Quoted after Colbert, *Martyrs*, 154.

But a change of tide was underway, and it may seem an irony of history that one of the first Iberian Christians to write in Arabic, was Hafṣ ibn Albar al-Qutī, “Hafṣ son of Albar the Goth”. “Albar the Goth” is almost certainly the same Alvarus whose acquaintance we have just made, who so proudly had ridiculed Bodo-Eleazar for daring to engage in battle with himself, a real Goth. Alvarus himself had only written in Latin, and warned the Christian youths of his day against adopting Arabic “rhetoric”, i.e., Arabic language and ways of expression. But his own son Hafṣ had no such qualms. Quite the contrary, he became in his own days “*the* celebrity of the Christian Arabic literature in [late] ninth century Spain.”<sup>171</sup>

In 889 C.E. he published an Arabic translation of the Psalms, encouraged to do so by Valentius, the bishop of Cordoba. This is the only one of his works to be preserved entirely, though only in one manuscript.<sup>172</sup> He was a prolific author, however, and in later Arabic works, Christian and Muslim, several quotes from other of his writings occur.

Hafṣ says in an Introduction to his Psalms translation that earlier prose translations of the Psalms exist, but because they are wooden word-for-word translations, they are of no use for liturgical singing.<sup>173</sup> The poetry of the Psalms is spoiled, and their true meaning lost.

The psalm verses are well written in the original, non-Arabic language, all in strict meter. This is a pleasant rhythm to which one can sing, and which is understood by him who is an expert in melodies... The chanting of the Psalms is done according to certain melodies to which one sings, and which have their own measures.<sup>174</sup>

The rhythmic Latin text translated by Hafṣ is the Vulgate’s Psalter. He chose to render it in Arabic *rajaz* meter because, he said, it most resembled the Christian iambic meter.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> On Alvarus as a Goth, see above, pp. 62–63. On Hafṣ ibn Albar being his son, see in particular D. M. Dunlop’s two articles: “Ḥafṣ b. Albar—the last of the Goths?” *JRAS* 3/4 (1954): 137–151; and “Sobre Ḥafṣ ibn Albar al-Qūṭī al-Qurṭubī,” *Al-Andalus* 20 (1955): 211–13. In the first of these, Dunlop read Ḥafṣ’s own dating of his Arabic translation of the Psalms as referring to the year 989 C.E. and taking Hafṣ to be Alvarus’ grandson rather than son; in the second, he revised this and argued that the dating in the text referred to 889, thus making Hafṣ Alvarus’ son. This identification has been accepted by van Koningsveld as well as Burman and I see no reason to question it. See P. Sj. van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature from Medieval Spain: An Attempt at Periodization,” in Shamir Khalil Samir and Jørgen S. Nielsen (eds.), *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Studies in the History of Religions [*Numen* Bookseries] 63; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 203–24, esp. 206–12; Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 14–15; 35–36; 158–60; and Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 108–109.

<sup>172</sup> For details, see van Koningsveld “Christian Arabic Literature,” 206–7 with note 21.

<sup>173</sup> Hafṣ’s Introduction to his translation of the Psalms is written in rhythmic verses, and translated in its entirety in Dunlop, “Ḥafṣ b. Albar,” 139–146. In the counting of the 145 verses, I follow Dunlop.

<sup>174</sup> Verses 21–27, translation according to van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature,” 208.

<sup>175</sup> Verses 40–53; in Dunlop op. cit., 141.



This means that what Hafṣ wanted to achieve with his translation was a transition to Arabic as – at least in part – the liturgical language of the Iberian Church. No wonder, therefore, that he assures his readers that this was not something he had ventured to do all by himself.

Throughout this entire work I have consulted [our] authorities, in whom I have put all my trust. They have given it their approval, inspired it, expressed their sincere wish for it... These people excel in their religion, they are the bright lights in the realm of sacred learning.... They considered this a pious work.... I have moreover performed it with the approval of the excellent bishop of the Church, Valentinus, who is noted for his sublime qualities, the best bishop now as well as in the past.<sup>176</sup>

Another interesting aspect of this translation is that it soon became popular and much quoted, not only in Christian sources, but also in Muslim and Jewish ones – in Muslim al-Andalus as well as in the Christian Spain in the north. This fact testifies to a situation at the end of the ninth and beginning of the tenth century in which contacts between scholars across the religious borderlines had again returned to the calmer mode of the period before the decade of the Cordoban martyrs.

Before we leave Hafṣ ibn Albar, I mention very briefly that he was also, in all probability, author of another work entitled *The Book of the Fifty-Seven Questions*. This work has not been preserved, but a Muslim author writing during the first decade of the thirteenth century, called the Cordoban Imam (*al-imam al-Qurtubi*), quotes sufficiently many and extensive fragments of it for us to get an impression of its character and contents.<sup>177</sup> It seems that the book was arranged as a series of answers by the author responding to questions put to him by a Muslim. The answers provide information and explanation concerning Christian festivals and rites, but also explanations of a somewhat apologetic nature concerning points of theology, first and foremost the triune nature of God. Al-Qurtubi says that the Christian author “elaborated on the Trinity from a point of view grounded in logic and philosophy.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, in the first known example of Christian literature in Arabic in Muslim Spain, we find a streak of philosophical rationalism as far as theology is concerned. We shall see the significance of this in Part Four, chapters 3–5.

<sup>176</sup> Verses 98–107, Dunlop, 144; translation according to van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature,” 209.

<sup>177</sup> See van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature,” 209–12; and further concerning al-Qurtubi, see below, pp. 177–78.

<sup>178</sup> Van Koningsveld’s paraphrase, *ibid*, 209–10.

While al-Qurtubi did not appreciate the Christian apologetics of Hafs ibn Albar, he had praise for his Arabic language and knowledge. He said that “Hafs was one of the most penetrating minds of the Christian ‘priests’, who was better versed in Arabic than any of them...” The reason for this, according to al-Qurtubi, was the fact that Hafs grew up under the protection of Muslims, “studying their branches of learning and surpassing all other Christians in this.”<sup>179</sup>

## 2. Concluding Remarks

While the father Alvarus eagerly advocated Latin as the language of Christians under Muslim rule in Spain, his son Hafs became a pioneer in the Arabization of the literature of these same Christians. In other words, the latter became one of the fathers of the Mozarabs, the “arabized” Christians. In the period that followed, Christian writers in al-Andalus would enculturate their expressions of their faith much more deeply than he had done. They would also, in increasing measure, draw on the literary heritage of the Arabicized Christians of the East, who had gone through this process some centuries before them. In this way, the distinctive Spanish “Mozarabic” Christianity developed, described so well in the pioneering studies of van Koningsveld and Burman.<sup>180</sup>

During the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century this Mozarabic tradition was more or less overwhelmed by the influx of Latin scholastic theology and books in the Iberian Peninsula. But in the process, the Mozarab tradition was preserved as a valuable enrichment of the Latin theology that now became dominant, also in Spain. The two currents united in a fruitful way in the one dominating figure in Christian Spain at the turn to the twelfth century: Petrus Alfonsi (on him, see below, Part Four, chapter 4).

In conclusion, Alvarus and son, two Christians of Jewish descent, played major roles during a period that proved to be foundational for the Mozarab Christians. Alvarus bore a Latin first name, Paulus, and wrote in Latin only. He was a fully assimilated Christian and said explicitly that “I do not call myself a Jew since I have been given ‘a new name, given to those whom the Lord names’ [Isa 62:2].” The only reason he comes to speak about his Jewish ancestry at all, is because it provides him with a polemical argument against the Christian convert to Judaism, Bodo-Eleazar. Otherwise, Alvarus is a fully assimilated member of the

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<sup>179</sup> Van Koningsveld, “Christian Arabic Literature,” 210, and cf. below, p. 180, note 494.

<sup>180</sup> Van Koningsveld has an impressive review of many and many-sided contacts between Christian, Muslim and Jewish scholars quoting and recognizing each other throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries, 212–19.

Church in al-Andalus, like his son. But the latter carries an Arabic surname and writes in Arabic (neither of them seem to have much knowledge of Hebrew). In so doing, against the advice of his father, he became one of the fathers of the Mozarabic Church of the tenth and eleventh centuries in Spain. In hindsight, these two centuries could be called the golden age of this Christian Church in al-Andalus. In its formative period, two Jewish believers played crucial roles.

## ***Part Four: Christian Spain (1031–1212)***

### *The First Period of “Reconquest”*

#### *The Situation prior to the Reconquest*

The Muslim conquest of Spain was never complete.<sup>181</sup> To the North-West a Christian kingdom was established, first under the name of Asturias. This kingdom gradually expanded its territory, and around 910 moved its capital to the plains of León, taking this as its new name. Further to the east, the small Basque kingdom of Navarre, with capital Pamplona, emerged as an independent unit during the ninth century. Further eastwards along the Pyrenees we find, in the same century, a chain of counties nominally under the Frankish crown, but increasingly independent. If we spool the film of history rapidly forwards to ca. 1030, we find a chain of independent Christian kingdoms or princedoms along the northern coast of Spain and further along the Pyrenees. From west to east we have Leon-Castile (capital León), Navarre (capital Pamplona), Aragon (capital Jaca), and Catalonia (capital Barcelona).

Before I go on to tell the story of the so-called reconquest of Muslim Spain by the Christian North, a few words are in place concerning the little we know of the Jewish population in these Christian areas. Sources are scarce, mainly because there were fewer Jews living there than in Muslim al-Andalus, but also because the poorer level of economy and culture in these kingdoms was less conducive regarding literary output. Yitzhak Baer has a good review of the little there is to know, and I shall briefly summarize it here.<sup>182</sup>

Going from East to West, we find evidence of a Jewish community in Barcelona in the late Carolingian period (latter half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century). A Jewish merchant of Barcelona brought news to Charles the Bald and carried back from the emperor ten pounds of silver to the bishop of Barcelona for the repair of his church. This reflects the political situation: since the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Catalonia was a Frankish province, the Count of Barcelona being the Frankish Emperor’s vassal. The good relations between a Jewish merchant, a local

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<sup>181</sup> For the following survey of political history in Christian Spain, see Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975, repr. 1983), 163–330; Simon Barton, *A History of Spain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 31–37 and 44–72.

<sup>182</sup> Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Two volumes, trans. Louis Schoffman; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1992), I:39–46.

bishop and the Frankish Emperor, were probably the rule rather than the exception in this period, and things did not change much in this regard when Catalonia became an independent county a little later. Throughout the 11<sup>th</sup> century there is evidence for Jewish ownership of landed estates throughout Catalonia, especially near the larger cities. In terms of legal rights, there were few if any differences between Christians and Jews. “We hear a Jew pleading, like a man deeply rooted in the soil for generations, ‘I do not want my ancestral estate to fall into the hands of strangers’.”<sup>183</sup> In the city of Barcelona there is evidence of a Jewish community in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. From this century and the next we hear of Jewish tailors, shoemakers, gold and silver smiths, moneylenders, and minters. Jews loaned money to the counts of Barcelona, and minted gold coins for them. “A roster of the Jewish households of Barcelona, compiled in 1079, contains about sixty names, and the community at this time already had a long tradition behind it.”<sup>184</sup> The backside of the privileges and protection granted to the Jews by the count was that they were regarded and treated like his own slaves.

If we turn westwards to the kingdoms of Aragon and Navarre, there is not much evidence to build on. The little we have would seem to indicate that the situation of the Jews there was like that of the Jews of Catalonia: they were the king’s serfs, which entailed protection as well as obligations.

In Castile we find evidence of local Jews as early as the second half of the tenth century. Here also their conditions of living were regulated by letters of privilege issued by the crown. The Jews were regarded as the property (serfs) of the local counts or the crown. “Everywhere, land was the basis of the Jewish economy, with only modest beginnings of commerce and handicraft.”<sup>185</sup> In Jewish (Hebrew) and Christian (Latin) documents of the tenth and eleventh centuries we hear about Jews holding lands in and around the then capital, León. The regulating law presumed that the Jewish and Christian landowners in the area had common interests and equal rights. In León itself, there was an organized Jewish community with learned scribes and men of law in its midst.<sup>186</sup>

In brief, the situation of the Jews in the Christian north of Spain before the reconquest was comparable to that of the Jews in France at that time. As so often in Christendom, the conditions under which the Jews were living were largely dependent on their usefulness for the Christian community. For secular princes, that was the most important factor. Ecclesiastical canon law in general imposed more restrictions on the Jews, and this influence

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<sup>183</sup> Baer, *History* I: 40.

<sup>184</sup> Baer, *History* I: 41.

<sup>185</sup> Baer, *History* I: 43.

<sup>186</sup> Baer, *History* I:44.

was to become more pronounced during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. And that brings us into the period of the so-called Christian reconquest of Spain.

*The Reconquest: First Period, a Survey* (see Map nr. 2, p. 461)

In 1031 the last Umayyad Caliph of Cordoba, Hisham III, was deposed, and the Caliphate as such was abolished. From this time on, Muslim al-Andalus became fragmented into small kingdoms, *taifas*, ruled by rivalling princes and kings, who were more than willing to enter alliances with the Christian kings of the north to crush their Muslim competitors.<sup>187</sup> This, of course, did nothing to strengthen the political or military clout of the Muslim kingdoms in general – it was now the Christian north that was on the offensive.

León and Castile were united to one kingdom in 1037 under the reign of Ferdinand I (1035–65).<sup>188</sup> Under the leadership of this energetic king, parts of what is now northern Portugal was reconquered from the Muslims. But in this early phase, military means were not the only ones for gaining control over parts of the Muslim south. Increasingly, the Christian rulers exacted “protection” payment from the weaker Muslim princes. For large sums of gold and silver, the Christian princes defended their Muslim neighbors against anyone attacking them, be they Muslim or Christian. In this way the Muslim south was increasingly fragmented and impoverished, while the Christian north became wealthier by the day. A Christian officer, sent by Alfonso VI (1079–1109) of Castile to exact protection taxes from the ruler of Granada about 1075, is reported to have said to him:

Al-Andalus belonged to the Christians from the beginning until they were conquered by the Arabs... Now... they want to recover what was taken from them by force, and so that the result may be final, it is necessary to weaken you and waste you away with time. When you no longer have money or soldiers, we will seize the country without the least effort.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> There were also Christian generals and soldiers who served Muslim rulers as mercenaries, right from the ninth century through the twelfth. These forces not only fought the Muslim rivals of their Muslim overlords, but on occasion could engage in fight with other Christian forces. On this phenomenon, see Simon Barton, “Traitors to the Faith? Christian Mercenaries in al-Andalus and the Maghreb, c. 1100–1300,” in *Medieval Spain: Culture, Conflict, and Coexistence. Studies in Honour of Angus MacKay* (ed. R. Collins and A. Goodman; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 23–45.

<sup>188</sup> This union remained in effect for the greater part of the period treated here, and since Castile gradually became the dominant part, I will in the following call the entire territory of the combined kingdoms Castile.

<sup>189</sup> Quoted from O’Callaghan, *History*, 204.

This prophecy was to prove more accurate than most. Already ten years afterwards, in 1085, Alfonso VI conquered the old Visigothic capital of Toledo. It was a momentous event, signaling an entirely new situation for Christian Spain: A Christian king, daring to reclaim the old title of Emperor, was now ruling the capital of the proud old Christian Visigothic-Roman Empire of the West, and when he now styled himself “Emperor of all the Spains,” it was hardly seen as ridiculous by any Christian. We shall have more to say about Christian Toledo in a moment.

But with the conquest of Toledo, the expansion of Castile-Leon came to a temporary halt of some hundred years’ duration, whereas Aragon in the east was more on the offensive in the following decades. This had in part to do with the fact that the conquest of Toledo triggered the Almoravid invasion the year after (1086), and the Almoravids succeeded in halting further expansion of Alfonso’s territory, they even pushed him back on several fronts, but did not regain Toledo.

The Almoravids (from Arabic *al-murabitun*, men of the *ribat*) were a Berber movement founded by the inflammatory preacher Abd Allah ibn Yasid. The origin of the name is uncertain, but a *ribat* was a fortress-monastery in which ascetic fighters for ibn Yasid’s radical form of Islam got their training. Under the able leadership of the military leader Yusuf ibn Tashufin the Almoravids succeeded in establishing an empire comprising Mauretania, Morocco and the western part of Algeria, making Marrakesh its capital (1062).

With Aragon, the Almoravids had less success. In Pedro I (1094–1104) and his brother and successor Alfonso I, *el Batallador*, “The Battler” (1104–34), Aragon got kings who successfully conquered one city after another from Muslim rule, the most important being Huesca (1096), Barbastro (1101), Tudela (1115), and Saragossa (1118).<sup>190</sup> With this, the reconquest conducted by the Aragonese kings also came to a temporary halt. It was now the Counts of Barcelona who took over the leading role. The greatest of them was Count Ramon Berenguer IV (1131–1162). He united his county with the Kingdom of Aragon, and a new period of conquests of important Muslim cities began. He conquered Tortosa (1148) and Lérida (1149), and with that, the entire Ebro valley was in Christian hands.<sup>191</sup>

But the Christian kingdoms now faced a new and formidable opponent: the Almohad dynasty, which from their entry into the Iberian Peninsula in 1146–47 were able not only to halt the Christian expansion from the north, but also in some places to reverse it<sup>192</sup>. It was

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<sup>190</sup> For further details, see O’Callaghan, *History*, 218–222 and Baer, *History I*: 52–53.

<sup>191</sup> Further details in O’Callaghan, *History*, 231–32; Baer, *History I*: 53–59.

<sup>192</sup> See the detailed story in O’Callaghan, *History*, 239–49. See also Map 2 below, p. 461

now the Christian north that was ravaged by internal fragmentation and conflicts, thereby being much weakened from a military perspective. A kind of uneasy stalemate lasted until 1212.

In that year a great crusader army, comprising French knights, Spanish military Orders and regular troops of Castile and Aragon, being led by the kings of the two kingdoms and accompanied by several bishops, went out from Toledo in June. They captured city after city on their way south until they engaged an Almohad army at Las Navas de Tolosa in July and won a decisive victory. With that, the second phase of the reconquest was opened. It lasted until only Granada was left as a Muslim vassalage in 1248, when the last Muslim stronghold outside Granada, Seville, surrendered to Christian forces. This story will be taken up later in this volume (Part Five, “Almohad Demise, Christian Supremacy,” pp. 188–191).

In conclusion: after the reconquest of Seville in 1248, the only Muslim province on the Iberian Peninsula was Granada, while on the Christian side we now have, from west to east, the kings of Portugal, Castile, Navarre, and Aragon, the latter kingdom also comprising Majorca.

### 1. The Reconquest – a Crusade<sup>193</sup>

In Western Europe, the eleventh century ended with Pope Urban II’s call for the first crusade in 1095. In Spain, the crusading idea took a form special to the peninsula. Instead of traveling to the Holy Land to fight Muslim infidels there, the Christian warriors of Spain had a valid target much closer to home. In fact, the father of the first crusade, Pope Urban II, expressly encouraged Spanish nobles *not* to go to Jerusalem, but to fight the Spanish Muslims instead, and he was not the first to do so. O’Callaghan argues convincingly that the crusading idea emerged first in Spain, so that the main elements in Urban’s famous speech in Clermont in 1095 had for some time been promoted in Spain already.<sup>194</sup> In Spain, warriors bent on crusade could realize their ambitions by taking part in the Christian re-conquest. As early as 1063 pope Alexander II (1061–73) told the clergy of Volturno, Italy, that they should instruct French knights who were heading to Spain to fight the Muslims, to confess their sins and to receive an appropriate penance. “We, by the authority of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, relieve them of penance and grant them remission of sins.”<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> I here present a perspective on the Spanish reconquest brilliantly argued in Joseph F. O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>194</sup> O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 1–32.

<sup>195</sup> Quoted after O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 24.



O'Callaghan calls this a revolution in ecclesiastical thought: "In the past one might atone for sin by entering a monastery or going on pilgrimage, but from this time on remission might be gained by taking up arms against the enemies of Christian society."<sup>196</sup> We are probably seeing here the very birth of the idea of crusade.

One important difference between the Spanish crusades and those to the East is conspicuous in another letter from the same pope, in 1063, addressed to the bishops of Spain and the province of Narbonne in France. The pope is pleased to hear, he says,

how you have protected the Jews who live among you, keeping them from being killed by those [French knights] leaving for Spain to wage war against the Saracens. Moved by stupid ignorance or blind greed, they wish to murder those who are, without a doubt, destined for salvation by divine piety [the Jews]. Thus, even Saint Gregory [Pope Gregory the Great] set himself in opposition to a certain few who were burning to destroy them, affirming that it is impious to want to destroy those who have been saved by divine mercy to live dispersed throughout the world, after having lost their country and their freedom, condemned to a long penitence for having spilled the blood of the Savior. Surely the case of the Jews and that of the Saracens are different. One may justly fight [only] against those [the Saracens] who persecute Christians and drive them from their towns and their own homes.<sup>197</sup>

This will be of great relevance when we turn to the renewed relationship between Jews and Christians in Spain during most of the reconquest period.

There was also another great difference between the Spanish crusades and those to the Holy Land. The latter had only very limited and only temporary success, the Spanish crusades had lasting results. Otherwise, there were many similarities as far as crusading ideals and ideas are concerned. At a council in Santiago de Compostela in 1125, Archbishop Diego Gelmírez gave eloquent expression to the prevailing ideal:<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 25.

<sup>197</sup> Alexander II, *Epistolae*, PL 146:1386–87, quoted here after Gilbert Dahan, *The Christian Polemic against the Jews in the Middle Ages* (trans. Jody Gladding; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 15; the last sentence after O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 25. The need for such warnings against crusader violence towards Jews in Spain is shown by an incident in Toledo during the buildup of the crusade against Las Navas de Tolosa in early 1212. Some northern knights arriving in Toledo to take part in the crusade are reported to have killed many Jews in the city. They probably did so inspired by the deplorable examples of crusaders in France and Germany. See O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 70.

<sup>198</sup> This powerful bishop convened councils in Compostela, one each year from 1121 through 1125. See in general Jaime Justo Fernández, *Die Konzilien von Compostela 1120–1563* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 22–55.

Just as the soldiers of Christ and faithful sons of the Holy Church opened the way to Jerusalem with much toil and bloodshed, so we should become soldiers of Christ and, defeating his wicked enemies, the Saracens, beat a shorter and much less difficult path through the regions of Spain to the same Sepulcher of the Lord. Thus, let anyone who wishes to take part in this expedition examine his sins... [and] hasten to make a true confession and sincere penance, and then, taking up arms, let him not delay in going to the camp of Christ in the service of God and for the remission of their sins.<sup>199</sup>

In Spain, several crusader-like orders were created. During the first decades of the twelfth century, these orders made significant inroads on Muslim territory. While the beginning of the first reconquest in Spain antedated the first crusade to the Holy Land, and while, accordingly, the whole set of terminology pertaining to “crusade” was not fully in place at that early period, there is no doubt that after ca. 1100 the Spanish war of reconquest was in all regards spoken of with the then standard terminology of crusade. And a crusade it had been right from the beginning.

## 2. ‘Convivencia’ of the three Faiths in the new Christian Spain<sup>200</sup>

The one most important fact to keep in mind when trying to understand the situation of the new Spanish Christian kingdoms was the scarcity of people in a great peninsula. There was a constant lack of soldiers and peasants to secure and cultivate the enormous stretches of land that now had come under the domination of Christian kingdoms.<sup>201</sup> This meant that the new kingdoms could hardly afford to lose any of those who had traditionally tilled the fields, pastured the flocks, and provided the economic infrastructure as bankers, tax collectors, traders, and courtiers. On the ‘frontier’, the newly conquered territories, these functions had in

<sup>199</sup> Emma Falque Rey (ed.), *Historia Compostellana* (CCCM 70; Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 379; translation according to Barton, *History of Spain*, 56, and O’Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade*, 39.

<sup>200</sup> Concerning the term *convivencia*, “living-togetherness”, I borrow the following explanation from Lucy K. Pick: “Américo Castro popularized this term to describe the productive tension between the three religious groups, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, which intermingled to create Spain. As *convivencia* is understood and used by historians today, it describes something far more problematic and interesting than simple tolerance between different groups sharing the same space. It describes a cultural situation in which potential cooperation and interdependence in economic, social, cultural, and intellectual spheres coexist with the continual threat of conflict and violence,” *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>201</sup> Jonathan Ray has studied this period and area from the perspective of ‘frontier’: *The Sephardic Frontier: The Reconquista and the Jewish Community in Medieval Iberia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

large measure been carried out by Jews and Muslims, and the new lords simply could not afford to dispense with them.

As for the Muslims, they were of great value as peasants or merchants, or as highly trained artisans, medics and scholars of science and philosophy. The Muslim upper class of the greater cities, like Toledo, (and later Valencia and Seville) were mostly expelled since they were regarded as potential traitors and a security risk. Unlike the Jews, they were therefore rarely employed as courtiers by the Christian kings. But the rank-and-file Muslims of the cities, towns, and especially the countryside, were allowed to remain.

There had also been some immigration of Muslims, not least scholars, from the Muslim south to the Christian north since the Almoravid take-over of Al-Andalus from 1086, and more were to come during the dramatic years of the Almohad invasion from 1146 onwards.

The legal position of these Muslims was reversed, of course, compared with the period of Muslim rule. It was now the Muslims under Christian rule—the so-called *Mudéjares* (a Romance word probably derived from Arabic *al-muta-ahkhirun*, “they who have submitted [to Christian rule]”)—who became subject to Christian legislation strongly resembling the Muslim *dhimmi* laws. Muslims should not exercise authority over Christians, and they should pay a special poll tax. But apart from such restrictions, they were recognized as legal subjects of the Christian kingdom and had the protection that followed this status. They could legally practice their religion and had freedom of travel and trade.<sup>202</sup>

The same was true of the Jews, only that their situation was rather better than that of the Muslims. This had more than one reason. For one thing, while Christians might feel they had some scores to settle with the Muslims who had dominated and repressed them, such feelings would not apply with the same intensity towards the Jews.

Secondly, during the period of Almoravid and Almohad persecution of Jews and Christians in al-Andalus, Christians as well as Jews had migrated in substantial numbers to the Christian north, and this made many of them inclined to forge a new alliance against a common enemy. The kings of the Christian north profited greatly from this. Jewish peasants took part in settling more densely the vast stretches of land that were now on Christian hands. Jewish soldiers were part of the crusading armies fighting Almoravids and Almohads. (This in large measure explains why Jews were not attacked during the crusading reconquest of Spain. In fact, the Jews were a valuable part of the crusade itself.) Jewish settlers were in many cases granted the same rights as Christian ones, and Jewish merchants were crucial in providing

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<sup>202</sup> For more details of the situation of the Mudéjares in Christian Spain, see O’Callaghan, *History*, 284–85.

supplies for the crusading armies. The Christian princes more than once persuaded Jewish courtiers, moneylenders, and tax-farmers to move to the new frontier territories and render their services there.

In the larger cities that now came under Christian rule, the Jews retained or regained the rights they had enjoyed under the rule of the Umayyads and the taifa kings. In Toledo, for example, the Jews were living well protected within the *juderia*, “a fortress situated on the slopes above the Tagus River, inside the city walls. Their quarter covered a wide area and was virtually a city in itself. In addition, some Jews owned stalls and dwellings in the business district of the city.”<sup>203</sup> These stalls were scattered among the Christian ones, which means that social *convivencia* between Jews and Christians and remaining Muslims was an everyday phenomenon. Royal laws and grants secured the safety of the urban Jewish communities, and most of the time this legislation was upheld in practice. They were also granted some measure of internal, independent jurisdiction, thus some limited autonomy.<sup>204</sup>

In the rural frontier territories, the amount of social *convivencia* was normally even greater. Christians, Jews and Mudejares were living closely together, sharing the few public facilities in the new towns and villages, like markets, and even baths, although some attempts at regulating use of the latter were made. Muslims and Jews should not use the baths on the same days as Christians.<sup>205</sup> But overall, economic and social interaction between members of the three faiths, and especially between Christians and Jews, was close and intimate in the first period of the reconquest, and patterns of behavior established then, could later not easily be eradicated.<sup>206</sup>

Two aspects of this situation are of special relevance in our context. First, the restrictions on Jewish life under Christian rule that were set forth in ecclesiastical law, were simply set aside by princes and kings for very practical reasons, often to the great dismay of ecclesiastical authorities. This was not only the case on the ‘Sephardic Frontier’ but was more clearly exposed here than elsewhere and at other times. One important issue was the stipulation in canon law that Jews should never exercise authority over Christians in any form. For Jewish courtiers this was impracticable. Jewish courtiers, not least tax-farmers, exercised royal authority over Christians. This, of course, was resented by ecclesiastical authorities as well as the Christian population who had the Jewish tax-collector on their neck.

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<sup>203</sup> Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain* I: 79.

<sup>204</sup> For a good review of general conditions in Castile and Aragon, see Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain* I: 79–90.

<sup>205</sup> There were also places where no such restriction was made, see Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 167.

<sup>206</sup> For all of the above, see, first and foremost, Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, esp. 15–71 and 98–144.

Other rulings in canon law were also set aside on the frontier. According to canon law, Jews were not allowed to build new synagogues, only to maintain old ones. But after some years of reconquest, the newly conquered territories were dotted with new synagogues, built with the tacit consent of secular princes.<sup>207</sup> Jewish farmers were exempt from paying Church tithe, but when the extent of Jewish take-over of Christian land implied a marked decrease of tithes paid to the Church, ecclesiastical authorities protested against Jews acquiring land from Christians, and ordered that they should continue to pay tithes to the Church from land formerly owned by Christians. The secular kings and princes, however, were quite satisfied with paying lip service only to these ecclesiastical orders, not enforcing them, and sometimes opposing them openly.<sup>208</sup>

This royal lenience regarding restrictions imposed upon the Jews was of course very important for them and improved their available options under Christian rule considerably. For the relationship between Christians and Jews, however, there was another aspect of even greater importance. The close social *convivencia* that was necessary for practical reasons in the frontier territories, meant that the two groups came to know each other and socialize with each other to a much larger extent than in large cities where the Jews were more or less confined to the old *juderia*. To put it briefly, social and cultural boundaries became much more fluid in the recently reconquered areas. This also meant that the line of division between Christians and Jews was more often ignored – and sometimes crossed, in both directions.

Mixed marriages were in principle not allowed, unless the Jewish partner converted to Christianity.<sup>209</sup> Given the culture of the times, this would, in most cases, be a Jewish woman who converted to the religion of her Christian husband. Such conversions probably made up the great majority of conversions from Judaism to Christianity.

Much more frequent, however, were the illicit liaisons between Christians and Jews. Here there was a marked asymmetry between those in power and those not. If a Christian man had an illicit affair with a Jewish or Muslim woman, the Christian man would be leniently punished with a fine or not punished at all.<sup>210</sup> In the opposite case, the man being

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<sup>207</sup> The Jews sometimes had to pay a “fine” to obtain this consent. See Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 100–101.

<sup>208</sup> Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 45–54.

<sup>209</sup> An explicit ban on mixed marriages between Jewish and Christian partners is first encountered in a decree of Theodosius the Great in 388. It was reiterated, but with primary reference to Christian women marrying Jewish men, in Spanish councils of the fourth to seventh centuries. The basic principle was that intermarriage was an offense as grave as adultery, and the latter was punished with execution of both partners. For a full review from Theodosius to the late Middle Ages, including Spain, see Walter Pakter, *Medieval Canon Law and the Jews* (Münchener Universitätschriften: Abhandlungen zur rechtswissenschaftlichen Grundlagenforschung 68; Ebelsbach: Verlag Rolf Gremer, 1988), 263–89.

<sup>210</sup> Ray points to an interesting literary idealization of such a case: “Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria* include the popular Castilian folktale of Marisaltos, a beautiful Jewess who is thrown from a cliff by the men of

Jewish or Muslim and the woman Christian, the standard penalty was death for both partners, but if the man was Jewish and rich, he could free himself through paying a large fine. There was thus no doubt about the fundamental asymmetry of power that prevailed between Christians and non-Christians.

Interestingly, Jewish religious authorities tried to counteract illicit sexual relations between Jews and non-Jews with similar severe punishments as in Christian canon law. But like the Christian authorities, they were not very successful in having their rulings obeyed.<sup>211</sup> “Contemporary Jewish attitudes toward the subject of sexual boundaries reflect a similar dichotomy [as on the Christian side] between theoretical prohibition and popular acceptance.”<sup>212</sup> A French rabbi visited Spain in 1236 and expressed great shock at the great tolerance shown there with regard to sexual relations between Jews and Gentiles.<sup>213</sup>

Sexual liaisons across the religious divides were of course not the only effects of close *convivencia* in the Christian kingdoms. Such a basic human relation as friendship was regarded as risky business by ecclesiastical authorities. The real fear was no doubt that such friendships might lead common people to play down the religious differences, or eventually join the other side through conversion. We therefore find local councils as well as standard canon law forbidding everyday socializing between Christians and Jews.<sup>214</sup> The fear that motivated such rulings was not entirely unfounded. There are explicit reports in the available sources that Jews as well as Christians crossed the religious border between them, in a few

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her own community when she is “found in error and caught.” The reference to Marisaltos’ beauty and the intimation of her availability to Christian men portray her as sexually alluring to Christians. Significantly, it is her own coreligionists who attempt to kill her for her transgressions, while the Virgin Mary intercedes to save her from death and eventually brings about her conversion.” *Sephardic Frontier*, 169.

<sup>211</sup> See the review of rabbinic rulings in Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 169–174.

<sup>212</sup> Ray, *Sephardic Frontier*, 169.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> E.g., in 1050 a council in Coyanza (Oviedo) forbade Christians to live or eat with Jews: “*Nullus etiam christianus cum judaeis in una domo maneat nec cum eis cibum sumat*: No Christian stays in the same house as Jews, and he does not eat food with them” (Aronius, *Regesten*, 4, nr. 8). Some 90 years later, the very influential *Decretum Gratiani* (ca. 1140) repeated the prohibition in a somewhat fuller form: “None of those in sacred orders, nor laypeople, should eat of the Jews’ unleavened [Passover] bread, nor live with them or call upon their help when ill. [Christians] should not take medicine from them nor bathe with them” (*Decretum Gratiani* 28.1.13, my translation from the Latin text quoted in Dwayne E. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on Siete Partidas 7.24 “De los judíos”* [University of California Publications in Modern Philology 115; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986], 126.). In the *Siete Partidas* of Alfonso X, ca. 1265, the prohibition reads like this: “No Christian, male or female, may reside in the house of a Jew.’ We order that no Jew shall dare to have in his house Christian servants, male or female, although Jews may hire Christians to work and care for their lands or to guide them when they must travel through perilous regions. Furthermore, we forbid any Christian, male or female, to invite a Jew, male or female, nor may a Christian receive an invitation from Jews, to eat and drink together or partake of wine made by Jews..., “ (*Siete Partidas* 7.24.8, first part. The second part forbids mixed bathing and receiving medicine made by Jews; although a Christian can blend the medicine according to a recipe made by a knowledgeable Jew. Text and English translation (used here) in Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews*, 34–35.

cases even twice: converting to the other faith, some returned to their original faith after some time. But these reports are from the thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

The fear that (too) close socializing between Jews and Christians could lead to weakened commitment to Judaism among Jews, and eventually result in full assimilation or conversion, is also voiced by some leading Jewish writers in our period. Most well-known are Moses Ibn Ezra and Judah Halevi.

Moses Ibn Ezra (ca. 1055 – ca. 1140) belonged to a wealthy Jewish family of courtiers in Granada, but the family's wealth and positions were lost when the Almoravids captured the city in 1090.<sup>215</sup> Moses' father and one of his brothers immediately fled to Toledo (now Christian) where they did well and rose to high positions under Alfonso VI. Moses tarried in Granada until 1095; then he also went to Toledo, but unlike his father and brother, was not able to become integrated in the new surroundings. Perhaps he simply did not want to, because he did not like what he saw in Toledo and elsewhere: Jewish refugees becoming successfully integrated and assimilated into the new Christian society. In one of his many poems, Moses says it like this:

They have adopted their neighbors' ways, anxious to enter their midst,  
And mingling with them they share their deeds  
and are now reckoned among their number.  
Those nurtured, in their youth, in the gardens of truth,  
hew, in old age, the wood of forests of folly.<sup>216</sup>

Baer's interpretation seems to me very convincing: The Jews emigrating from al-Andalus to the Christian North soon assimilated successfully into the new society. They learned from their neighbors to turn forest land into fertile fields and towns, and in the process also learned to "hew the wood of the forests of folly," viz. to accept their values.<sup>217</sup> All through Moses' poetry written in Castile, one senses the loss of Jewish wisdom and the weakening of Jewish identity that most of his Jewish compatriots suffered in their new surroundings.

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<sup>215</sup> On Moses, his time, life and writings, see Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain* I: 59–64 and Raymond P. Scheindlin, "Moses Ibn Ezra," in *The Literature of al-Andalus* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature 5; ed. M.R. Menocal, R. P. Scheindlin, and M. Sells; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 252–264. On Moses as a great poet, see Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Texts and Studies 7; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 59–62.

<sup>216</sup> Moses Ibn Ezra, *Diwan* nr. 20, lines 35–37, reference and translation taken from Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain* I: 63–64.

<sup>217</sup> Baer, *Jews in Christian Spain* I: 64.

Judah Halevi (c. 1075 – 1141) was perhaps the most famous Jewish author of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>218</sup> His fame began already during his lifetime, and like Moses Ibn Ezra he excelled in early life as a poet cultivating the fine arts of Andalusian court poets, even though he was probably born in Toledo and spent many years there after it became Christian. We know that in his youth he spent several years in Muslim Granada, and it was there and in other places in al-Andalus that he got his education as physician, philosopher, and poet. Like other Jewish writers of his day, he extolled the highly placed Jewish courtiers who did great services for their people by keeping them in favor with their Muslim or Christian rulers and invoking the princes' protection of the Jews when need be.

But in his last years, Halevi turned his back on this whole concept. He despised the false security provided by royal protection in Christian as well as Muslim Spain; he also turned his back on the attempts by Jewish philosophers to present Judaism as an entirely rational faith, based on reason in all its aspects. He now found that this was false accommodation to fashionable tenets in the Muslim (and Christian) culture of the time. He began to see the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham as irreconcilable opposites, arguing that Judaism was based on direct revelation by God to chosen prophets, not on human reason.

In poetic form, his reckoning with the life and strategy of Jewish philosophers and courtiers read like this:

His opponents' dissuasions resound about him.

But he listens in silence like a man of no words.

What is the use of reply or refutation,

Why make them all angry when they are all drunkards?

They congratulate him for being in the service of kings,

Which to him is like the worship of idols.

Is it right for a pious and worthy man

To be glad that he is caught, like a bird by a child,

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<sup>218</sup> On Halevi, see Henry Slonimsky, "Judah Halevi: An Introduction," in Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari (Kitab al Khazari): An Argument for the Faith of Israel* (trans. H. Hirschfeld; New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 17–31; Arie Schippers, *Spanish Hebrew Poetry and the Arabic Literary Tradition: Arabic Themes in Hebrew Andalusian Poetry* (Medieval Iberian Peninsula: Texts and Studies 7; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 62–68; Ross Brann, "Judah Halevi," in *The Literature of al-Andalus* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature 5; ed. M.R. Menocal, R. P. Scheindlin, and M. Sells; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 265–81; Barry S. Kogan, "Judah Halevi and his Use of Philosophy in the Kuzari," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (ed. D. H. Frank and O. Leaman; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 111–35.



In the service of Philistines, Hittites, and descendants of Hagar,

His heart is seduced by alien deities.

To do their will, and forsake the will of God,

To deceive the Creator and serve his creatures?<sup>219</sup>

In poetic prose Halevi made the same point in his most famous book, written in the period ca. 1130–1140, *The Book of the Khazars*, *Kitab al-Khazari* (now better known by the English version of its Hebrew name: *The Kuzari*) with a characteristic subtitle: "The book of refutation and proof on behalf of the most despised religion."<sup>220</sup> This book was soon to become a Jewish classic, and has remained so till this day. In it, Halevi fiercely attacked the Aristotelian rationalism in vogue among many of his fellow Jewish intellectuals. He feared that through rationalistic philosophy Judaism would lose what was most precious and most peculiar to it—the concreteness and factuality of divine revelation, transmitted through prophets, not philosophers, the concrete divine gift of the Land, not a purely intellectual happiness in the sphere of abstract knowledge. Halevi was not in doubt that the growing rationalism of his age would lead to such loss of Jewish substance in theology that apostasy was an imminent threat.

That such fears were not without foundation was exemplified in the Kingdom of Aragon in the city of Huesca 1106, a little more than 30 years before Halevi completed his famous *Kuzari*. On 29 June that year, on the Memorial Day of saints Peter and Paul, a well-educated Jew by the name of Moses was baptized in the cathedral of Huesca, King Alfonso I “The Battler” acting as his sponsor. At his baptism he took the name Petrus after the Apostle, and Alfonsi after the royal sponsor. In his one polemical work against Judaism, the *Dialogue*, he comes forth as a polemicist who finds fault with Judaism because it appears as unphilosophical and unscientific. The Rabbis of the Talmud were completely ignorant of philosophical and scientific truths, and therefore stated ridiculous phantasies about God and the world we live in. Alfonsi’s criticism was based on the Arabic-Muslim Aristotelianism and science of nature in which he had received a good, if not excellent, education – not uncommon among Andalusian Jews of his day.

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<sup>219</sup> Translation by David Goldstein, *The Jewish Poets of Spain 900–1250* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), 137–38.

<sup>220</sup> See the English translation by Hartwig Hirschfeld in *Judah Halevi, The Kuzari (Kitab al Khazari): An Argument for the Faith of Israel* (trans. H. Hirschfeld; New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

The city of Huesca may not only have been the site of Moses/Petrus' baptism, but also the place of his Jewish upbringing and education. Until 1097, Huesca was a major city of the Muslim kingdom of Saragossa, and had a population of about 4000 souls, of which around 250 (6%) were Jewish. In that year, it was conquered by King Pedro I (1094–1104) and was turned into a Christian city, part of the Kingdom of Aragon. Huesca thus shared fate with Toledo where the same change had occurred 12 years earlier. We do not know in which year Petrus Alfonsi was born, but since he had finished his Arabic education and had had time to establish himself as a leading teacher and apologist for the local Jewish community before his conversion and baptism (1106), it is reasonable to assume that he was born in the 1070ies, just like Halevi.

So, here we have two contemporary Andalusian Jews, both sharing a good Andalusian education, comprising science, medicine, and philosophy. Both men experienced problems in fully harmonizing this Arab-Muslim world of knowledge with their Jewish faith, but they went different ways to deal with the conflict. Judah Halevi ended up with repudiating philosophy and embracing the traditional notions of Judaism being based, not on reason, but on prophetic revelation. Petrus Alfonsi turned his back on Judaism and embraced a philosophical-scientific version of Christianity instead.

Two remarks of a more general nature must be added here. The first concerns the knowledge of the Babylonian Talmud in the west of Europe until ca. 1000 C.E. The second is related to the first, viz. the dominance of "Rabbanite" Judaism in Western Europe in general and in Spain in particular. From the tenth century onwards, this term designates those Jews who opposed the so-called Qaraites. The Qaraites rejected rabbinic Oral Law, the Rabbanites obeyed it.

(1) The spread of the Talmud.<sup>221</sup> Briefly told, until the turn of the first millennium, the *Babylonian Talmud* (which had reached its final redaction in Babylonia during the seventh century C.E.) was largely unknown *among the Jews* of the western lands around the Mediterranean. It goes without saying that the Christian scholars in the same areas were as ignorant about it as their Jewish colleagues. Gradually, however, knowledge of the Talmud spread westwards along the North African coast, and by the turn from the tenth to the eleventh century the Talmud had reached Spain, and its influence increased by the year.

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<sup>221</sup> The standard monograph is now Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

(2) The Rabbanites gain the upper hand.<sup>222</sup> This inner-Jewish power struggle began in the East, too. Many of us tend to think of Judaism as a monolithic entity being the same from century to century, the authorized rabbis being the guarantors of its normative tradition of teaching. However,

from the tenth century onward, Mediterranean towns of any importance housed not two but three Jewish groups: Babylonian Rabbanites, Palestinian Rabbanites, and Qaraites. Each had its own houses of worship, and each its own scholastic academy: the Babylonians had two in Baghdad, called *yeshivot* (sing. *yeshiva*); the Palestinian Rabbanites had a *yeshiva* in Tiberias, which later moved to Jerusalem; and the Qaraites had an academy in Jerusalem, though they avoided calling it a *yeshiva*, a name with distinct Rabbanite overtones. Each group also ran its own judicial and administrative institutions. This arrangement meant that Jewish law was not territorial but personal: people living in the same town might claim loyalty to any one of these four academies and have their documents drawn up in the courts whose judges they ordained. Since congregational loyalties were removed from geographic origins, people whose families hailed from any region might join any one of the two Rabbanite congregations or opt for the Qaraite one.<sup>223</sup>

The important study by Marina Rustow from which this quotation is taken contains more than its title indicates; it reconfigures our view on the internal differences among medieval Jews, and it objects against a historiographic tradition taking the Rabbanite perspective as a given, viz. that mainstream Judaism had at all times been the Rabbinic variety, and that Qaraism since its uncertain beginnings was always a deviation, a schismatic group. In the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, says Rustow, not so. In many places, and for Jews living at that time, the later victory of Rabbanite Judaism was not a given. In Egypt, Palestine and Babylon, there was even, most of the time, a rather peaceful *convivencia* between the two Rabbanite groups on the one hand, and the Qaraite group on the other.

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<sup>222</sup> On this topic, a groundbreaking monograph is Marina Rustow's *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008. This book contains more than the title promises; indeed, it sketches the contours of the long battle between Qaraites and Rabbanites in general.

<sup>223</sup> Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community*, 3.

In Spain, however, not so. The Rabbanite Jews and the Qaraite Jews vied with each other for the favor of the kings. Most often, the Rabbanites won, and made their Christian king authorize use of force against the Qaraites, even to the point of executing them. One occasion of the opposite taking place is on record, however: In 1177–78 a Rabbanite courtier of Alfonso IX of Leon “punished Qaraites who had compelled Rabbanites to conform publicly to Qaraite Sabbath prohibitions.”<sup>224</sup> What we see here is probably that first a Qaraite courtier got the hearing of the king, then his Rabbanite colleague.

The defining feature of the Qaraites was the complete rejection of the Rabbanite idea of an Oral Law transmitted via Moses at Sinai, which supplemented and interpreted the Written Law in the Torah. There is a certain analogy here between the Qaraites and the later Protestants of Christianity: Ecclesiastical tradition is rejected; the ideal is to relate to the written word of God directly. The Qaraites thus rejected the Oral Law written down in the Talmud and the other books containing the tradition of the rabbinic sages.

What these two interrelated processes mean for our story is that when we enter the eleventh century, the whole deck of cards was changed concerning theological dialogues between Christians and Jews. In Spain, the dominance of Rabbanite Judaism based on the Babylonian Talmud was gaining the upper hand. Qaraism was not eradicated but was increasingly marginalized.

Returning to Petrus Alfonsi, I would enter the realm of sheer speculation if I were to assert that Petrus Alfonsi was a Qaraite before his conversion and baptism. But when, in the following, we come to deal with his criticism of the tradition of the talmudic sages, it should be kept in mind that there was no universal accept of this tradition among the Spanish Jews of his time.

In his self-portrayal as “Moses” in the *Dialogue*, Alfonsi clearly makes Moses a Rabbanite Jew, defending the rabbinic traditions and the rabbinic sages. But he also portrays himself as a philosophically interested Jew, being quite rationalistic already before his conversion to Christianity. I therefore tend to agree with Daniel Lasker when he argues that, while influence from Qaraism in Spain cannot be excluded in Alfonsi’s case, it cannot be asserted with full certainty either. There is, in such and similar cases, always the possibility that rationalistic qualms concerning cross anthropomorphic sayings in the haggadah were present *within* the Rabbanite community as well. Lasker points to several Christian sources

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<sup>224</sup> Rustow, *Heresy*, 353–54.

which directly point to such internal rabbinic debates.<sup>225</sup> In the following I will argue that philosophical rationalism, and a consequent uneasiness with the anthropomorphic God-language of the talmudic sages – with or without Qaraite input – were instrumental in bringing about Alfonsi’s conversion.

Alfonsi belongs to the early twelfth century, a period when the new developments of the preceding century came to full fruition in close encounters between Jews, Christians and Muslims. The twelfth century was also marked by entirely new challenges of an intellectual nature for thinking adherents of all the three faiths, challenges of an internal as well as external nature. A third factor, additional to the two mentioned above, is also of great significance here. It may briefly be called philosophical rationalism.

### 3. An Unsettling Age of Reason: The Twelfth Century in Spain

Once again, it all began in the East, this time during the reign of the Abbasid Dynasty (750–1258).<sup>226</sup> In the 760ies they established their new capital in Baghdad, and gradually a new project of appropriating the Greek heritage in science and philosophy took form, mainly by translating the classical Greek literature into Arabic. This translation project reached its peak during the ninth century, many of the translators being Nestorian scholars, like the greatest of them all, the physician Hunayn ibn Ishaq (809 – 873) and his son Ishaq (ca. 830 – ca. 910).<sup>227</sup> Some works of Christian theologians, books of a more philosophical nature, were also translated, being found helpful by Muslim theologians in constructing a “rational” version of Islam.<sup>228</sup>

Two of the new questions now being addressed by Muslim theologians were (1) the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur’an, and (2) the relationship between an eternal and immutable God on the one hand, and the created, time-bound, and mutable world

<sup>225</sup> Daniel Lasker, “Karaism and the Jewish-Christian Debate,” in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume I* (ed. B. Walfish; Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1993), 323–32, especially 325–27.

<sup>226</sup> For the following sketch, see in general Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of The Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Joel L. Kraemer, “The Islamic context of medieval Jewish philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (ed. D. H. Frank and O. Leaman; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38–68; Oliver Leaman, “Introduction to the study of medieval Jewish philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 3–15; Sarah Stroumsa, “Saadya and Jewish kalam,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, 71–90; Peter Adamson and Richard C. Taylor, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (ed. P. Adamson and R. C. Taylor; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–9.

<sup>227</sup> For him and other Christian translators, see Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia I: Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco), 354–55 and Kraemer, “Islamic context,” 41.

<sup>228</sup> See Wolfson, *Philosophy of The Kalam*, 51–52.

on the other. In the philosophical, rationally defensible, non-anthropomorphic concept of God that had been developed in the Greek philosophical tradition, Muslim theologians found new arguments for their idea of God's essential one-ness or unity – useful in polemics against Christian trinitarianism. And while God's immutability and eternity was thought to imply the eternity of creation as such among leading Greek philosophers, Christian philosophers had pioneered an argument for combining God's eternity with a creation *ex nihilo* of the world.<sup>229</sup>

The new, rationally founded, Muslim theology which was developed on this basis came to be called *Kalam*, speech, word, probably meant as the Arabic equivalent of Greek *Logos*, word, reason, argument. It came to mean not only rational theology in a narrower sense, but also learning in the sciences, and scholarship in a wider sense.<sup>230</sup> The Greek philosophy in question here was the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophy developed in the late phase of Platonism defined by Plotinus' works (d. 270) and those of his editor and pupil Porphyry. By this time, the Platonic thinkers had incorporated much of Aristotle's analysis of logic and categories, and his form-and-matter theory, in their own thinking. Inversely, parts of Plotinus' works were reedited as Aristotle's. This was especially true of the Arabic translations made in the ninth century and later.<sup>231</sup> But other fields of knowledge were also transmitted into Arabic by able translators.

The Muslim "kalamists", the *mutakallimun*, justified their use of these philosophical and scientific insights by creating an Eastern pedigree for Greek philosophy and science. "Scientific knowledge was thus legitimized as an indigenous growth, as Hellenistic and medieval Jewish thinkers also portrayed Abraham, Solomon, and Moses as philosophers from whom Greek wisdom was derived."<sup>232</sup>

This serves to underline the very high prestige enjoyed by this new type of knowledge. The Byzantine Christians had a chronological advantage here, since they had appropriated this

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<sup>229</sup> Especially important here was the Christian philosopher John Philoponus (6<sup>th</sup> cent.). See Kramer, "Muslim context," 42; Stroumsa. "Saadya and Jewish *kalam*," 85.

<sup>230</sup> See, for the etymology and evolving meanings of *Kalam*, Wolfson, *Philosophy of The Kalam*, 1–2. Thomas E. Burman quotes the following definition by Robert Caspar: "[Kalam is] the science which attempts to prove the dogmas of the faith by arguments taken from revealed tradition ... and by rational arguments ... in order to defend the orthodox faith against its enemies both external ... and internal... and to answer the doubts of the believers" (Burman, "Christian Kalam in Twelfth-Century Mozarabic Apologetic in Spain," in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Robert I. Burns S.J. Volume 1: Proceedings from Kalamazoo* (The Medieval Mediterranean Peoples, Economics and Cultures, 400–1453, 4; ed. L. J. Simon; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 38–49; here at 39.

<sup>231</sup> For example, Plotinus' *Enneads*, books 4–6, were paraphrased under the title *Theology of Aristotle* (!). For a special study of the entire corpus of Pseudo-Aristotelian writings, see J. Kraye, W. F. Ryan, and C. B. Schmitt (eds.), *Pseudo-Aristotle in the Middle Ages: The Theology and Other Texts* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1986).

<sup>232</sup> Kraemer, "Islamic context," 40.

knowledge for centuries already.<sup>233</sup> For Muslim, and, following their example, for Jewish scholars, this type of learning was often received as almost a new revelation. In a surprisingly short time, philosophical and scientific reason was accorded a role as an unavoidable hermeneutical standard according to which the metaphorical and anthropomorphic language of holy writings was to be interpreted. What until now had been held by faith alone, could now be proved by reason in an undeniable way. But this fostered the question: why was revelation in a metaphorical and narrative garb necessary at all? The answer nearest to hand, and the one given by Muslim as well as Jewish thinkers, was that the language of the Holy Scriptures was adapted to simple people for whom the world of philosophical discourse had not been opened.<sup>234</sup>

How to proceed from this point was a very open question. One could argue that one's own religion was the most adequate metaphorical version of philosophical truth. But one could as well argue that Christianity, Islam, and Judaism were only three different versions of the same truth, thus relativizing the three faiths as being of equal (high or low) value. One could even degrade the historical religions as something the philosopher could leave behind as obsolete. Such "free-thinkers" are on record from the ninth century, across the religious divides. In Baghdad, beginning under the rule of the caliph al-Mamun (813–33), we see a milieu and an institution in which such thoughts could develop: the *Bayt al-Hikma*, House of Wisdom, in which scholars of the three faiths worked together, presumably often in teams of two (as later in Spain), translating Greek or Syriac works into Arabic, and in which there also assembled a circle of scholars discussing their faiths in respectful and open-minded dialogues.<sup>235</sup> Representatives of all three faiths, sometimes also Zoroastrians and Mandeans, took part in such discussions. Especially well-known is a report written down by the Muslim historian al-Humaydi about another Muslim, the Spaniard ibn Sa'di, who visited Baghdad during the tenth century and had the following to tell:

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<sup>233</sup> Maimonides, in fact, portrays the Eastern, post-Constantinian, Church Fathers as the teachers of the Muslim *mutakallimun*. See *Guide of the Perplexed*, I.71 and Wolfson, *Philosophy of The Kalam*, 52–55; Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *kalam*," 75. In Antiquity, Christian Church Fathers like Justin and Clement of Alexandria saw Plato as a disciple of Moses.

<sup>234</sup> Saadia Gaon, for example, discusses the question in his *Beliefs and Opinions*, Introduction 6 (Rosenblatt, 31–33). "Inasmuch as all matters of religious belief ... can be attained by means of research and correct speculation, what was the reason that prompted [divine] wisdom to transmit them to us by way of prophecy and support them by means of visible proofs and miracles rather than intellectual demonstration?" (loc. cit., 31). Saadia's answer is in part that philosophical speculation needs a long time to reach safe conclusions, and in the meantime, Israel could not be without divine guidance, and also that "women and young people and those who have no aptitude for speculation can thus also have a perfect and accessible faith..." (ibid., 32).

<sup>235</sup> See for this Julius Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism: A History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig* (trans. D. W. Silverman; New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 59–60.

He had attended two meetings of “the Kalam” in Baghdad. “At the first meeting there were present not only people of various (Islamic) sects, but also unbelievers, Magians, materialists, atheists, Jews, and Christians, in short, unbelievers of all kinds. Each group had its own leader, whose task it was to defend its views, and every time one of the leaders entered the room, his followers rose to their feet and remained standing until he took his seat. In the meanwhile, the hall had become overcrowded with people. One of the unbelievers rose and said to the assembly: we are meeting here for a discussion. Its conditions are known to all. You, Muslims, are not allowed to argue from your books and prophetic traditions since we deny both. Everybody, therefore, has to limit himself to rational arguments. The whole assembly applauded these words.”<sup>236</sup>

Ibn Sa’di made no secret of his dislike of this kind of discussions in which the truth of the Qur’an and Hadith was not a given. But he came from Spain, where such reliance on arguments from reason alone would not be accepted by adherents of any faith until the twelfth century. In the East, however, the ninth and tenth centuries represented a time window in which such an approach to religious dialogue was in fact possible. Here, Arab-speaking Christians drew on the old tradition of philosophic apologetics for their faith but created new Arabic terminology for Greek theological concepts and tailored their arguments to match Muslim terminology and ideas. Jews followed suit, often appropriating Muslim anti-trinitarian and anti-incarnation arguments, making them their own. In 933 the head of the rabbinical academy in Babylonia, Saadia Gaon, wrote a masterly handbook in which philosophical arguments were presented in such a way as to undergird rabbinic Judaism and undermine Christian trinitarianism. The Muslim school of Kalam that most emphatically taught the oneness of God, which excluded any separate existence of any of his attributes, was called the Mutazilites. Saadia took over their anti-trinitarian arguments.

Saadia’s book is the classical document of Jewish Kalam.<sup>237</sup> It was written to counteract widespread uncertainty among his fellow Jews. Many seem to have felt that rational speculation was a risky business that resulted in questioning and gainsaying traditional religious convictions. Perhaps learned interfaith circles like the one described above helped foster such fears among the rank and file faithful. For example, one of Saadia’s Jewish predecessors in extolling reason as providing more certainty in religious matters than

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<sup>236</sup> Translation taken from Alexander Altmann, “Translator’s Introduction,” in *Saadya Gaon: Books of Doctrines and Beliefs*, 13 (in *Three Jewish Philosophers*; New York: Atheneum, 1969).

<sup>237</sup> See Stroumsa. “Saadya and Jewish *kalam*”.



traditional faith, Dawud al-Muqammas (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), for a period of his life converted to Christianity, then back to Judaism.<sup>238</sup> As Sarah Stroumsa has pointed out, his Christian period coincided roughly with the period in which he studied philosophy under the Syrian Church Father Nonnus at Nisibis. He demonstrates, she says, “the typical peculiarities of an intellectual: the search for education and learning wherever they can be found, the quest for religious truth, and the tendency to identify the place of religious truth with the place of education and learning.”<sup>239</sup>

But the religious unrest caused by philosophy was not the only factor at play in this process. Arabic science played a similar role. In mathematics and astronomy, Christians of the east transmitted the Greek heritage into Arabic, but soon Muslim mathematicians and scientists also absorbed impulses coming from India via Persia.

One towering figure in Islamic mathematics and astronomy was the Persian Muhammed ibn Musa al-Khwarismi, who flourished around 830. He introduced Indian numerals, including zero, and taught his readers how to solve quadratic equations. His influence and significance were reflected linguistically in quite a few important mathematical concepts. Algorithm and algorithm derive from the Latin version of his name, *Algoritmi*, and algebra is the name of one of his techniques for solving quadratic equations, *al jabr*.<sup>240</sup> Another important aspect of his work was a theory of the seven zones of the northern hemisphere of the earth, and the attempt to map important cities according to their latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates. His most important work in astronomy was his famous astronomical tables, allowing more exact calculations of the positions of the heavenly bodies, and consequently the construction of more exact calendars. The original of this work, called the *Zij al-Sindhind* (c. 820), is lost, but the work was adapted to Spanish coordinates by the Iberian Muslim astronomer Maslamah Ibn Ahmad al-Majriti (c. 1000), and it was probably this version Petrus Alfonsi turned into Latin early in the twelfth century, somewhat later being improved by his pupil Adelard of Bath in England 1126 (see further below).

In medicine, Christian doctors were the first tutors of Muslim ones, but the latter soon became leading, and far surpassed their Christian colleagues in the West. This became apparent when advanced Muslim science was exported to fellow believers in al-Andalus.

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<sup>238</sup> Concerning him, see Sarah Stroumsa, “On Jewish Intellectuals Who Converted in the Early Middle Ages,” in *The Jews of Medieval Islam: Community, Society, and Identity* (Études sur le judaïsme medieval 16; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 183–85.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>240</sup> Meaning “restoration,” adding the same number to both sides of an equation to make it solvable.

Muslim physicians soon won such good reputation that even Christian kings availed themselves of their services.

A standing point of controversy since Greek Antiquity had been the use of astronomy in medicine.<sup>241</sup> The phases of the moon were especially important, since there was thought to be a connection between the moon's phases and the height of the tide, hence a general connection between the moon and fluids. Fevers were understood to be caused by superfluity of one of the four body liquids, hence the influence of the moon's phases on fevers seemed logical. According to Greek medicine, there were cycles of seven days regarding the duration of fevers, and important days of crisis in these cycles. It lay near to hand to connect these cycles with the moon's four seven-day phases, though it was often admitted that this was only one factor in the equation. For Alfonsi, as for other Jewish physicians of his time, all of this was important medical knowledge. But he also deemed astronomy important for another reason: "Medicine can be fully known through astronomy, since through astronomy the permutations of the four seasons of the year are predicted before they arrive."<sup>242</sup> Accordingly, the typical diseases of each season can be more easily avoided – or diagnosed and treated – when they occur.

As was the case with the sciences, Oriental Arabic philosophical theology as well – Christian, Muslim, and Jewish – became known in the Iberian Peninsula, only delayed by a hundred years or so. It is from the time of the Castilian conquest of Toledo in 1085 and the Aragonese conquest of Huesca in 1096 that we see a rationalistic trend arise, very like the one in the East, and in large measure dependent upon the Arabic writings of the latter becoming known and read in Al-Andalus and, after translation into Latin, in Christian Spain and in the rest of Europe too. In this way, a classical Hellenistic heritage of philosophy and learning was transmitted, first by Oriental Christians translating essential parts of the Greek corpus of writings into Arabic (some of it via Syriac), thus transmitting this heritage to the Muslim world of learning. Then this Arabic knowledge was exported to Spain and, in Latin translations, to the rest of Europe, causing the greatest revolution until then in the history of European theology. Latin scholastic theology would not have existed without this input from the East via Spain, and the history of European science, theology and philosophy would have

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<sup>241</sup> For an instructive historical review, see the Introduction, "Astrological Medicine: A Historical Sketch," in Gerrit Bos, Charles Burnett and Tzvi Langermann, *Hebrew Medical Astrology: David Ben Yom Tov, Kelal Qatan* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 95.5; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2005), 2–15.

<sup>242</sup> Alfonsi, *Epistola ad peripateticos* 5; quoted here according to John Tolan's translation in Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 1993), 174.

been very different from what took place. Spain was the clearinghouse in this exchange from East to West – not by accident, of course, but because here the learned men of the three faiths met in a sometimes very productive *convivencia*. And in Spain, as in the East, this new wave of rationalistic learning resulted in traditional beliefs being challenged in a way unheard of before. For predisposed and restless souls, this could sometimes result in changes of religious conviction and/or allegiance, or in religious relativism or a-religious free-thinking. This is the intellectual world in which Judah Halevi and Petrus Alfonsi were at home, and many more like them. Some of them were born Jews or Muslims who became converts to Christianity, some of them were Jews or Christians who became converts to Islam. It is to some well-known and some lesser-known representatives of this rare world of learning that we now turn.

But before that, a last relevant note: In none of the three faiths did this *Kalam* version of their respective theologies sit well with all and everyone. In the Jewish camp in Spain and Southern France, the supreme spokesman of this theology in the twelfth century, Moses ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135–1204), met with intense opposition, especially in Southern France, resulting in the famous “Maimonidean controversy.” The anti-Maimonideans even called upon the Christian authorities (e.g., the Dominicans and the Franciscans) to help quench this new Jewish heresy! (See Baer, *History* I:109–110).

#### 4. ‘Convivencia’ in one Man: Petrus Alfonsi

We have already made his acquaintance above. In the person of Alfonsi so many threads in the web of Iberian religions and cultures meet, that he, in my view, deserves an extensive presentation. Here we have a Jew, at home in the essentially Muslim-Arabic culture of al-Andalus, who became a Christian and made his own the heritage of Mozarabic as well as Latin Christianity. He was himself acutely aware of his unique position to mediate between these worlds, and did so, in part by translating texts of Muslim scholars from Arabic into Latin, in part by authoring Latin books and writings in which he willingly shared with the Latin world what he found useful in the Muslim-Arabic literary heritage. He also used his Jewish competences when dialoguing with the Judaism he left behind at his conversion.

His *Dialogue* between his old Jewish self “Moses” and his new Christian self “Petrus” is better informed about Jewish faith, lore, and praxis than anything written before his time, and stands out as strikingly original, innovative, and informed, when compared to the long Christian tradition of Greek and Latin *adversus iudeos* literature. Last, but not least, Alfonsi comes forward as a staunch spokesman for the reason-based scientific-philosophical approach

to worldly as well as religious knowledge and truth that was described in the chapter prior to this. In this one man, therefore, most of the colors of the Iberian cultural rainbow are refracted as in a prism.

### A. Life and Works

The story of his baptism in Huesca in 1106 has been told above, I shall here fill in the little that is known about his life and works apart from that event.<sup>243</sup> In his youth as the Jew Moses, Alfonsi no doubt got a typically Andalusian education. As John Tolan points out, the curriculum of such an education was well described by the Muslim scholar Şa'id al-Andalusi:

[The wise man studies] the sciences according to a rational order and acquire[s] great erudition in various branches of knowledge according to the best methods. He has a proficiency in Arabic language and a good knowledge of Arabic rhetoric and poetry. He is remarkable in arithmetic, geometry, and in astronomy. He understands the theory of music and its application.... [H]e has a consummate grasp of logic, and also the practical science of research and observation. He subsequently advance[s] to the study of the sciences of nature.... [H]e will know to perfection philosophy, and the various parts of this science will be no secret to him.”<sup>244</sup>

This description enumerates the disciplines mastered by the Jewish courtier Abu'l-Fadl Ibn Hasdai (1046–1100) of the generation before Alfonsi's. Ibn Hasdai eventually converted to Islam, and Tolan's remark concerning his reasons to do so, may be of some relevance here:

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<sup>243</sup> For a bibliography on Alfonsi, see Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews* (The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation 8; trans. Irvn M. Resnick; Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), xi–xxv. I have found the following studies particularly helpful: J. H. L. Reuter, “Petrus Alfonsi: An Examination of his Works, their Scientific Content, and their Background” (Ph.D. Diss., Saint Hilda's College, Oxford, 1975); Eberhard Hermes, “The Author and his Times,” in *The Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi* (trans. P.R. Quarrie; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 3–99; John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993); Fidel Rädle, “In der Alhambra der Grossen Vernunft: zum Werk des Petrus Alfonsi,” in *Ex nobili philologorum officio: Festschrift Heinrich Bihler* (ed. Dietrich Briesemeister and Axel Schönberger; Berlin: Domus Editoria Europaea, 1998), 47–60; Lourdes Maria Alvarez, “Petrus Alfonsi,” in *The Literature of Al-Andalus* (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature 5; ed. M. R. Menocal, R. P. Scheindlin, and M. Sells; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 282–91; Charles L. Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Studies on the Children of Abraham 3. Leiden: Brill, 2013), 189–202. *Addition 2021*: See now also the many valuable studies contained in Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, and Philipp Roelli (eds.), *Petrus Alfonsi and his Dialogus: Background, Context, Reception* (Micrologus Library 66; Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014).

<sup>244</sup> Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, 5. Translation taken from Norman Roth, “Some Aspects of Muslim-Jewish Relations in Spain,” in *Estudios en Homenaje a Don Claudio Sanchez Albornoz en sus 90 años 2* (1983): 179–214, here at 196.

“There were bounds beyond which most Jewish courtiers could not rise. Such limits (rather than any overt pressure) caused several prominent Andalusian Jews to convert to Islam.”<sup>245</sup>

Alfonsi’s learning comprised the subjects enumerated here and is displayed in all his preserved works. One could also say he comes forward as the typically Jewish courtier. He may well, like his contemporary Judah Halevi, have earned his bread as a court physician. Since there is literary evidence for Alfonsi serving later as personal physician for King Henry I of England, a reasonable guess would be that he also served as such for his own King, Alfonso I, even before his own conversion. This would be a natural explanation of the fact that the king took such an interest in Alfonsi’s conversion that he acted as sponsor at his baptism. Since “lending out” a good physician was not uncommon between kings, this would also explain why Alfonsi went to England and served the English king as court physician, and probably as a diplomatic envoy of the king of Aragon in other matters as well. In any case, in his amusing book *Disciplina Clericalis*, Alfonsi introduces the reader to the typical life of the Jewish Andalusian courtier. Such people had an education, knowledge, and experience of life that no Latin Christian could match.

A brief look at the *Disciplina* may substantiate this viewpoint.<sup>246</sup> In the Prologue Alfonsi immediately, in his characteristic manner, goes straight to the purpose of the book: He praises God,

who is wise and brings wisdom and reason to mankind, who has breathed into us his wisdom and led us to the light with the marvelous clarity of his teaching ... Therefore, because God has designed to clothe me in his many-sided wisdom, although I am a sinner, in order that the light given me should not be hid under a bushel, and at the prompting of ... [the] Holy Spirit, I have been moved to write this book.<sup>247</sup>

In his typical fashion, Alfonsi attributes to human reason, the greatest gift of God, all the good advice for life that his book offers. As Tolan has pointed out, there is in fact very little in the main corpus of the text that marks it as Christian, and the sources of practical wisdom from which Alfonsi draws his proverbs, similitudes, fables about humans and animals, are a very mixed lot. The common denominator, however, is that they are Oriental. Some of them

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<sup>245</sup> Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, 5.

<sup>246</sup> The critical edition of the Latin text is *Petri Alfonsi Disciplina Clericalis* (Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae 38.4; ed. A. Hilka and W. Söderhjelm; Helsingfors, 1911). I quote according to the English translation in *The Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi* (trans. P.R. Quarrie; introd. E. Hermes; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

<sup>247</sup> Translation according to Quarrie, *The Disciplina Clericalis*, 103.

originate in India, some in Persia, some of them on the eastern and southern Mediterranean coasts, and probably all of them reached Alfonsi in Arabic garb. Some of the material is dressed as advice from a father to his son (typical of Wisdom literature, also in the Bible), some of it as advice from a “philosopher” to a courtier about behaving wisely in serving a king. It is here, as Hermes points out, that the book most clearly betrays the world of experience of a Jewish courtier.<sup>248</sup> There is a certain shrewd realism and caution in many of the admonitions, reflecting the precarious life of the Jewish courtier who always depended on the changing moods and whims of his Muslim or Christian overlord.

A philosopher has said: “A king is like a fire: when one is too near, one is burnt, and when one is totally removed, one freezes.” An Arab asked his father: “If I am to believe the words of the philosophers, I should never become the confidant of a king.” The father answered him: “My son, it requires great intelligence to be on good terms with a king.”<sup>249</sup>

The realism and rationality of the *Disciplina* is also to be seen in the complete absence of the miraculous, incantations, magic potions, and other magical elements in the advice of the book. On the contrary, those who take their refuge to such remedies to extricate themselves in difficult situations are ridiculed.

As Tolan points out, there is very little in the book that betrays the Christianity of its author. His Jewishness is much more easily recognized, as shown by Hermes. The most explicit Christian elements appear at the book's very beginning and at its end. He begins the book by presenting himself as “Petrus Alfonsi, a servant of Jesus Christ,” quotes Matt 5:15, and says that anyone who is “perfect in the Catholic faith” should feel free to “correct what is wrong” in the book. He ends it with an Epilogue, entreating almighty God for mercy,

that we may, on the day of the great judgement ... take our place on the right of His Son and be honored together with all the faithful with the enjoyment of eternal peace in the heavenly palace, where for us our Lord Jesus Christ is a stronghold; to whom be the glory together with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> See his Introduction, 3–8 and 90–99 (the latter passage is entitled “The Jewish Experience”).

<sup>249</sup> Translation according to Quarrie, *The Disciplina*, 149.

<sup>250</sup> Translation according to Quarrie, *The Disciplina*, 162.

When one considers the rather slim Christian framework of the book, one could speculate that Alfonsi had gathered material for the book for a rather long period, much of it during his pre-conversion studies. In his Prologue Alfonsi asks God to help him with the book because “[h]e compelled me to write it and translate it into Latin.” One wonders if there was a first Arabic draft by Moses the Jew, then adapted into Latin by Alfonsi the Christian.

The main proof of Alfonsi’s knowledge of Jewish things is to be found in his *Dialogue*, perhaps written only two years after his baptism. Here it becomes evident that he knew sufficient Hebrew to comment competently on textual details in the Hebrew Bible. He also had a reasonable grasp of talmudic and Midrashic texts, which could point to some elementary knowledge of talmudic Aramaic. His Andalusian background also meant he was much better informed concerning Islam than any of his Latin contemporaries.

As an adult, Alfonsi gained a prominent position within the Jewish community of his city (Huesca?). In the *Dialogue* he has his old *persona* “Moses” say to his Christian *persona* “Petrus”:

[Y]ou used to excel in the writings of the prophets and the sayings of our sages, and ... from your youth you were more zealous for the law than all your contemporaries; ... if there were any adversary, you opposed him with a shield of defense; ... you preached to the Jews in the synagogues, lest any withdraw from the faith; ... you taught your companions; ... you led the learned to greater things.<sup>251</sup>

Christian subtexts, however, are more frequently discerned in the *Dialogue*, as in this case, where he casts himself in the role of Paul in Phil 3:4–6: as to the law, a learned Pharisee, as to zeal, a defender against apostasy, as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

The extent of his Christian knowledge prior to his conversion is difficult to assess, but as we have just seen, he describes himself as a trained debater and apologist on behalf of Judaism before his conversion. This would imply that he had a decent knowledge of

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<sup>251</sup> The critical edition of the Latin text of Alfonsi’s *Dialogue* that I have used is Klaus-Peter Mieth, “Der Dialog des Petrus Alfonsi: Seine Überlieferung im Druck und in den Handschriften. Textedition” (PhD Diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1982). My page and lines references are to this edition (e.g., “Mieth, 8:13–15” = Mieth’s edition, page 8, lines 13–15). My English quotes from the *Dialogue* are from Irven M. Resnick, *Petrus Alfonsi: Dialogue against the Jews, translated* (The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation 8; Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006). The whole of this chapter on Alfonsi was written before the appearance of the most recent critical edition: Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, Darko Senekovic and Thomas Ziegler (eds.), *Petrus Alfonsi: Dialogus. Bd. 1. Kritische Edition mit deutscher Übersetzung* (Millennio Medievale 116.1; Testi 30.1; German translation by Peter Stotz; Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2018). For practical reasons (lack of time), I have kept the references to Mieth’s edition. The quotation above: *Dialogue*, Prologue, Mieth, 3:26–30; trans. Resnick, 43.

Mozarabic Christianity and Andalusian Islam. In his *Dialogue*, his Jewish self Moses brings forward objections that could well echo arguments that had actually been used by Moses the Jewish apologist. If so, he portrays himself as well informed about Christian doctrine even before his conversion. In one place we find Moses saying the following:

[W]ise Catholics, to whose faith you have converted, have long thought about these things [space and time] differently than the books of the ancient philosophers say. For Catholics have held that these have a beginning, whereas the old philosophers testify that they are eternal.<sup>252</sup>

Alfonsi here portrays his pre-conversion self as well informed about Catholic discussions of Greek philosophy, and I find no reason to doubt that in fact he was. I shall return to this later, when trying to understand his reasons for converting.

Two or four years after his baptism, Alfonsi wrote his *Dialogue* in good, although somewhat idiosyncratic, Latin.<sup>253</sup> This indicates that in addition to his Andalusian Arabic-based education he may also, even before his baptism, have had some knowledge of the Christian Latin literature available to him.

In any case, the Alfonsi we meet in his preserved Latin works is a man bridging the gap between two cultural worlds, and he seems at home in both. But he makes no secret of his conviction that Arabic-Muslim science is far superior to Latin, and that Latin Christians should promptly update their knowledge in these things. His own Latin works are written to serve this purpose. Even his *Dialogue*, devoted to refuting Judaism and Islam, contains lengthy excursions on scientific matters that really are superfluous to the polemical points Alfonsi is making.

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<sup>252</sup> *Dialogue* 1; Mieth, 24:40–25:2; trans. Resnick, 84.

<sup>253</sup> On Alfonsi's Latin, see Fidel Rädle, "In der Alhambra der Grossen Vernunft: zum Werk des Petrus Alfonsi," in *Ex nobili philologorum officio: Festschrift für Heinrich Bihler zu seinem 80. Geburtstag* (eds. D. Briesemeister and A. Schönberger; Berlin: Domus Editoria Europaea, 1998), 47–60; here at 48: "Dieses eigenwillige Latein wäre eine besondere Untersuchung wert."

On the dating of the *Dialogue* to 1108 or 1110 (2 or 4 years after his baptism), see Tolán, *Petrus Alfonsi*, 13. The dating is given in *Titulus* 2: [Petrus:] "Tell me ... what has been the cause of a captivity so protracted and so harsh that it has already lasted 1040 years?" (Mieth, 33: 34–35; trans. Resnick, *Dialogue*, 98). Jews dated the fall of the Temple to 68 C.E., Christians to 70 C.E., yielding 1108 or 1110 respectively. But perhaps the figure of 1040 years is approximate rather than exact. In any case, ca. 1110 should be near the truth.



This is of relevance to the question of the *Dialogue*'s intended readership. The very fact that it was written in Latin is sufficient, I believe, to show that Latin Christians were the primary audience.<sup>254</sup>

After having finished his *Dialogue* ca. 1110, probably still in Aragon, Alfonsi soon made his way to England. As pointed out already, he may have acted as an envoy of the Aragonese king and have served the English king Henry 1. as his physician. It may have been during his stay in England that he finished the Latin text of the *Disciplina clericalis*.

He also made himself known in England as a diligent educator and transmitter of the scientific knowledge of his day, especially in Astronomy and Medicine. Part of his success was due to his translations into Latin of Arabic textbooks in these fields, especially his Latin version of al-Khwarizmi's astronomical tables, translated and adapted by Alfonsi in 1116, and improved and corrected by his pupil Adelard of Bath some ten years later. Another Englishman sitting at Alfonsi's feet and writing down his astronomical teaching was Walcher of Malvern, who in 1120 published an astronomical treatise with the impressive title *The Thoughts of Peter the Hebrew, whose last name is Alfonsi, on the Lunar Nodes [De dracone]*, which Walcher prior of Malvern translated into the Latin language. In this book Walcher speaks reverently of Alfonsi as *magister noster*, Our Teacher. It is unnecessary to go into the technical details of these works here, suffice it to say that the synthesis of Ptolemaic and Hindu astronomy that had been developed by Muslim scholars was far ahead of anything available in Latin before Alfonsi.

For Alfonsi the practical use of exact astronomy was in the field of medicine. Astronomy provided exact predictions of the annual seasons with their different climates (warm, cold, dry, humid), all these variables being influenced by the Sun, the Moon and the other planets. The good physician adjusted his treatment of illnesses accordingly (see above, pp. 93–94).

After England, Alfonsi may have returned to Spain via France. Probably while in France, Alfonsi wrote a short tract stylized as a letter to the Peripatetics of France.<sup>255</sup> As in no other preserved writing of his, Alfonsi here makes no secret of his feeling that what he has to offer the Latins in the field of science (astronomy in this case) is absolutely superior to

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<sup>254</sup> See more arguments for this view in Charles L. Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Studies on the Children of Abraham 3; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 191–93. This does not exclude the purpose which Alfonsi himself states in the Prologue: The book would also be of use in negating the accusation of his Jewish compatriots that he converted for entirely opportunistic reasons (see further below).

<sup>255</sup> For a first critical edition of the Latin text, and an English translation, see Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, 163–81. Tolan has appropriately entitled the work *Epistola ad Peripateticos*. "Peripatetics" is Alfonsi's term for the Latin scholastics who excelled in the Aristotelian logic, but, in Alfonsi's view, were very ignorant in science.

anything the Latins could read in their cherished textbooks.<sup>256</sup> “It is the purpose of our text to give us a perpetual name after our death, and that we might rouse into life a knowledge of this art [astronomy] which has disappeared among the Latins, and that we might shatter the pretexts of those who have promised that they would study this if they found it.”<sup>257</sup> The obvious ire displayed by the last period refers to Alfonsi having received promises of attendance from many quarters for lectures he had advertised, but they did not show up! These people would now have no excuse for not reading his written text.

After France, Alfonsi returned to Aragon since his presence there is documented for the year 1121. In the document we find Alfonsi’s signature, probably because he acted as Alfonso I’s officer in a property deal. A French knight serving under Alfonso I had bought an estate in Saragossa which had formerly belonged to a Muslim. Very likely, the king employed Alfonsi here as a broker of the deal, expert as he was in Arabic and knowing the art of negotiating with Muslims.<sup>258</sup> – The year of his death is unknown.

In his *Letter to the Peripatetics*, Alfonsi said he wanted by that writing to make “a perpetual name” for himself. This Letter exists only in one manuscript, however, which means that it was not through this writing he won a name for posterity. It was rather two of his other writings that secured his fame and made him a much-used authority in later Latin writers: his *Dialogue* and the *Disciplina Clericalis*.<sup>259</sup> These are also the writings that most clearly reveal his personal and intellectual profile. But the one writing that tells us most about Alfonsi the Jewish convert, is his *Dialogue*. It is to this writing that we now turn. I believe it is so characteristic, not only of its author, but also of the period and place in which it was written, that an extensive survey and analysis is justified.

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<sup>256</sup> Alfonsi seems to be ignorant of the fact that several Arabic texts in the sciences had already been translated into Latin before his time and were known in France. See Charles Burnett, “King Ptolemy and Alchandreus the philosopher: the earliest texts on the astrolabe and Arabic astrology at Fleury, Micy and Chartres,” in *Annals of Science* 55 (1998), 329–68; reprinted in idem, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; essay I; Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2009), esp. 330–40.

<sup>257</sup> *Epistola* 10, text, Tolan, 168; trans. *ibid.*, 176–77.

<sup>258</sup> For this point of view, see Eberhard Hermes, introduction to *The Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi* (trans. P.R. Quarrie; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 3–99), 64.

<sup>259</sup> The reception of Alfonsi in Latin Christendom is studied in some detail by Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, Part II, “Reinventing Petrus Alfonsi: His Medieval Readers,” 95–162. Tolan lists 79 manuscripts (12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century) of the *Dialogue* (pp. 182–98), 18 of which are from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the same century in which the book was written; and 76 manuscripts (12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century) of the *Disciplina Clericalis* (pp. 199–204). The significance of these numbers can be evaluated by reference to Bernard Guenée’s table of a writing’s success among medieval readers: six extant manuscripts: small degree of success; 15 mss, limited success; 30, considerable success; and 70, great success (here quoted via Ora Limor and Israel Jakob Yuval, “Skepticism and Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Doubters in *Sefer ha-Nizzahon*,” in *Hebraica Veritas? Christian Hebraists and the Study of Judaism in Early Modern Europe* [ed. A. P. Coudert and J. S. Shoulson; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004], 165.)

## B. Alfonsi's *Dialogue*: An Analysis<sup>260</sup>

The book is clearly outlined and organized. It has an introductory part, subdivided into (1) a short proem; (2) a prologue; and (3) the *incipit liber*, the introductory dialogue between Moses and Petrus. In the proem, Alfonsi presents himself as an illustrious man and a Jew turned Catholic Christian. A short creed follows, in which God is said to be the omnipotent creator of all things, including mankind. God endowed humankind with two powers, reason and wisdom. These powers set humankind apart from the animals and enable human beings to “desire with understanding things that are just and flee from those that are contrary to salvation.” – We see here, already in the very first lines of the text, the echo of the typically Aristotelian definition of man, the rational animal, and we notice the great emphasis placed on reason which, well used, leads to knowledge of right and wrong, and with that to salvation.

In the Prologue this heavy emphasis on reason is counterbalanced by the following statement:

The Omnipotent One has inspired us with his spirit and led me on the correct path, first removing the white spot from the eyes [cp. Lev 21:20 Vulg.] and then the weighty veil of a corrupt soul [cp. 2 Cor 3:14–16]. Then the halls of the prophets lay open for us, and their secret places were revealed, and we applied the mind to perceiving their true understanding and we tarried over interpreting it.<sup>261</sup>

Alfonsi here introduces the other source of theological knowledge, the prophetic revelation of truths about God contained in both Testaments, the New revealing the hidden truths of the Old. The exact relationship between these two sources of theological knowledge, reason and revelation, is not yet explained; but basically, this two-source model of valid knowledge was common to the medieval philosophers and scientists of all the three faiths, and their ways of harmonizing the two sources also show striking similarities.

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<sup>260</sup> There are surprisingly few full-scale studies of this *Dialogue*; I list here some of those I found useful: Manfred Kniewasser, “Die antijüdische Polemik des Petrus Alfonsi (getauft 1106) und des Abtes Petrus Venerabilis von Cluny (1156),” *Kairos*, New Series 22 (1980):34–49; Barbara Phyllis Hurwitz, “*Fidei Causa et Tui Amore*: The Role of Petrus Alfonsi's Dialogues in the History of Jewish-Christian Debate” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1983); Jeremy Cohen, “The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate: Peter Alfonsi, Herman of Cologne, and Pablo Christiani,” in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (ed. Todd M. Endelman; New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 20–47; esp. 23–29; Schreckenberg II: 69–84. *Addition 2021*: See now the many valuable studies contained in Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann, and Philipp Roelli (eds.), *Petrus Alfonsi and his Dialogue: Background, Context, Reception* (Micrologus Library 66; Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014).

<sup>261</sup> *Dial. Prologue*; Mieth, 1:10–15; trans. Resnick, 39.

Next, Alfonsi once again sets forward a creed, this time a clearly Christian one with two focal points: the triune nature of the Creator and the salvific incarnation of God's Son. This creed-like summary echoes passages in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed as well as *Chalcedonense* and *Athanasianum*. He then goes on to tell how he was baptized professing this faith.

He devotes some lines to describing the reaction of his fellow Jews when they heard about his baptism, and explains that his *Dialogue* has been written in part to explain the reasons for his conversion, "so that all may know my intention and hear my arguments, in which I set forth the destruction of the belief of all the other nations, after which I concluded that the Christian law is superior to all others."<sup>262</sup> The whole book is written in the format of a dialogue between his former Jewish self Moses and his new Christian self Petrus "so that the reader's mind may more quickly achieve an understanding." By the literary device of debating with himself, the Jewish Alfonsi challenging the Christian Alfonsi and vice versa, Alfonsi seeks to lay bare the real motives for his conversion.<sup>263</sup> Many readers, medieval as well as modern, will no doubt hesitate in taking this at face value. The suspicion of ulterior motives was already reported by Alfonsi himself: "[O]thers accused me of vainglory and falsely claimed that I had done this for worldly honor, because I perceived that the Christians' nation dominated all others."<sup>264</sup> I shall return to this question, for now I only want to point out that if anything characterizes the Christian Alfonsi, it is his consequent rationalism. He writes like a man who has discovered the supreme rule of reason with the same enthusiasm as in a religious awakening. He should certainly not *tout court* be written off as a simple opportunist.

The book is divided in 12 chapters, called *tituli*, and in the Prologue Alfonsi gives a one-sentence summary of each of them. The first four *tituli* contain his criticism of Judaism, the fifth his criticism of Islam, and the remaining seven are devoted to his apology for Christianity as being solidly based on reason as well as trustworthy revelation, or "reason and authority" in Alfonsi's own terminology.

The Prologue ends with the following disclaimer, one of the rare expressions of humbleness by this author: "I beseech those who are about to read this little book, that if they find that it contains some imperfect or superfluous statement, they forgive this venial error, since no one is without fault."<sup>265</sup> Not even Alfonsi.

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<sup>262</sup> *Dial. Prologue*; Mieth, 2:17–20; trans. Resnick, 41.

<sup>263</sup> Hurwitz, "*Fidei Causa*," 11: "By arguing with his former self, he recreates the process of his own conversion."

<sup>264</sup> Mieth, 2:14–16; trans. Resnick, 41.

<sup>265</sup> Mieth, 3:9–11; trans. Resnick, 42.

Now the dialogue proper begins (we are still in the Introduction, but this part begins with *incipit liber*). Petrus is visited by Moses who upbraids him for having abandoned “the old law”, he who earlier had been its most able defender.<sup>266</sup> Petrus responds by saying that it is typical of the Jews and of untutored people that they judge anyone who does anything contrary to their own practice, without paying the least attention to the rational arguments that are relevant in the matter. From Moses, however, who has “been reared in the cradle of philosophy, suckled on the breasts of philosophy,”<sup>267</sup> Petrus expects more. He should not condemn Petrus before he has scrutinized his reasons for converting. Moses agrees to enter such an investigation in dialogue with Petrus.

They next set down some further ground rules of their common enterprise. Moses requires that all citations of Scripture should be according to the “Hebrew truth” (*hebraica veritas*), and that Petrus should not quarrel with him concerning readings deviating from the text recognized by the Jews.<sup>268</sup> Petrus accepts this, “for I desire greatly to slay you with your own sword.” There should also be complete freedom for both parts to ask whatever questions might seem relevant to them, even questions seemingly irrelevant to the question of the old versus the “new” law. They also agree that reason, not religious tradition, should be the supreme arbiter regarding which beliefs are true. Further, “Moses” asks Petrus if he concedes that Moses was a true prophet, speaking God’s word, and that all prophets after him confirmed the law given through him, and that the text of the law presently used by the Jews corresponds exactly to the text written down by Moses. To this Petrus responds:

How, I ask you, will I be able to deny this, especially since the same law previously was translated from the words of the same Moses by our [Christian] sages, in whom we have confidence, and is considered by us to be Scripture, except that when appropriate in certain places the words are changed, although nevertheless the meaning is the same.<sup>269</sup>

What Alfonsi is saying here, is that Moses’ requirement that Scripture should be quoted according the *hebraica veritas*, is compatible with quoting it according to the Vulgate text,

<sup>266</sup> See the passage quoted above, p. 99.

<sup>267</sup> A quote from Boethius, *Philosophiae consolatio* 1.2.2.

<sup>268</sup> The term *hebraica veritas* is taken from Jerome, who preferred to translate the Latin bible (later called the Vulgate) directly from the Hebrew text, not the Greek Septuagint preferred by Augustine and generally in the early church at his time. As early as in the debate between Justin and Trypho (written c. 160 C.E.), Justin quarrels with Trypho in cases where the Septuagint (according to Justin) has other readings than the “Jewish” text, which Justin claims the Jews have corrupted. See Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 25–92.

<sup>269</sup> Mieth, 4:40–43; trans. Resnick, 45.

since Jerome (the Christian “sage” alluded to) followed the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint when he made his Latin translation. According to Jerome’s prologue to his translation of the book of Job, he sometimes resorted to the Aramaic or Syriac texts to get the exact meaning of the Hebrew text, the meaning being more important than the exact wording.<sup>270</sup>

A scrutiny of Alfonsi’s scriptural quotations shows that he actually quotes the Vulgate in most cases. But he can delete words or lines in the Vulgate text that are without basis in the Hebrew text, and on occasion make his own impromptu translation of the Hebrew text of his own time or take readings from the talmudic quotations of the bible.<sup>271</sup> This shows that Alfonsi was serious in his commitment to base his argument on the Hebrew text recognized by the Jews.<sup>272</sup>

Moses now concludes that the point of disagreement between them is not the text of the bible, but its interpretation. Why does Petrus think he understands the law better than his own people? Petrus answers:

(1) Since I see that they attend to the surface and the letter of the law alone, and do not explicate it spiritually but rather carnally, this is why they are especially beguiled by error.<sup>273</sup>

Asked by Moses to explain this further, he says:

(2) Are you not mindful of your teachers who wrote your teaching (*doctrina*),<sup>274</sup> on which your entire law relies, according to you, how they claim that God has a form and

<sup>270</sup> See Vulgate, *Prol. in Iob*, “The present translation follows no ancient translator, but will be found to reproduce now the exact words, now the meaning, now both together of the original Hebrew, Aramaic and occasionally the Syriac” (Latin text Weber I:731; transl. *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6:491).

<sup>271</sup> The text of Alfonsi’s biblical quotes have been studied by J. H. L. Reuter, “Petrus Alfonsi: An Examination of his Works, their Scientific Content, and their Background,” (Ph.D. Diss., Saint Hilda’s College, Oxford, 1975), 37–50; and by Mieth in great detail in his notes, pp. 150–82 passim. Resnick takes over the most important findings of Mieth and Reuter in the footnotes of his translation.

<sup>272</sup> One especially notes his treatment of Isa 7:14 in *titulus* 7. When Moses objects that the Hebrew has ‘*almah*, unmarried girl, and not *betulah*, virgin, Petrus continues his argument exclusively based on the Hebrew text (see below, pp.142–44). Discussing another crucial text, Isa 52:13–53:12, in *titulus* 9, he modifies the Vulgate translation in six places so that it agrees with the Hebrew text (for detailed comparison, see Mieth, 174–75). He then says: “Clearly, Moses, I have above all labored over this prophecy in order to introduce it in the way it is found among you; by doing so I have abandoned, moreover, the correct but nevertheless variant translation of the blessed Jerome. I have done this, however, in order to remove all your pretexts.” (Mieth, 100:26–30; trans. Resnick, 209–10).

<sup>273</sup> Mieth, 5:10–11; trans. Resnick, 45.

<sup>274</sup> *Doctrina*, “teaching”, is Alfonsi’s Latin rendering of “Talmud.” It was soon established as the Latin name for Talmud in other Christian writers, see Resnick, 32 with note 101. A close examination of Alfonsi’s quotes from

a body, and they attribute such things to his ineffable majesty as it is wicked to believe and absurd to hear, seeing that they are not based on reason?<sup>275</sup>

This is a theme to which Alfonsi returns several times throughout his *Dialogue*, and it completely dominates the first four *tituli* in which he gives his reasons for abandoning Judaism. When Moses points out that in the sayings of the prophets, God is said to have “a head, eyes, nostrils, hands, arms, and all the outlines of a body,” and that accordingly the rabbis do nothing wrong in using the same language about God, Petrus answers:

(3) The sayings of the prophets are obscure, and they are not sufficiently clear to all. For this reason, when we find such as this in the prophets, which, when accepted literally, cause us to depart from the path of reason, we interpret them as allegories, so that we may return to the narrow path of reason. Now, necessity compels us to do this, since reason cannot support the text otherwise. Your sages, however, have not known God as was necessary, and for this reason they explain the sayings of the prophets in a superficial way.<sup>276</sup>

Observing how fundamental this point is to Alfonsi’s entire argument in the *Dialogue*, several scholars have taken Alfonsi to task for ignoring the fact that non-anthropomorphic interpretation of anthropomorphic God-language in the Bible had already been advocated by Jewish scholars before Alfonsi’s time, the most prominent of them being Saadia ben Joseph (882–942) who in 928 was appointed Gaon (head) of the famous Academy of Sura in Babylonia.<sup>277</sup> He was the great pioneer in formulating a reason-based Jewish theology, especially in his treatise *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (933).<sup>278</sup> Concerning biblical anthropomorphic God-language, Saadia stated that whenever we meet sayings in scripture that attribute to God the Creator features that belong to created things,

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the “*doctrina*” reveals that in the great majority of cases they come from the Babylonian Talmud (including the Mishnah), more rarely from the Jerusalem Talmud, and on occasion from some midrash outside the Talmuds. See extensive analysis in Hurwitz, “*Causa fidei*,” 167–186. For the sake of brevity, I call all rabbinic material in Alfonsi “Talmud” or “talmudic.”

<sup>275</sup> Mieth, 5:14–19; trans. Resnick, 46.

<sup>276</sup> *Dial.*, *titulus* 1; Mieth, 17:36 – 18:2; trans. Resnick, 71–72, slightly altered.

<sup>277</sup> Such criticism is voiced, e.g., by Cohen, “The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate,” 26; and especially by Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*,” 27–29 and 98–114.

<sup>278</sup> See, for comparison with Alfonsi’s *Dialogue*, the English translation of Saadia’s work in Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Yale Judaica Series 1; trans. Samuel Rosenblatt; New Haven: Yale University Press, Second Printing 1951).

it is out of question and impossible to declare him to be anything that he has himself created. Consequently, for all divine attributes pertaining to either [created] substance or accident that are encountered in the books of the prophets it is necessary to find in the language of Scripture nonanthropomorphic meanings that would be in keeping with the requirements of reason.<sup>279</sup>

This reads very much like Alfonsi himself in the third quote above – “when we find such as this in the prophets, which, when accepted literally, cause us to depart from the path of reason, we interpret them as allegories, so that we may return to the narrow path of reason.” So why did Alfonsi blame the Jewish sages, *tout court*, with cross literalism, especially if he was in fact acquainted with Saadia’s book? Hurwitz thinks he was, and having compared the two books in some detail, I tend to agree. I would even go one step further and suggest that Alfonsi’s *Dialogue* was in part, and especially in *tituli* One and Three, written as a response to Saadia’s *Beliefs and Opinions*, especially the Introductory Treatise and Treatises One, Two, Seven, and Eight. But if so, Hurwitz’s point gains in weight: why should Alfonsi ignore Saadia’s anti-anthropomorphic statements? “[C]learly ... it would not suit Alfonsi’s purpose to quote Saadia here, since it would defeat his argument that Jews anthropomorphize God, and that Jews are literalists.”<sup>280</sup> Hurwitz thus explains Alfonsi’s silence about Saadia as being purely tactical. He simply would not complicate his argument against Jewish literalism by admitting that some Jewish sages did not share it.

I leave this problem in suspension here; I will return to it in due course. It is now time for a review of Alfonsi’s detailed argument in the first four *tituli*. For constant comparison with Saadia’s *Beliefs and Opinions*, I refer to the footnotes.

#### *Tituli* 1–4: The irrationality of the talmudic Rabbis

In the first *titulus*—by many deemed the most original and interesting<sup>281</sup>—Alfonsi uses his considerable knowledge of talmudic lore to criticize Jewish exegesis of the Bible along the

<sup>279</sup> Saadia, *Beliefs and Opinions*, II.8; Rosenblatt, 113–14. Saadia treats this theme extensively and with examples in Treatise Two, chapters 8–13.

<sup>280</sup> Hurwitz, “*Fidei Causa*,” 29.

<sup>281</sup> The first *titulus* is also by far the most extensive; in Resnick’s translation, it is 49 pages, the same amount of text as the second largest (the 12<sup>th</sup>, 25 pages) and third largest (the 9<sup>th</sup>, 24 pages) taken together.



lines already explained. He begins by enumerating several rabbinic *haggadot* exemplifying the irrational concept of deity in the Talmud.<sup>282</sup>

His first example is taken from the talmudic tractate *Berakoth* (benedictions), to which he explicitly refers.<sup>283</sup> Here, the rabbis claim that God has a body with head and arms, since he ties phylacteries to his head and left arm each day. When asked by Petrus on which scriptural verses this is based, Moses points to Ex 33:23 and Isa 62:8. In a detailed discussion Petrus convinces Moses that this haggadah has no basis whatsoever in these scriptures. And worse, it is also contrary to reason:

You [Jews] contend that God has a head, arms, and the entire form of the body. If this is the case, then it is necessary that you confess that God consists of the dimensions of length, breadth, and height. If he is truly encompassed by these three dimensions, he is bounded by the six parts of a body, so that he would appear in his own place, which is unsuitable. Moreover, I propose to you two things for the band<sup>284</sup> which you say he has on his head. For either the band comes from him, or from something else. If truly it comes from him, then God is divided from himself. If from something else, then it is either a creator or a creature. If a creator, then there are two creators. If it is creature, then some creature is greater than a certain part of the creator, which is unsuitable.... Now, then, clearly you can understand what you demanded be shown to you by reason, namely, how worthless what you believe about the band really is.<sup>285</sup>

In this way, Alfonsi means to refute this and the remaining haggadot by two accounts: they have no basis in the *authority* of Scripture, and they are contrary to what *reason* teaches us about God's nature.

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<sup>282</sup> The Spanish Muslim author Ibn Hazm (d. 1064) was an accomplished rationalistic critic of Biblical as well as rabbinic texts, accusing them of inconsistencies, anthropomorphic concepts of God, and other absurdities. "[He] repeatedly thanks God for having saved the Muslims from this error, as if he knew of no anthropomorphic Qur'anic verses" (Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992], 29). There is an instructive survey of Ibn Hazm's philosophical criticism of the holy texts in Judaism in this book, 26–35. His criticism also comprised the Christians insofar as they held the Old Testament in the same high regard as the Jews. It is only when he criticizes talmudic *haggadot* as being unscientific and literalistic that his criticism comes near to Alfonsi's.

<sup>283</sup> See *b. Ber. 6a*.

<sup>284</sup> Phylacteries.

<sup>285</sup> *Dial.* 1; Mieth 8:1–16; transl. Resnick, 52–53. This application of formal logic to propositions about God, showing them to be incompatible with the very definition of God (his unity of essence implied that all attributes of God had no existence separate from his essence) was typical of Muslim Mutazilite theology. See Hurwitz, "*Fidei Causa*," 99–101 and p. 92 above.

Alfonsi's next example is refuted by reason alone, reason in this case being represented by Arabic astronomy and geography. The haggadah claims that God is located in the west where all stars fall into the ocean worshipping God (based on Nehemiah 9:6).<sup>286</sup> Alfonsi says that "the west", understood as the place where the sun as well as the stars set, is not a specific place on earth, but relative to the location of the observer. When the observer's longitude changes, the place where he sees the sun and the stars set will also change accordingly. And the latitude of sunset and that of the stars will change with the seasons. Alfonsi is not satisfied with pointing this out; he takes the theme as a pretext for lecturing extensively on the map of the earth and its climate zones described by al Khwarismi and other Arab astronomers. He even describes how this knowledge is made useful in calculating the distance between cities. Alfonsi may not primarily be addressing Moses with all this, but rather his Latin Christian readers. Just as in his *Letter to the Peripatetics*, Alfonsi is eager to impress Latin readers with his superior insight into the most advanced astronomical science of his time. And of course, he also likes to paint a background foil against which the ignorance of the talmudic rabbis in these matters stand out all the more conspicuously.<sup>287</sup> But one should not overlook a third element: Alfonsi's sheer enthusiasm over the new rational insights into the shape of the earth and the universe surrounding it. In the *Dialogue*, this is an enthusiasm shared between Alfonsi's old and new self, and Alfonsi justifies these extensive scientific excursions by having Moses ask curiously for them.

This is the case also with some of the remaining haggadadot. According to Alfonsi, there is an interpretation of Dan 10:20 in the "third book" of the Talmud that takes this verse to mean that God's location is circumscribed on six sides, like a cube.<sup>288</sup> Asked how God is able to work on things outside his place, Moses answers that he does so through his wisdom, which lets him know the things outside himself, and through his will, that allows him to act on them. Again, Alfonsi counters this by a Mutazilite argument that denies these attributes any independent existence outside God himself (cf. p. 92 above). Moses, however, retorts that a good analogy for how these attributes act outside God is the way the sun acts outside itself through the heat and light emitted from it.

Moses is here made to use one of the Church Fathers' favorite metaphors for the Father acting through the Son (and the Spirit), and it is somewhat surprising that Alfonsi

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<sup>286</sup> See *b. Baba Batra 25a*. Very likely, R. Sheshet, the propounder of this haggadah, wanted to oppose Jewish Believers in Jesus who, like other Christians, prayed facing east.

<sup>287</sup> See Hurwitz, "*Fidei Causa*," 91–98.

<sup>288</sup> Scholars seem to be at a loss as to the source of this. See Mieth's note ad loc., 148, and Hurwitz, "*Fidei Causa*," 101, n. 276.

rejects this analogy by pointing out that the light as well as the heat are weakened the further away from the sun they come, “which hardly befits God.” Not only is he indirectly contradicting an established Christian model for the Trinity; he himself will use the model of equating God’s wisdom and will with the Son and the Spirit later in the *Dialogue*, and even illustrate it with the simile of the sun and its light and heat. But interestingly, in *titulus* 1 he does not explicitly draw the conclusion that it is improper to talk about these two attributes as mediators of God’s outward actions. The question is rather left hanging in the balance.

Probably Alfonsi is arguing *ad hominem* here: as a Jew rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, Moses has no valid reasons for using the two attributes of wisdom and will the way he does. But for Alfonsi, accepting Trinitarian doctrine, they constitute the very key to understanding God’s triune nature (*tituli* 6 and 8, see below).<sup>289</sup>

The talmudic teachers further say that God’s wrath is kindled once a day according to Ps 7:12,<sup>290</sup> and that only Balaam knows the hour of his wrath; that God weeps once a day, and his tears appear as light falling from the stars at night; that God cries because of Israel’s captivity, roars in pain thereover like a lion thrice a day, tramples with his feet, coos like a dove, shakes his head and regrets painfully that he has destroyed his temple and scattered his sons among the nations; that he prays every day that his compassion with his people will conquer his wrath; etc. etc. Alfonsi points out the absurdity of all this, in part by evoking philosophical arguments of a Mutazilite type, in part by giving scientific reasons for phenomena of nature. According to right reason, God is immaterial, not a composite being, eternally existing, and uncreated. All this is incompatible with the anthropomorphic concept of God in the rabbinic haggadot. Alfonsi also mobilizes the current theories of contemporary science to show that the natural phenomena which the rabbis take to be God’s tears or other supernatural events, really all have quite natural causes, well explained by scientific theories. It is beyond the scope of this survey to give detailed summaries of all Alfonsi’s many interesting excursions into philosophy and science in *titulus* 1, but a few examples will suffice to give a clearer picture of what kind of man he was.

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<sup>289</sup> In this analysis I disagree somewhat with Hurwitz, “*Fidei Causa*,” 101–103. She only sees contradiction here and thinks that Alfonsi left the question hanging unanswered for sheer tactical reasons. See further below, pp. 139 and 144–45 with notes. I would like to point out, however, that Saadia, like “Moses”, posits a “Trinitarian” model for God as a creator: God is described in the Bible as (1) living, (2) omnipotent and (3) omniscient, and philosophical reason substantiates this. The Creator exists as One (he is living); he has the ability and will to create from nothing (he is omnipotent), and he knows and plans how to create (he is omniscient). While philosophical reason intuits these truths, it also understands that in God these three attributes coalesce into one, being identical with God’s essence. Therefore, Christian trinitarianism is false (*Beliefs and Opinions*, II.1–5, Rosenblatt, 94–107).

<sup>290</sup> Attributed to R. Meir in *b. Ber. 7a*.

After Alfonsi has referred several talmudic haggadot that ascribe a body and bodily organs and functions to God, and judged them all silly and irrational, Moses counters that the biblical prophets did the same, so why blame the rabbis for following their example? This objection triggers one of the longest and most carefully constructed hermeneutical-philosophical excursions in the entire *Dialogue*.<sup>291</sup>

Alfonsi begins by stating his basic principle: While the prophets often spoke figuratively about God (and created things), such metaphorical language should never be understood literally – as in the narrative haggadot of the talmudic sages – but always be interpreted as allegories, and in this way be harmonized with what philosophical reason tells about God and God’s nature.<sup>292</sup> Moses asks for biblical sayings that undeniably require a figurative interpretation, and Petrus quotes several, e.g., Exodus 10:5 which says that locusts shall cover “the eye” of the earth; Numbers 16:32, the earth opening its “mouth”; Isaiah 24:16, from “the wing” of the earth.<sup>293</sup> Moses accepts this, but asks for scriptural proof that biblical God-language that attributes a body and bodily features to God should always, in the same way, be metaphorically understood. Petrus again answers with a list of biblical sayings that in different ways say that God cannot be likened to anyone or anything created, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:15–18, you saw no likeness on the day the Lord spoke to you...; Isaiah 40:18, to whom will you liken God, or what image will you propose for him?; Isaiah 46:5, to whom have you likened and equated and compared me and made me similar?<sup>294</sup>

Moses now declares himself convinced by these biblical proofs but asks Petrus to make good on his promise to also prove his point by reason. This Petrus promises to do, and on this point, he waxes unusually lyrical:

When we will lie down in the palace of great Reason, let us strew the ground of this same palace with some flowers of opinions, so that afterward we will sit there more delightfully when we argue. Some of these opinions will be steps for us to prove [1] that

<sup>291</sup> Mieth, 17:31–28:40; Resnick, 71–90.

<sup>292</sup> See the passage quoted in full above, p. 107.

<sup>293</sup> Saadia Gaon in his *Beliefs and Opinions* has a similar list of examples to the same purpose, and the three of Alfonsi’s cited here, are also in Saadia’s list (*Beliefs and Opinions* II.10; trans. Rosenblatt, 119). Isa 24:16 is especially interesting. The Hebrew reads “from the *kanaf* of the earth...,” the literal meaning of *kanaf* being wing. The Vulgate, like all modern translations, renders the word according to its metaphorical meaning here: “from the end(s) of the earth.” Like Saadia, Alfonsi is clearly recurring to the *Hebraica veritas* here, whereas he quotes the Vulgate text of Isa 24:16 in *titulus 2*.

<sup>294</sup> Again, Saadia has a very similar list of passages proving the same point in *Beliefs and Opinions* II.9, Rosenblatt 113. The three passages of Alfonsi given above also occur in Saadia, loc. cit.

God is, and to know [2] what he is. For first we ought to prove that God exists, and then afterward to show that there is nothing else like him.<sup>295</sup>

In his Prologue Alfonsi told how the “halls of the prophets” (*prophetiarum claustra*) lay open for him when he learned to read the prophets correctly, that is, according to reason. Now, he extols the “palace of great Reason” (*magne rationis palatium*) in even more flowery language, and the dialogue between Moses and Petrus changes character. Moses no longer speaks as the defender of talmudic Judaism, but as an inquisitive partner in a philosophical dialogue in which articles already held by faith by Jews and Christians are demonstrated to be true by reason, independent of revelation. He soon reminds Petrus of his exuberant description of the palace of reason: “It is appropriate for me to bless your words, from which I believe that I receive such great fruit. Therefore, fulfill the promise [of proving the Creator], and now bestrew the palace with the flowers which you mentioned.”<sup>296</sup>

Moses prods Petrus to explain the rational proof for God’s existence by saying: Since you do not want to prove God’s existence by quoting the Scriptures, and “since he is himself incomprehensible to every corporeal sense, it will help me a great deal to hear how this can be proved by philosophical reason.”<sup>297</sup> Alfonsi now enters on a proof of God’s existence, but interjects a short note on three different ways of acquiring knowledge: first, the existence of something can be known by observation by our bodily senses, second, the existence of rational truths can be known by intellectual intuition, third, truth can be known by valid inferences from truths of the first two kinds (or, in Alfonsi’s terminology, by analogy).<sup>298</sup> An example of the first kind is how we know the color of things by the sight of our eyes, whereas there is no way of explaining what the colors look like to a blind man. The second type is exemplified by us knowing that one cannot say at the same time that a certain thing moves and does not move. The third type is, e.g., “that if you hear a voice somewhere, you understand that there is something making the voice there, even though you do not see it.”<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Mieth, 19:28–36; Resnick, 75.

<sup>296</sup> Mieth, 20:20–22; Resnick, 76.

<sup>297</sup> Mieth, 19:41–43; Resnick, 75.

<sup>298</sup> As pointed out by Hurwitz (*Fidei causa*, 106), this corresponds closely to Saadia’s threefold way of acquiring true insight: “The first consists of the knowledge gained by [direct] observation. The second is composed of the intuition of the intellect. The third comprises that knowledge which is inferred by logical necessity” (*Beliefs and Opinions*, Introductory Treatise, 5; Rosenblatt, 16).

<sup>299</sup> For this whole passage, see Latin text in Mieth, 20:2–19; trans. Resnick, 75–76. In addition to the example of hearing a voice and inferring a producer, Alfonsi adds the example of observing smoke and inferring a fire making it. Saadia uses the same two examples in his explanation of the inference method, *Beliefs and Opinions*, Introd. 5, Rosenblatt, 21.

It is this latter method one can use to prove the existence of God. If the world can be proven to be a creation, the existence of a Creator necessarily follows. It further follows that everything composite, consisting of parts that have been brought together, must have a beginning, whereas God, being immaterial and non-composite, has no beginning. This entails his absolute unity and non-similarity to anything created and composite. Hence, reason itself requires that all anthropomorphic God-language in the Bible must be taken as metaphors only and not in any way as literally true descriptions of God. In concluding the first *titulus*, Alfonsi again enumerates rabbinic haggadot, one more ridiculous than the other, which violate this principle in the crudest imaginable ways.

Alfonsi's argument is much more detailed and technical than this short summary indicates.<sup>300</sup> Time and again, Moses requires clarification of issues he himself has pondered, without finding good answers. For example, he asks Petrus for an important clarification:

I earnestly entreat that one scruple ... which is still gnawing at my mind, be entangled by your sagacity. For I have read in many books of the philosophers that five things existed before the establishment of the earth, namely, God, who holds the origin of all things, and after him the [world]soul and matter, and time and place. Since ... you have discussed the first three, I am ... surprised that you made no mention of the last two. [Petrus: they were not relevant to the present argument].

Moses: [Even so,] I would like to hear what you think of these [time and space], because wise Catholics, to whose faith you have converted, have long thought about these things differently than the books of the ancient philosophers say. For Catholics have held that these have a beginning, whereas the old philosophers testify that they are eternal.<sup>301</sup>

One senses that Moses' sympathy is with the "wise Catholics" in this matter, and one is slightly surprised that Alfonsi sides with the ancient philosophers: time and space are eternal dimensions, but before and apart from the created things which fill them, they are real but empty. It is probable that Alfonsi is following the (heretical) Muslim philosopher al-Razi (d. 934) here (who for his part followed Plato in the *Timaios*).<sup>302</sup> I agree with Hurwitz's comment on this: "It is curious that Alfonsi should accept the view of a Muslim heretic, particularly

<sup>300</sup> For a quite detailed summary and analysis, see Hurwitz, "*Fidei causa*" 106–119.

<sup>301</sup> Mieth, 24:31–25:2; Resnick, 83–84.

<sup>302</sup> For details, see Hurwitz, "*Fidei causa*," 115–116.

since his views are also heretical to Christianity. ...Alfonsi's love of reason ... has led him here also to reject a Christian belief."<sup>303</sup> If anything, this demonstrates that, at least on occasion, Alfonsi was willing to follow reason even when it apparently was at odds with established opinion among his fellow Christians.

But Moses is still not satisfied that all problems are solved concerning the relation between God's eternity on the one hand, and on the other, that he created a world at a certain point in time. To complete his argument, Petrus should provide

some argument which will destroy those who say that the world has existed from eternity. For they say, how was such a sudden and novel creation of things conceived by the highest creator, when he had not already created them a long time ago? ...[T]hey say that it is wicked to believe that God either remembered something or suddenly saw something that previously he had forgotten or had not seen. Up to now, I have found no solution to this question of theirs.<sup>304</sup>

Alfonsi tries to solve this difficulty – with which philosophers believing in a Creator-God had struggled since Plato and Aristotle – with the following distinction: Acts come in three categories: (1) acts that one is obliged to do because not doing them is bad, (2) acts that should not be done, and are blameworthy, (3) acts that are good but not obligatory. These latter ones are praiseworthy when done, but if they are not done, the subject not doing them incurs no blame. God's act of creating a world belongs to this latter category. He was under no necessity to create, but was free to, because he eternally had the power to do it. What made the possible creation actually take place was an act of will on God's part. This does not imply that God at any time changed his nature. – Moses is full of praise for this solution of his problem. Alfonsi's handling of the problem seems, in fact, to be his personal and original contribution.<sup>305</sup>

This review of the very rich philosophical and scientific argument in *titulus* 1 does not do justice to all the intricacies which Alfonsi discusses very competently in his many

<sup>303</sup> Hurwitz, "*Fidei causa*," 116.

<sup>304</sup> Mieth, 26:9–15; Resnick,

<sup>305</sup> See for this Hurwitz, "*Fidei causa*," 118. Saadia asks the same question, and takes the same position as Alfonsi, but his reasons are in part different. Unlike Alfonsi but agreeing with the mainline Christian doctrine (cp. Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.12–13), Saadia denies the eternity of time. Therefore, "[If an] individual were to ask, 'Then why did God not create them [all created beings] before this time [when he created them]?' our reply would be: 'There was no time in existence as yet that one could ask about, and furthermore it is of the very nature of him who acts by free choice to do what he wants when he wants'" (*Beliefs and Opinions* I.4 end; Rosenblatt, 86). The first reason echoes Augustine's answer, the second can be said to anticipate Alfonsi's answer.

excurses, demonstrating a good mastery of the considerable Arabic corpus of Neoplatonic, Pseudo Aristotelian works presented above (see pp. 89–90), and also the Muslim commentaries on these works, as well as the works of leading Arabic astronomers and geographers. In all of this, Alfonsi was conscious of contributing new and significant insights into the traditional *adversus Ioudaeos* arsenal of well-worn arguments in the works of Latin Christian authors. None of the latter had made *reason* – science and philosophy – such a dominant criterion for deciding which party had truth on their side.

On this background, I side with the scholars who characterize the twelfth century in Spain as inaugurating a watershed in the Jewish/Christian debate. Until then, the subject of controversy between Jews and Christians had been the right interpretation of a dossier of biblical proof-texts, and which texts should belong in this dossier. During the twelfth century, post-biblical Jewish texts, like Talmud and *midrashim*, were introduced into the Christian arsenal, and the criterion of rationality was accorded a much greater weight. Alfonsi's contribution is pioneering and significant in both respects. From his Andalusian, Jewish and culturally Muslim, background, he set a new standard for Christian *adversus iudaeos* argument.

I have made scattered remarks concerning parallels between Alfonsi and the great Jewish pioneer Saadia in this quest for a rationally defensible theology. The timespan between Saadia's book (933) and Alfonsi's (1108/1110) is ca. 175 years. Even so, they are strikingly concerned with the very same issues. This extends beyond the few parallels I have pointed out above (I will add some more below). As mentioned, Barbara Hurwitz is confident that Alfonsi knew and used Saadia's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, and as far as I have been able to compare the two works, I am inclined to agree. If we assume he did, this may throw interesting light on the intellectual process that led to Alfonsi's conversion. In Saadia, we find the same fascination with rational, philosophical arguments as in Alfonsi. Saadia has the same rational explanation of the biblical anthropomorphic God-language as Alfonsi. He even has the same argumentative strategy in his handling of the question. First, examples of biblical verses describing God's body parts are quoted.<sup>306</sup> Second, examples of undeniably metaphorical descriptions of created things are mentioned. They show that metaphorical language is not foreign to the Bible.<sup>307</sup> Third, testimonies from Scripture are quoted in which

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<sup>306</sup> For easy reference and comparison, I just give the page number of the two translations, Rosenblatt's for Saadia's *Beliefs and Opinions* and Resnick's for Alfonsi's *Dialogue*. Here, Saadia, 116–17 and Alfonsi, 71.

<sup>307</sup> Saadia, 117–120, Alfonsi, 72.



God explicitly says he is not really similar to any created things.<sup>308</sup> Fourth, philosophical arguments for God not being corporeal undergird the biblical arguments.<sup>309</sup>

Here I would like to return to the question raised above: this being so, why did Alfonsi attribute cross literalism to the Jewish sages; Saadia being one of them?

If we read Alfonsi's text closely, we see that those whom he brands literalists are "your teachers who wrote your teaching (*doctrina*), on which your entire law relies, according to you." In other words, the insensible literalists are *the rabbis of the Talmud*. It is clearly the same rabbis who are meant by "your sages" in the third quote above (p. 107). The people Alfonsi take to task are the rabbis speaking in the Talmud. And while it may be legitimate for biblical prophets to speak in bodily metaphors of God, it is the task of rational commentators to decipher these metaphors and bring out their deeper theological-philosophical meaning. It is as commentators on the biblical text that the talmudic haggadists fail miserably. Not only do they not unravel the biblical metaphors by reason; they also produce their own stories about God with even coarser anthropomorphisms.<sup>310</sup>

Saadia seems to have been aware of this problem because he claims that the talmudic sages thought the same way about biblical anthropomorphisms as he does. But he is not able to quote a single passage from the Talmud that supports this contention. Instead, he quotes four passages from Targum Onqelos in which "the hand of God" is translated as "a plague from God," (Ex 9:3) and "under God's feet" is rendered "under the throne of his glory" (Ex 24:10), etc. Saadia claims that "all passages of a similar nature" were translated in the same allegorical way.<sup>311</sup> This latter statement is simply incorrect; on many occasions Onqelos keeps the anthropomorphic pictures of God intact, and so do other Targums. Seen from Alfonsi's perspective, Saadia was entirely correct in his criticism of literalist reading of biblical anthropomorphic God-language, but he failed miserably in his attempt to portray the talmudic rabbis as his allies in this endeavor.

<sup>308</sup> In Saadia, this comes first, 113–114, in Alfonsi, third, 73–74, but the argumentative function is the same, as are – in part – the quoted texts.

<sup>309</sup> Saadia, 122–27, Alfonsi, 75–86. For a detailed comparison of similarities and differences between the two authors in their philosophy in these passages, see above.

<sup>310</sup> In an article very relevant for the present subject, Meir Bar-Ilan argues that during the talmudic period, all rabbis shared the literalism of the biblical prophets, and even went further by speculating on the actual size of God's body and its different parts. See his article "The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism," in *Rashi 1040–1990: Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach* (ed. G. Sed-Rajna; Paris: Cerf, 1993), 321–335, esp. 322–31.

<sup>311</sup> *Beliefs and Opinions* II.9, Rosenblatt, 116. As Bar-Ilan notices, this view influenced modern scholarship on the Targumim, resulting in the view that there was a consequent anti-anthropomorphic tendency, at least in Onqelos, but also in other Targumim, though in varying degrees. In more recent scholarship, this theory has been widely criticized, and abandoned by many. See Bar-Ilan, "Hand of God," 333–34 and further references there.

There is also another factor that should be taken into consideration. With good reason, Alfonsi would not accept Saadia as the spokesman for rabbinic Judaism *tout court*. As Bar-Ilan points out, literalistic reading of biblical and talmudic God-language seems to have been widespread among common rabbis in Alfonsi's days and even later.<sup>312</sup> Interestingly, in the beginning of *titulus* 1, "Moses" defends the literalist position. It may realistically reflect the actual view of Alfonsi himself in his Jewish youth. It is relevant to recall here something Alfonsi tells in his Prologue. He says that when his fellow Jews learned about his conversion to Christianity, they found it odd, because they had considered him "well-trained in the books of the prophets and the sayings of the sages..." In other words, the Judaism in which Alfonsi had been brought up, and on behalf of which he had preached apologetically in the synagogues, was a talmudic Judaism in which the biblical texts were interpreted by the sages of the Talmud. In line with Bar-Ilan, I believe it would be anachronistic to think that in Alfonsi's youth, medieval Jewish philosophy of Saadia's type had already filtered down to every local rabbi in al-Andalus, e.g., the rabbi who taught young Alfonsi his Judaism.<sup>313</sup>

One could speculate that when Alfonsi later read Saadia, the latter's criticism of literalistic reading of biblical God-language impressed him as convincing and in line with similar criticism among Muslim writers, but not Saadia's attempt to save the talmudic sages from this criticism. Regardless of how one looked at it, the sages of the Talmud remained the very foundation of Rabbanite Judaism, and any attempt at radically reinterpreting their anthropomorphic picture of God was unconvincing. In this way, Saadia's apology for Judaism may actually have backfired in Alfonsi's case. While agreeing with Saadia in his application of reason as hermeneutical criterion as far as sayings about a corporeal God were concerned, he may have found Saadia's attempt to reconcile this with talmudic Judaism utterly unimpressive.<sup>314</sup> In Alfonsi's view, it hardly made things better that regarding Jewish belief in

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<sup>312</sup> Bar-Ilan, "Hand of God," 334–35.

<sup>313</sup> Hurwitz seems to think such was the case generally at Alfonsi's time: "[N]either Saadia nor Alfonsi's Hispano-Jewish contemporaries would have accepted many of these [talmudic] haggadot literally, but would have insisted, as Christian rationalists did, on a figurative interpretation. Nevertheless, Alfonsi insists on taking as both literal and authoritative material which was not so viewed by his Jewish contemporaries in Spain" ("*Fidei causa*," 197). I refer again to Bar-Ilan's criticism of this view. Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi*, already made the same point: "In light of this evidence [for literalism among Alfonsi's contemporary rabbis], we must modify the claim of Hurwitz, '*Fidei Causa et Tui Amore*,' 197, that Alfonsi 'insists on taking as both literal and authoritative material that was not so viewed by his Jewish contemporaries.'" Clearly, it depends on which contemporaries one examines" (p. 218, note 39).

<sup>314</sup> Julius Guttman observes that "Saadia himself uses [his] principle [of reason-based exegesis] sparingly, and sharply criticizes the excessive and uninhibited reinterpretation of Scripture by some philosophical commentators." See his *Philosophies of Judaism: A History of Jewish Philosophy from Biblical Times to Franz Rosenzweig* (trans. D. W. Silverman; New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 72. He further observes that for Saadia, the fundamental beliefs of the Bible and the Talmud remained unchanged, while later Jewish thinkers

a concrete resurrection of righteous Jews for a millennial reign on this earth, Saadia came out as a staunch literalist (see below on *titulus* 3).

In his Prologue, Alfonsi further says that some Jews thought his conversion might have come about “because I had not understood the words of the prophets and the law appropriately.” Alfonsi could be saying this tongue-in-cheek, because this reason was close to the truth, only in a different sense than intended. If one assumes that Alfonsi’s defense of Judaism had in part been conducted as apologetics for the anthropomorphic God-language of the Bible as well as the talmudic rabbis, he could increasingly have been shaken by the philosophic-rational criticism of this God-language. He probably found this criticism first and foremost in Muslim literature, and then also in Christian, and here widespread, while Saadia remained a Jewish *Einzelgänger*.<sup>315</sup> Alfonsi’s final surrender to a philosophical-spiritual reinterpretation of biblical God-metaphors, and to making reason the supreme canon of interpretation, would then be experienced as a radical turn-around, a farewell to talmudic Judaism, and could explain the almost religious fervor with which he extols reason as a basic theological criterion. (His reasons for choosing Christianity rather than Islam are given in *tituli* 5–12.)

As I said earlier, there is no reason to assert that Alfonsi was a qaraite Jew before his conversion. What we have seen so far, only underlines that as a Jew, he followed the talmudic Sages. But the existence of an alternative Judaism which rejected the entire Rabbanite corpus of writings, could have made him think that by embracing Christianity, he did not necessarily abandon everything Jewish. Like the Qaraites, he could extol the authority of the Jewish Bible over against the Rabbanite tradition. But for him, the supreme interpreters of this Bible were not his contemporary Qaraites, but those Jews of old who followed the Rabbi Jesus, and their later followers.

One can reasonably assume that allegorical reading of the God-language of the bible was much more common among Andalusian Mozarab Christians than among the common Muslims and Jews. The Christian preachers of the Middle Ages had through several centuries popularized an allegorical interpretation of Old Testament texts, while this kind of

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appealed to Saadia’s principles “in order to justify their sometimes radical transformations of Jewish ideas” (ibid.). They probably found Saadia inconsequent, and Alfonsi probably thought the same.

<sup>315</sup> Considering that Saadia’s anti-anthropomorphic exegesis of biblical God-language, and his claim that the talmudic rabbis were anti-anthropomorphists like himself, were in large measure directed against Qaraite criticism, it is of interest to note that according to A. Poznanski, “after Saadia, there were no further major works written against Karaism before Alfonsi’s time,” Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*,” 167. She refers to A. Poznanski, “The Anti-Karaite Writings of Saadiah Gaon,” in *Karaite Studies* (ed. P. Birnbaum; New York: 1971), 89–90. She also notes that “whatever Alfonsi may have known of Jewish defense of the Talmud came from the works of Saadia, or perhaps from the implicit responses of other geonim” (ibid.).

interpretation of holy texts was more of a novelty in Muslim and Jewish circles in Spain, reserved for rather narrow religious elites.

I believe that understanding Alfonsi's conversion along these lines makes good sense of his own words in the Prologue. He has written the book to explain the true reason of his conversion ("so that all may know my intention [in converting]"). And his conversion had the immediate effect that "the halls of the prophets lay open for us and their secret places were revealed, and we applied the mind to perceiving their true understanding and we tarried over interpreting it." One may reasonably find a well-known Christian subtext here, viz. Augustine's famous description of his pre-Christian versus his Christian attitude to Scripture in his *Confessions*. After having abandoned the Bible in his youth because of its cross literalism, especially concerning God,<sup>316</sup> and instead having embraced a philosophical, neo-platonic concept of God, his earlier problems with the Bible's language were solved by bishop Ambrose's allegorical interpretations of the offensive texts. "[In Scripture] there are things not approachable by the haughty and not clear to the small ones, but in entering Scripture you have to humble yourself, and then, as you proceed, you see exalted things, veiled in mysteries."<sup>317</sup>

In the Prologue, Alfonsi promises to explain the true reasons for his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. "Moses" challenges him first to explain why he left Judaism. The way I interpret *titulus* 1, Alfonsi divulges his main reasons for doing so in this chapter, from beginning to end. The dominant motive was his dissatisfaction with the irrationality – as he saw it – of the rabbinic literalistic interpretation of the Bible. For Alfonsi, rationality was defined by Arabic philosophy and science, ultimately of Greek and Hindu origins. His embracement of this kind of reason-based knowledge is not lacking an almost religious fervor. And while this kind of knowledge had been more or less critically embraced and adopted by the Church since the second century, and by Muslim thinkers since the eighth, Saadia Gaon seemed like a lonely Jewish pioneer in the tenth. For Alfonsi, that was too little too late. It seemed impossible for him to reconcile his new-won belief in reason with traditional talmudic Judaism.

Compared with traditional Latin *adversus iudaeos* writings prior to Alfonsi, *titulus* 1 is full of fresh and original material, and even when Alfonsi covers well-trodden ground, he brings new arguments to well-known scriptural testimonies.

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<sup>316</sup> *Conf.* III,5.

<sup>317</sup> *Conf.* III,5, Latin text in Augustinus, *Confessiones/Bekenntnisse* (ed. and trans. J. Bernhart; Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1966), 108, English translation my own.

The criticism of Judaism is continued in *tituli* 2–4. In *titulus* 2, Alfonsi is again rather original, compared with earlier *adversus iudaeos* polemics, in so far as he mobilizes a rich amount of haggadic material. “The second [*titulus*] leads to knowledge of the cause of the present captivity of the Jews, and how long it has to last.”<sup>318</sup> His main point is that whereas the first Jewish exile had an obvious reason in the manifest sins of the whole people—according to Jeremiah 5:1 not one righteous person could be found in Jerusalem!—this explanation cannot hold for the second exile (after C.E. 70) because at its beginning many holy and righteous men were around in Israel. To prove the latter point, Alfonsi lists a parade of famous sages that performed miracles and did other things to prove their sanctity: Johanan ben Zakkai,<sup>319</sup> Honi the circle-drawer, Hanina ben Dosa, Nicodemus ben Gurion, and Rabbi Akiba.<sup>320</sup> It was only because they lived after the period of inspired prophets that these holy and righteous men could not be called prophets – Akiba was really greater than the greatest of prophets, Moses! But then the reason behind the present exile, which has already lasted 1040 years, must be a different and grave one, since the first lasted only 70 years and was much milder than the present captivity.<sup>321</sup>

One wonders if Alfonsi is arguing only *ad hominem* here. Considering his general condemnation of the talmudic sages, his praise of these five comes as a surprise. Is he, for the sake of argument, using the talmudic portrayal of these sages against “Moses” because as a Jew Moses would no doubt hold it to be true? In favor of this interpretation, one could point to Alfonsi’s repeated introduction “your sages say” which precedes each of the stories he renders about the five heroes. Before the story about Johanan ben Zakkai, Alfonsi reports a rabbinic legend which he probably considers false, introducing it the following way: “Moreover, they [your sages] add even this besides for the overthrow of your argument...” Here the *ad hominem* use of the legend is stated in so many words.

On the other hand, Alfonsi recounts the stories about these sages in great detail and without the least hint that he disbelieves them. Quite the contrary, when he concludes, he says in his own name:

<sup>318</sup> *Dial. Proem.*, Mieth 2:31–32; Resnick, 42.

<sup>319</sup> Alfonsi attributes to him a miracle that the Talmud attributes to his contemporary Jonathan ben Uzziel, *b. Sukkah* 28a.

<sup>320</sup> The talmudic references for the last four are: *b. Ta’anit* 23a; *b. Ta’anit* 25a; *b. Ta’anit* 19b–20a, *b. Menahot* 29b. For a detailed assessment of Alfonsi’s exactness in rendering talmudic material, see Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*,” 198–207.

<sup>321</sup> Alfonsi was not the first Christian writer to make this point, it had been made by Peter Damian (1007–1072) and Fulbert of Chartres (d. 1028) before him. But their arguments are different than Alfonsi’s, and they do not refer to rabbinic explanations for the second exile the way Alfonsi does. See for details Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*,” 33–34.

These and others like them were judges and elders for you, who commanded the masses to do good, and the rest freely submitted to their admonishments. If there had been even one like them in the time of the earlier captivity, as above we showed that God said through Jeremiah [Jer 5:1], the captivity would never have occurred.<sup>322</sup>

Alfonsi's argument would simply collapse if what he says here were not regarded by him as historically true but only as rabbinic fiction. This is even more manifest in a later passage. In contrast to the many sins to which the evil examples of evil kings induced Israel in the time of the first Temple, the situation was different during the last 300 years before the destruction of the second:

[T]he princes of the second period were altogether different from these, because they were living a good life and encouraged the people to live in the same way by their example. With what argument can one show that sins grew to be so many that the [second] captivity occurred for that reason?<sup>323</sup>

Alfonsi responds here to Moses who said that the reasons for the second captivity were the same as for the first: the many sins of the people, including idol worship (as in the Golden Calf incident). In responding, Alfonsi points out that not even the talmudic rabbis agreed with "Moses" on this point. In fact, "the prevailing view of the sages in the third century [C.E.] was that the craving for idolatry had been uprooted and removed from Israel already at the beginning of the Second Temple period."<sup>324</sup> As for the cause of the second captivity suggested by the rabbis, Alfonsi alludes to *b. Yoma 9b*: "[Y]our sages say that this alone was the cause of Jerusalem's [second] destruction – that one [Jewish] person envied another and became an enemy of another." The talmudic text reads: "But why was the second Sanctuary destroyed, seeing that in its time they were occupying themselves with Torah, [observance of] precepts, and the practice of charity? Because therein prevailed *hatred without cause*. That teaches you that groundless hatred is considered as of even gravity with the three sins of idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed." Alfonsi dismisses this as unhistorical nonsense, and utterly

<sup>322</sup> Mieth, 35:19–23; Resnick, 101.

<sup>323</sup> Mieth, 35:36–39; Resnick, 102.

<sup>324</sup> Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (2 vols.; trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975), I: 22. Urbach refers to *b. Yoma 69b* as rabbinic evidence for this view, and Judith 8:18 as an early statement to the same effect.

insufficient as an explanation why the second captivity was so much longer and harsher than the first – which was caused by many sins and more serious ones at that.

No, the second, harsh and extremely long, captivity must have been caused by a sin satisfying two criteria: It must have been of a uniquely grave nature, and it must be a sin of which every generation up to the present is guilty. Petrus is in no doubt what sin this is: the first generation's rejection of Christ, expressed in their killing of him, and the continued rejection of him by all later generations. To magnify the dimensions of this guilt, Alfonsi refers to the talmudic stories of manifest signs in the Temple of its coming destruction; these signs occurred 40 years before it was destroyed by the Romans, in other words, exactly at the time of Christ's death.<sup>325</sup> Alfonsi assumes that not only Johanan ben Zakkai, but all the other sages also, understood that the destruction of the Temple as well as the following captivity were caused by the killing of Christ, but they hid their insight in this from the people.

Moses objects that if the first generation was guilty of killing God's own Son, the only appropriate punishment would have been the killing of all Israel. This would have meant the extermination of the entire nation, making their potential offspring innocent victims of their ancestors' sin. This, however, would be in accordance with Exodus 20:5 and Lamentations 5:7: God visits the sins of the fathers on their offspring in several generations.

Alfonsi argues that if God had exterminated Israel at the time of Christ's killing, there would be no more Jews to remind the world of their heinous crime, and it would soon have been forgotten.<sup>326</sup> Also, their continued existence leaves room for some of them to recognize the truth about Christ and thus be saved.

In general, God does not punish later generations for their ancestor's sins, cp. Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:3–4. There is no contradiction here, since the visiting of the fathers' sins on their offspring only takes place if their offspring continue doing the sins of their fathers.<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> See *b. Yoma 39b*.

<sup>326</sup> This is the classical Augustinian model for making sense of the continued existence of the Jewish people in the midst of Christendom: their divinely ordained abject position in Christendom, rightly imposed upon them as punishment for their rejection of Christ, made them living witnesses of the truth of Christianity. See, e.g., Bernhard Blumenkranz, "Augustin et les juifs, Augustin et le judaïsme," *Recherches augustiniennes* (suppl. to *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*)1 (1958), 225–241; repr. as Essay XV in idem, *Juifs et Chrétiens: Patristique et Moyen Age* (VCS 70; London: Variorum Reprints, 1977); Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999); Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 2008). It was translated into Church Law on how to treat Jews in Gregory the Great's famous *Sicut Iudaeis* bull of 598. See pp. 5–8 and 18 in this volume.

<sup>327</sup> Hurwitz rightly points out that Moses' understanding of Exod 20:5 and similar passages is in line with traditional Christian exegesis of these texts, while Alfonsi's somewhat strained harmonization of such texts with those which deny that offspring is punished for the sins of ancestors is found in Medieval Jewish commentators

Moses still demands compelling proof that the killing of Christ was the cause of the second captivity. Petrus answers by telling the rabbinic story of the rabbinic martyrs in the wake of the Bar Kokhba revolt. They were martyred because they had sold “a just person”, a fellow Jew – this being a crime punishable by death according to Deuteronomy 24:7. This just person was Christ, but the rabbis, knowing this, said instead that the just person was Joseph, son of Jacob, which of course is absurd on chronological and other grounds.

Moses is still not satisfied and demands scriptural proof rather than such fictional stories. Petrus retorts by first quoting from Isaiah 24:16–20 which he takes partly as a prophecy of the universal adoration that Christ, “the Just One” (and no one else) will receive, partly as a prediction of the sufferings that Christ and his prophets would undergo, partly as a prediction of the sufferings of Israel in punishment for their killing of Christ. “[The Jewish people’s] iniquity will be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again” (Isa 24:20).<sup>328</sup> To this last quote, Petrus adds an enigmatic comment: by saying this, Isaiah “took away from you completely a fixed term for escaping from captivity.”<sup>329</sup> I will return to this below.

The next prophetic passages quoted selectively by Alfonsi are Isaiah 30:8–14 and Isaiah 65:8–15. In the first prophecy, Alfonsi finds it said that the Jewish people refused to hear the law of God, this cannot refer to the law given by Moses, which they have heard incessantly, so it must refer to the law of Christ. The prophecy also said that Israel would not see “the Holy One of Israel”; this must refer to the only visible God appearing to them, Christ. The prophecy also said that they rejected God’s Word, this word is Christ. Isaiah 65:8–15 begins with a description of the Jewish remnant of true believers in Christ in verses 8–10, and then turns to those “who forsake the Lord” and the punishment that awaits them (11–12). In verses 13–15 the two groups are contrasted. The last saying is that God will give the remnant of faithful Jewish servants “a different name”, viz. the name of Christians.<sup>330</sup>

The final text on which Petrus comments, is Amos 5:1–2 (and 8:2). Moses objects that this is a traditional Christian proof-text that proves nothing,<sup>331</sup> and he is surprised that a man like Petrus brings forward such a weak testimony. Petrus admits that this testimony has been

like Rashi and Ibn Ezra (“*Fidei causa*,” 35–36). In this way, Alfonsi’s contribution to the Christian *adversus iudaeos* arsenal represents a new perspective: a Jewish convert uses Jewish rationalistic exegesis against his Jewish dialogue partner.

<sup>328</sup> Saadia quotes the same passage as a valid summary of the present captivity and its tribulations; made known to Israel beforehand so that they should not despair, *On Beliefs and Opinions*, VIII.6; Rosenblatt 304.

<sup>329</sup> Mieth, 41:16–17; Resnick 112.

<sup>330</sup> Saadia quotes Isa 65:13–14 as describing how the wicked envy the better fate of the righteous in the hereafter, since they can see each other. The wicked comprise nonbelievers and polytheists (Gentiles) and unrepentant sinners among the Jews. See *Beliefs and Opinions* IX.9; Rosenblatt 350–52.

<sup>331</sup> In Spain, Isidore of Seville quotes Isa 65:8, Amos 5:1–2 and 8:2 to the same effect as Alfonsi; Isidore, *De fide catholica* PL 83, 512–19 (I have this reference from Hurwitz, “*Causa fidei*,” 38, n. 83).



quoted by several Christian authors before him, but he has mentioned it in order to refute Jewish refutations of it. Again, one notes Alfonsi's self-conscious certainty that because of his Jewish Andalusian background, he can refute Jewish objections much better than had often been done in earlier Latin *adversus iudaeos* argument.

In conclusion, Peter says that he has now established, by scripture supported by reason, that the second Jewish captivity was caused by their rejection of Christ. It will continue as long as the Jews keep to their unbelief in him. The good news is that Christ will come to deliver his people as soon as "you believe what they [your fathers] did not believe."

Once the mind has been purified for this sin, divine piety immediately follows it. One of your sages, however, wanted that to be expressed by subtle and dissembling words, had that penetrated the hardness of your mind. For asked when the son of David would come, he said: "Today, if you will believe his words."<sup>332</sup>

It is appropriate here to come back to Petrus' saying quoted above concerning Isaiah 24:20: This scripture proves that for Israel there is no "fixed term for escaping from captivity." The question of a fixed term for Israel's deliverance is only brought up once and only in the passing by Moses, introducing Petrus' long exposition of Isaiah 24:16–20. Until that point, the subject has not been mentioned by either antagonist, unless one assumes that Moses has a veiled reference to it when he speaks of escaping the captivity "in the way in which we believe [we shall escape it]." What may be hinted at here, and explicitly mentioned by the phrase "fixed term," are the well-known attempts at calculating the date of the messianic redemption – such attempts being frequent among Jews as well as Christians. Alfonsi for his part is only interested in one such calculation, not with regard to the end-time, but concerning Christ's first coming. As we shall see, he uses Daniel 9:24–27 to prove that Christ came at exactly the time he should have come, according to this prophecy.

In Alfonsi's case, it is not Petrus who has an interest in calculated dates for the redemption of Israel, but rather Moses. And this reflects, no doubt, a live interest among contemporary Jews concerning how near or remote the Messiah's coming might be. In the talmudic period, we find several rabbis trying their hand in eschatological forecasts, based on biblical texts.<sup>333</sup> But this tradition finds itself in a certain tension with another, viz. the sayings

<sup>332</sup> Mieth, 45:36–46:2; Resnick 119. The rabbinic quote is *b. Sanhedrin 98a*, the speaker R. Joshua ben Levi.

<sup>333</sup> See the succinct review in Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 3–30.

that renounce calculations and make the coming of the Messiah conditional upon sincere repentance and observance of the law on Israel's part.

It is here that a comparison with Saadia becomes relevant regarding Alfonsi's *titulus 2*. Saadia is well aware of the two traditions concerning the advent of the Messiah, and he has an interesting way of harmonizing the two. In *Beliefs and Opinions*, VIII.2–6 he says that two factors determine the date of the Messiah's coming.<sup>334</sup> If and when Israel makes sincere repentance of its sins, the Davidic Messiah will come at once and redeem his people. In the absence of such repentance, the Messiah of Joseph will come *at the term fixed by God* and announced in Daniel 12:6–12.<sup>335</sup> He will fight for Israel and be slain, and the unfaithful Jews will be weeded out. Then the Messiah of David will come, and with him the redemption of Israel.

Read against this foil, Alfonsi agrees that redemption will follow immediately upon Israel's repentance – of their great sin: slaying the Messiah at his first coming. But should this repentance fail, there is no fixed term that will bring redemption to Israel anyhow.

In conclusion, I think it is not by accident that the theme of the long duration of Israel's present exile, and the non-appearance of their Messiah, is accorded a prominent position in Alfonsi's critique of rabbinic Judaism. We have more than one testimony that this objection against their faith and hopes hit a sore point for many Jews. There is indirect testimony for this in Saadia, too.

It is ... not permissible for us to entertain the thought that God is not aware of our situation or that He does not deal fairly with us or that He is not compassionate... Nor is it right to think that God is unable to help us or to answer our prayers... Nor finally is it proper to believe He has forsaken us and cast us off.<sup>336</sup>

Why bring up these troubling thoughts if no one had entertained them? A second, more direct testimony comes from ca. 960. At that time, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, the Jewish courtier at Caliph Abd el Rachman's court (reigned 912–961), sent a letter to Joseph, king of the Khazars, in

<sup>334</sup> Rosenblatt, 293–312.

<sup>335</sup> In *Beliefs and Opinions* VIII.3 Saadia has an ingenious harmonization of the three end-terms in Dan 12:7 (a time, two times, and half a time); 12:11 (1290 days = years); and 12:12 (1335 days = years). This latter term is probably to be reckoned (according to S. Poznanski) from the third year of the reign of Cyrus. In that year, 367 B.C.E. according to early Jewish chronology, the permission was given for the Jews to return from the first exile. This means that Saadia, without saying it in so many words, expected the Messiah's coming in 968 C.E. at the latest, because this was the fixed term according to Daniel's prophecy. He died in 942, and thus did not live to see the non-occurrence of his prediction. For details, see Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 50–51. See also above, pp. 64–65, note 163; and below, pp. 253–54 and p. 369, note 1084.

<sup>336</sup> *Beliefs and Opinions* VIII.2; Rosenblatt, 294.

which he asked the king to inform him concerning this Jewish kingdom in the East, the only place where Jews had a kingdom in those days.<sup>337</sup> Towards the end of the letter Hasdai asks the king about something that weighed heavily on his mind:

I would ask of my master, the king, to let me know whether there is among you any tradition concerning the time of the end, for which we have been waiting these many years, during which time we have been going from one captivity to another, and from one exile to another. For one must be very strong indeed, to refrain from inquiring about it... We who were many are now few and are fallen from our high estate and dwell in exile. *We have no retort* to those who say to us daily, “Every people has a kingdom, but you have none.”<sup>338</sup>

In *titulus 3*, Petrus goes on to criticize the Jewish view of bodily resurrection as crossly materialistic: “The third [heading] is for refuting the silly belief of the Jews over the resurrection of their dead, whom they believe both will be resurrected and will inhabit the earth again.”<sup>339</sup> Towards the end of the chapter, it becomes clear that the Jewish doctrine under debate is the idea of a millennial reign of the Messiah on this earth before the final judgment and life eternal. The patriarchs, priests, prophets, and all the righteous in Israel will be raised bodily from death and enjoy the blessings of the earthly millennium. Among several of the early Church Fathers, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, et al., this was deemed an important Christian doctrine. In Alfonsi, it is deemed Jewish and contrary to reason. It seems likely that Alfonsi here is dependent on the Augustinian tradition of interpreting the millennium of Revelation 20:1–6 as another way of describing Christ’s reign in the present era, between his first and his second coming, so that the only resurrection spoken of in Scripture is the one at the end of time, followed by the judgment and life eternal. But while Alfonsi’s scheme is Augustinian, his arguments for it are strikingly new and rationalistic, and he has first-hand knowledge of rabbinic lore concerning the millennium, or “the Days of the Messiah” as it is called among the rabbis. For example, he refers to the rabbinic idea that in the Days of the Messiah women will be so fertile that they conceive and give birth to a child every day, *b. Sabb.* 30b; and that “the honor and glory of this world are to the delights of that life as one is to sixty,” compare *b. Ber.* 57b.

<sup>337</sup> For the whole story of this letter and a full review of its contents, see Ashtor, *Jews of Moslem Spain* I: 210–15.

<sup>338</sup> Translation according to Silver, *Messianic Speculation*, 53. For later polemics concerning the Daniel 12 prophecy, see below, pp. 253–54 and 369, note 1084.

<sup>339</sup> *Dial. Proem.*, Mieth, 2:33–35; Resnick, 42.

In the following summary of Alfonsi's argument in the third *titulus*, I will focus on two points, first, the thoroughgoing rationalism of Alfonsi's biblical exegesis of relevant scriptures, and, secondly, the many points of contact that can be found between Saadia's and Alfonsi's treatments of this issue. For the latter point, I refer to the footnotes and the concluding remarks.

Petrus begins by saying that the idea that human beings will rise in the flesh and again enjoy earthly life with all its blessings, is absurd and without foundation in "any authority", i.e., without Scriptural support. Moses counters by quoting Deuteronomy 32:39, "I shall kill and make alive, I shall wound, and I shall heal."<sup>340</sup> Petrus answers: This only proves what the Almighty is capable of, not that he will actually bring the dead back to a life on this earth. Petrus himself believes that God will raise all dead human beings at the Day of judgement, but the purpose of this is not that they should inhabit this earth again. Moses counters by pointing to the young men raised by Elijah and Elisha; they obviously enjoyed a good life on this earth afterwards.<sup>341</sup> Petrus' answer is not entirely clear, but seems to mean that these examples were special, since the bodies of the young men had not had time to decay. But there is no clear prophetic prediction of something similar for all men at the general resurrection at the end of days. Moses then brings in Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2.<sup>342</sup> Alfonsi argues that the first text possibly, and the latter certainly, refer to the resurrection before the day of judgment. Isaiah 26:19 may perhaps rather be taken as a metaphorical reference to salvation from captivity.

It is when Moses quotes from Ezekiel 37:12.14 that Petrus' problems really begin, for in this scripture the words about resurrection are followed by a saying that "I will bring you into the Land of Israel" and "I shall make you rest on your own soil [*adamah*]." Alfonsi is aware

<sup>340</sup> Saadia, in his Treatise VII, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead in this world," begins his scriptural proof (of a resurrection in this world for the righteous of Israel) by quoting precisely this verse, explaining its meaning from the context in Deut 32 (Rosenblatt, 267–68).

<sup>341</sup> Here again, Moses echoes Saadia. Moses: "[those] revived by Elijah or Elisha still enjoyed a long life, had a wife, begot sons, and fulfilled all the original functions of a human life" (Resnick, 121). Saadia: "[Those resurrected in this world] will eat and drink as we do and they will also marry. This is evident from the fact that the son of the Zarephite and the one of the Shunammite woman, who were brought back to life in this world, both ate and drank after their revival and were in a fit state for marriage" (Rosenblatt, 280). As proof that they married, Saadia points to *b. Sanh. 92b* in which a talmudic sage claims to descend from one of these individuals, and Rosenblatt adds references to *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* 33 and *Zohar* I, 7b Introduction, according to which the prophet Jonah was the son of Zarephite and Habbakuk the son of Shunammite. Alfonsi may have had knowledge of these rabbinic traditions, or he may depend on Saadia alone.

<sup>342</sup> In Saadia, the exposition of Deut 32:39 is followed by an exegesis of Ezek 37:11–14, then he continues with Isa 26:19 (Rosenblatt, 268), after having argued that the valid criteria necessitating a non-literal interpretation apply to neither of these texts. He then adds several verses from Dan 11–12, 12:2 being the core text. For Saadia, Ezek 37:12 ("I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people, and I will bring you into the Land of Israel") provide the interpretative clue for the other two texts which are less clear concerning a resurrected life on this earth. This could explain why Alfonsi treats these two texts first, and only then brings in Ezek 37:9–14 – for him the most problematic of these testimonies.

that different interpretations of this prophecy are discussed among the rabbis; he is also aware that the dominant interpretation – here put in the mouth of “Moses” – is that Ezekiel actually raised certain groups of Israelites in his own time, and that this was a prophetic anticipation of the general resurrection of all Israel in the Days of the Messiah. He even knows one detail in this tradition: Among those raised by Ezekiel were the men of Ephraim who had died during an unsuccessful attempt at fleeing from Egypt prior to the exodus led by Moses.<sup>343</sup>

Petrus begins his discussion of this – for him – difficult passage by saying that certain basic concepts in an anthropology based on reason must first be clarified. What is the exact meaning of Ezekiel 37:9–10, in which the “spirit” breathed into the dead men is said to “come forth from the four winds?” Is this the “corporeal spirit” that is one with the body, being its life principle, or is it the “rational soul” that is the immortal part of human beings?<sup>344</sup> Moses asserts that a rational soul was restored to those raised by Ezekiel, this soul being the same as the “spirit coming forth from the four winds” in Ezekiel. Petrus disagrees and digresses into a long philosophical diatribe on the composition of human beings, including three types of souls. The vegetative soul makes all living beings, plants, animals, and humans, take in nourishment, process it, and eject the waste. It is composed from the four elements. The irrational soul makes all animals and humans able to sense what is around them and to be mobile. These two souls are so closely united with the bodies they enliven that when the bodies die, these souls die with them. The rational soul, on the other hand, is specific to humans, and its powers do not diminish when the body weakens, often the contrary. This indicates that it is not from the body’s substance, but an independent substance of its own, and that it is immortal.

Alfonsi seldom misses an opportunity to lecture extensively on philosophical and scientific matters, and betrays an awareness towards the end of the long philosophical excursus that he is now saying more than strictly necessary:

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<sup>343</sup> The main passage treating these issues is *b. Sanh.* 92a/b; well paraphrased and with parallels in other rabbinic texts in Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4:332–33 and 6:421–22. On the whole issue, see Joseph Heinemann, “The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim,” *HTR* 68 (1975), 1–15.

<sup>344</sup> Again, there is a parallel in Saadia, in his Treatise VI.1. Saadia here mentions the theory espoused by Alfonsi: “A fourth theory... is to the effect that the soul consists of two parts, one of which is intellectual, rational, intransient..., while the other is the source of the vitality that is spread over the rest of the body and of a transient nature” (Rosenblatt, 237). Saadia rejects this theory and recommends instead the view that each human being has one rational soul, created by God from a substance finer than that of the heavenly spheres (VI.2–3, Rosenblatt, 239–45). “Moses” seems to echo this theory in his several remarks on the issue.

Petrus: If you would like to know more, you will discover it in the books of the philosophers, because at present we have neither the time nor the place for explaining a matter of this sort. Instead, it is better for us to return to our proposition.

Moses: Up to this point you have treated quite philosophically the difference between a corporal spirit and a rational soul. But simple minds do not at all penetrate the depths of the subtle arguments of the sages, I beg you to prove the same distinction by the testimony of the law and the prophets, if you are able to, so that at least authority would create faith among those for whom the gravity of [these] profound arguments has not illuminated the mind.<sup>345</sup>

The main point made by Petrus in the philosophical excursus is that when the prophet speaks of the spirit that made the dead bodies live, he refers to this spirit as “coming forth from the four winds.” This means that this spirit is composed from the four elements, i.e., it belongs to the corruptible world and is not immortal. In other words, it is not identical with the rational and immortal soul of human beings. When Moses, as quoted above, asks for a scriptural proof, Petrus quotes Ecclesiastes 3:21: “Who knows if the spirit of the children of Adam goes upward, and if the spirit of the beasts goes down below?” Petrus takes these two questions to state the truth: the spirits of animals are corrupted with their bodies, whereas the rational souls of humans are incorruptible.<sup>346</sup>

Since Ezekiel 37:9–10 only speaks of the corporeal spirit being restored to those raised from death, these verses do not describe a complete resurrection. One should expect a saying that these men’s rational souls were restored to their enlivened bodies. And that, exactly, is the true meaning of “I shall make you rest on your own soil [*adamah*]!” (Ezek 37:14). It really means, “I shall let your souls rest in—i.e., be united with—your bodies.” Proof: In Genesis 2:7 Adam’s body is said to be made from the dust of the *adamah*. In this way, the Ezekiel text is shown not to speak about a resurrection at the beginning of the messianic millennium, in which the righteous Israelites return to a new life on earth, but rather to speak about the final resurrection at the end of days.

<sup>345</sup> *Dial.* 3, Mieth, 51:17–25; transl. Resnick, *Dialogue*, 128. Saadia expresses a similar sentiment, having reviewed different philosophical theories of the soul: “[T]his enquiry into the science of the soul is an enquiry into a profound, abstract, and subtle subject. ...[T]he investigation of the nature of the soul [is] fraught with subtleties that confuse many persons” (VI.2, Rosenblatt, 239).

<sup>346</sup> After Saadia has commented on the difficulty of a philosophical theory of the soul (see the former note), he quotes exactly the same verse as Alfonsi, Eccl 3:21, as scriptural authority. But unlike Alfonsi, he explains why the questions in this text should be taken to state the truth. In asking “Who knows so and so”, the intended answer is: *He who is wise* knows so and so. See Treatise VI.2 (Rosenblatt, 239–41). Alfonsi clearly had the same understanding of the text, but instead of crediting a Jewish scholar, he presents it as self-evident and in need of no argument.

Alfonsi betrays an awareness that this somewhat forced exegesis of Ezekiel's text is in sore need of extra underpinnings. These come in the rest of the chapter, in which Alfonsi demonstrates the absurdities that must follow if the millennium should be anything like the rabbinic ideas about it. First, it would contradict the many scriptural passages in which the descent of human beings to *sheol* is said to be definitive.<sup>347</sup> Second, the very idea of a resurrection back to bodily life on this earth entails a lot of absurd consequences. For example, when all the High Priests of Israel are resurrected, who among them will reign in the Millennium, and what will those not elected feel about it? And what about the Anointed King, is there to be just one or several? Moses answers: just one. Petrus: Right, but if the Messiah is an ordinary human, how should prophet-kings like Abraham, David, Joshua, and Moses, "who was king and prophet and lawgiver of the entire people" be subject to any earthly king? However, all these and all other great men of Israel would rightly and without loss of honor obey the Anointed One if he were both man and God.<sup>348</sup>

Further, will those resurrected in the Millennium procreate and have children? Moses and Petrus discuss in turns all the possible answers to this question: no, because the law prohibits it (which it clearly does not). No, because their ability to procreate has been taken away (in that case, no one is fit for the priesthood according to the law). Yes, because a unanimous tradition in favor of it exists among the Jews, saying that at that time, a woman will conceive daily and give birth daily.<sup>349</sup> Petrus: In that case, the earth will soon become too small to contain all the people born during the millennium.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Alfonsi quotes Psalm 49:11,20; *103:16*; 88:6; *Job 7:7-10*; 10:21; *14:12*; *Eccl 9:5-6*. Saadia, saying that "there are still likely to arise in somebody's mind uncertainties in regard to the meaning of certain verses, leading him to think that they negate the idea of the resurrection of the dead in this world," discusses the following verses: *Job 7:7-10*; 14:14; *14:12*; Psalm 78:39; *103:15-16*; *Eccl 9:3-6*. As indicated by my italics, the correspondence between the two writers, concerning theme as well as selection of verses, is remarkable. See Treatise VII.5 (Rosenblatt, 273-75).

<sup>348</sup> Saadia touches this problem, but implicitly declares it a no-problem by quoting from *b. Sukkah 52b*: "Then shall we raise against him [Assyria] seven shepherds, and eight princes among men" (Mic 5:4), the seven being David in the center, Adam, Seth, and Metusalah on his right, and Abraham, Jacob, and Moses on his left; the eight princes being Jesse, Samuel, Amos, Zaphaniah, Hezekiah, Elija, and the Messiah. (Treatise VII.6, Rosenblatt, 276).

<sup>349</sup> Cf. *b. Shabbat 30b*.

<sup>350</sup> This is a problem explicitly raised and discussed by Saadia, but he avoids any mention of the tradition quoted by Alfonsi's Moses. Saadia, however, is concerned with the problem of how the earth can contain all the resurrected righteous of Israel. He answers by an amusing calculation, according to which 32 generations of Israelites "from the time that our nation emerged upon the world of men until that of the redemption" would make a total of 38,400,000 individuals (assuming all Israelites to have been righteous, thus a maximum number). He then calculates that the earth's size is such that this leaves sufficient land for all the resurrected to support themselves. "This is, then, something that can remain unknown only to those who are not disciples of the learned" (Treatise 7, Rosenblatt 285-86). If we assume Alfonsi knew Saadia's book, he may have chosen to focus on the talmudic haggadah about everyday births in the millennium to make Saadia's calculation irrelevant.

Further, there are all the problems relating to marriage and family bonds of different kinds.<sup>351</sup> For example, Petrus asks:

Again, when all are raised, will a man return to the wife he had, or will he have a new one?

Moses: Each one will certainly have his own again, and this will be the consummation of happiness.

Petrus: But that woman who has died after having had three or even more husbands, which of them will she have in the resurrection? Now if you answer that she will have the first, then the law of Moses, who says that after a second husband she ought not to return to the first is destroyed. But if you say that she will have a husband other than the first, the law is destroyed by this as well, for the law commands that while the first husband still lives and while he does not repudiate her, she will be unable to marry anyone else.<sup>352</sup>

The striking fact about this argument is obvious: Alfonsi comes very close to siding with the Sadducees in their debate with Jesus about the resurrection.<sup>353</sup> Alfonsi must have believed that the argument of the Sadducees was valid in so far as the very concrete notions of the rabbis were concerned, but that Jesus distanced himself from this in his answer to the Sadducees: “When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mark 12:25). Even so, one is struck by the very high degree of rationalistic denial of the very concrete resurrection faith that was shared by early Christians and their Jewish contemporaries. Alfonsi’s arguments would destroy the millennialism of Justin Martyr or Irenaeus just as much as the millennialism of Saadia and many of his own Jewish compatriots.<sup>354</sup> If anything, this demonstrates that Alfonsi’s consequent rationalism was not something he advocated when it suited him, but rather a deep-seated conviction.

<sup>351</sup> In Treatise VII.7 (Rosenblatt, 280–81), Saadia affirms that in the Days of the Messiah, the resurrected “will eat and drink as we do and also ... marry.” (It is apropos this that he refers to the sons of the Zarephite and the Shunammite mentioned by “Moses” in his argument for resurrection on this earth, cf. above, p. 128, note 341).

<sup>352</sup> *Dial.* 3; Mieth, 55:37 – 56:5; transl. Resnick, 135.

<sup>353</sup> Matt 22:23–33/Mark 12:18–27/Luke 20:27–40.

<sup>354</sup> Interestingly, when Moses in *titulus* 3 is not trying out possible counterarguments to Petrus’ view, but simply stating common Jewish belief, he always sounds as an echo of Saadia. For example, “Whatever we have said up to this point, we have said for the sake of reasoning and arguing. Actually, this is the certitude of our faith: that in fact those being raised will have the use and nature of eating, drinking, and procreating. After a course of one thousand years has been completed, they will be transferred to a realm of perpetual beatitude and immortality, without any death” (Mieth, 57:12–16; Resnick, 137). Alfonsi may not have been aware that this could also serve as a precise summary of the millennialism of Justin or Tertullian.



*Titulus 4*: Alfonsi argues that with the cessation of the Temple service (including the entire sacrificial cult) and the enforced exile, most of the commandments of the law are impracticable. The Jews did not innocently get into this predicament. Had God been satisfied with their Temple worship, he would not have terminated it and sent them into exile. If one takes the law literally, the consequences for all Jews living after the Temple's fall are grave indeed. For example, no Jew after the fall of the Temple has been born in purity, because discernment between legitimate menstruation and illegitimate flux in women was the task of the temple priests.

Moses counters by saying that the prophesies quoted by Petrus, in which God condemns the sacrificial cult and other observances of the Jews as abominable, were uttered before the Babylonian exile. During that exile Israel suffered just punishment for their sins, but after the exile they bettered their ways. Even Petrus himself had earlier testified to this fact, so now he has contradicted himself.

I do not deny [what I said earlier] that [after the first exile] they guarded worthily that law which the lawgiver Moses had received from God and proclaimed to them.<sup>355</sup> But after Christ arrived – who revealed the hidden teachings of the prophets and, once the veil of the law had been removed, revealed the spiritual sense that it concealed – from that point on, they had to guard the legal institutions not according to the letter that kills but according to the lifegiving spirit, since he who gave the law understood it better than the prophets who were the ones who heard it.<sup>356</sup>

In this short paragraph Alfonsi ties together all the major themes of the Introduction as well as the four first *tituli*. The great tragedy of Israel is that they did not obey any of the two redeemers sent them. They did not obey Moses and were punished with the Babylonian exile. After that, they improved their ways regarding literal observance of the law. But when Christ came and interpreted the law according to its true spiritual sense, they killed him and insisted on continuing in their literalist understanding of the sayings of the law and the prophets. Therefore, they now have been severely punished by a much harsher and longer exile. It will not end until they turn, recognize Christ, and observe the law in its spiritual sense. This spiritual sense is not only the true one; it is also the only sensible one. When spiritually

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<sup>355</sup> Cf. the discussion above concerning this point in *titulus 2*, pp. 120–21.

<sup>356</sup> Mieth, 61:14–20; Resnick, 143–44.

interpreted, everything in the Bible can be shown to agree with philosophy and science, in one word: reason.

In *titulus* 1, Alfonsi had said that the sayings of the prophets were obscure and, if taken literally, contrary to reason.<sup>357</sup> But he had only criticized the Jewish interpreters for taking these sayings as literally as they sounded, not the prophets themselves for speaking in this manner. In the passage quoted here, however, he comes very close to criticizing the prophets themselves for their literalism. Christ understood the spiritual meaning better than the prophets because he was not only the law's receiver and interpreter, but he was also its giver. When he reveals the true spiritual meaning of the law and the prophets, this meaning agrees fully with reason. Reason is the yardstick by which the spiritual meaning is discerned.

Moses, the pre-conversion Alfonsi, is portrayed as an inquisitive Jew, curious of philosophical and scientific learning, grateful for being enlightened in these matters – but often pulling back and asserting traditional Jewish views when they seem to conflict with philosophy or science. He defends Jewish literalism as far as he can, confronted with the very consequent application of reason and spiritualization advocated by Petrus, the Jewish convert. As I have argued above, it lies near to hand to view this inner dialogue between the pre- and post-conversion Alfonsi as in part a dialogue between Saadia Gaon and Alfonsi the convert. If we assume that Alfonsi, before his conversion, had acquainted himself with Saadia's great apology for Judaism in a new age of rational inquiry, philosophical and scientific, he would have acquired a passion for rationality that Saadia evinces time and again throughout his book. But it seems that for "Moses", this passion for rationality worked like a leaven that with time burst through the Jewish framework within which Saadia had contained it. In the spiritual exegesis of the Hebrew Bible practiced by Paul, Augustine, Jerome, Isidore, and many others, Alfonsi may have found the kind of rational, philosophical hermeneutics that he missed in Saadia, and even more so in the average contemporary rabbis of Spain.

#### *Titulus* 5: Criticism of Islam<sup>358</sup>

Moses now raises the question why Petrus had chosen Christianity rather than Islam as his new faith, once he left Judaism. Moses here assumes the role of Islam's spokesman,

<sup>357</sup> See the passage quoted above, p. 107.

<sup>358</sup> For this *Titulus*, see Charles L. Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Studies on the Children of Abraham 3; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 194–200. See now also Regula Forster, "Der abwesende Dritte: Die Darstellung des Islam in *titulus V* des *Dialogus* des Petrus Alfonsi," in *Petrus Alfonsi and his Dialogus: Background, Context, Reception* (eds. Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann and Phillipp Roelli; Firenze: SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 159–82.

beginning by giving a brief but remarkably precise description of Muslim doctrine and praxis.<sup>359</sup> On the other hand, Petrus attacks Islam with largely traditional arguments, taken from Jewish as well as Christian sources—one of the most important being Pseudo-al-Kindī’s *Apology*.<sup>360</sup> The main thrust of Alfonsi’s argument is (1) to attack the extra-qur’anic *hadits* about The Prophet’s life and deeds as being unreliable. If true, they depict a life and deeds unworthy of a true prophet. The Muslim picture of Paradise is painted so as to appeal to men’s lowest instincts, their carnal appetites.<sup>361</sup> (2) Peter next points out internal contradictions in the Qur’an, e.g., whether it is legitimate to use violence in propagating the Muslim faith. Alfonsi is aware of the hermeneutical principle that early *suras* should be interpreted in the light of later ones but deems this principle worthless because there is no consistent principle of chronology in the Qur’an’s order.

Interestingly, Alfonsi does not attack the Muslim conception of God as such. There is no polemic here of the same type as he brings forward in attacking the anthropomorphic God-concept of the rabbis. One can perhaps see this as a tacit admission that the philosophical theology developed by Muslim theologians in Alfonsi’s time and before, was deemed more acceptable by him than the cruder talmudic theology of his contemporary rabbis. One could go one step further and suggest that the philosophical theology of Muslim theologians might have furnished him with some of his own arguments against rabbinic Judaism.

#### *Tituli 6–12: Christianity is rational*

*Titulus 6* is devoted to the doctrine of the Trinity, which Alfonsi argues is entirely rational. It is with this rational-philosophical argument that he begins. Reason recognizes that God is the un-created Creator, and in order to be so, God must have Wisdom and Will. By his Wisdom he plans creation, by his Will he executes his plan. Accordingly, God is tri-une: God’s

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<sup>359</sup> See Tieszens summary, *Christian Identity*, 195–96, and note his comment: “Moses’ summary of Islam is surprisingly accurate, genuine, and full of qur’anic support (...) The normal vices – mentioned [by other Christian writers] in order to shock and disgust Christians – are absent from his description of paradise (...). [H]is portrayal rests on the Qur’an and is honest to how Muslims may have described their faith...[H]e departs from the usual pejorative descriptions for Muslims (e.g., Saracens, Hagarenes, or Ishmaelites) ...Neither does Moses refer to Islam as “pagan” beliefs. Instead, he accurately calls Islam “the Muslim [...] religion,” and in so doing, seems to recognize it as a religion in its own right” (*ibid.*).

<sup>360</sup> This Arabic Christian tract against Islam was written by an anonymous Christian in Baghdad late in the ninth or early in the tenth century, “arguably the greatest medieval Christian polemic against Islam, and certainly the most influential,” Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 52; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 95. For detailed discussion of Alfonsi’s dependence on this work, see the footnotes in Resnick’s translation, pp. 151–53.

<sup>361</sup> Peter here falls behind his Jewish self Moses as far as fairness is concerned, cf. note 359 above.

essence (the Father), God's Wisdom (the Son), and God's Will (his Spirit). God's Wisdom and Will must be co-eternal with him, and of God's essence.

In his characteristic way, Alfonsi does not let himself become embroiled in the many subtleties and pitfalls of Trinitarian theory. He constructs a simple, elegant argument leading directly to the wanted conclusion, side-stepping the many and difficult philosophical problems of this theory that had been discussed for centuries already between Christians, Muslims, and Jews when Alfonsi wrote his *Dialogue*. A very short review of some aspects of this discussion may help, however, to situate Alfonsi's argument.

Alfonsi's attempt to rationalize the Trinity has a prehistory beginning in the New Testament. Basic to Christian trinitarianism is a Christological interpretation of biblical sayings about God's Wisdom taking part in creation.<sup>362</sup> Most often, this Wisdom was taken to refer to the Son, sometimes also to God's Spirit. Some passages in the Hebrew Bible spoke of two mediators, like Psalm 33:6: "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the *ruach* (spirit) of his mouth."<sup>363</sup> This was taken to mean that in God's case two of his attributes, wisdom (word) and spirit, were spoken of in Scripture as if they were persons in their own right, while being at the same time inseparable from God and being parts of God's essence, co-eternal with him.

One feature of this doctrine should be mentioned here, before I comment on Alfonsi's version of Trinitarian theology. As early as in Justin Martyr (ca. 160 C.E.), two analogies are employed to illustrate the relationship between the Father and the Son. Having stated that according to Prov 8:22–25 Wisdom (=the Son) was begotten by the Father as a *dynamis logikee*, a power in form of a word, by which God created the world, Justin continues:

[D]oes not something similar happen also with us humans? When we utter a word, it can be said that we beget the word, but not by cutting it off, in the sense that our power

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<sup>362</sup> Of greatest importance is Prov 8:22.30. In Col 1:15–17 these verses may already have been combined with Gen 1:1 (the Wisdom=*reshit* in Prov 8:22 being used to render Gen 1:1 "by Wisdom God created..."), Wisdom being equated with God's Son. We then also have the background of John 1:1–3, Wisdom being identified with *Logos* (as in Philo). Very likely, the same exegesis of these verses underlies Paul's statement in 1 Cor 8:6: "For us there is one God, the Father, from whom all things, and for whom we; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things and through whom we." (I have omitted the verbs "are" and "exist" that are added in modern translations but are missing in the Greek text.) The mediatorship of the Son in creation is also met with in Heb 1:2–3 and Rev 3:14, in both cases the idea of Wisdom's mediatorship in creation is a likely background. See Oskar Skarsaune, *Incarnation: Myth or Fact?* (Trans. T. R. Skarsten; St. Louis: Concordia, 1991), 25–29.

<sup>363</sup> For an overview of the early stages of this development, see Skarsaune, "Jewish Christian Sources Used by Justin Martyr and Some Other Greek and Latin Fathers," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 379–416, esp. 402–408. For later patristic and medieval material, see also Skarsaune, "Is Christianity Monotheistic? Patristic Perspectives on a Jewish/Christian Debate," in *Studia Patristica XXIX: Historica, Theologica et Philosophica, Critica et Philologica* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 340–363.

of uttering words would thereby be diminished. We can observe a similar example in nature when one fire kindles another without losing anything but remaining the same; yet the enkindled fire seems to exist of itself and to shine without lessening the brilliancy of the first fire.<sup>364</sup>

Two similes are used here to explain the relationship between the Father and the Son, first the anthropological analogy of a human being uttering a word, thereby “begetting” it, without losing any of his own word-generating power in the process. This anthropological analogy was later more fully exploited, and the binitarian model in Justin developed into a trinitarian, most elaborate in Augustine’s *On the Trinity*. Here he finds several triads in the human psyche and in human acts that depict God’s triune nature. After Augustine, the anthropological analogy became stock-in-trade in all Latin theology, and allowed for almost endless variations regarding which human abilities were used to illustrate the Trinity. In the first stages of this development, the divine triad was conceived as God and his two essential attributes, Logos (Wisdom) and Spirit. Later, especially in Augustine, a more symmetrical triad was created by identifying God’s essence with the divine nature common to the three hypostases/persons, while the Father was identified e.g., with Power (Omnipotence, creative power), the Son with Word and the Spirit with varying attributes. As we have seen, Alfonsi seems to prefer the older model.

The other simile is the ability of a fire to enkindle a second (and a third, etc.) fire without in the least diminishing its own power. Justin uses the analogy to illustrate the same point as in his first, anthropological, analogy, but the simile was soon (e.g., in Tertullian) used to illustrate another point. Just like the sun emits light (and heat), in the same way the Father “begets” the Son (and lets the Spirit “proceed”) from himself eternally.

Both similes are most often employed when God is spoken of as Creator of the world – not surprisingly, since the biblical wisdom sayings on which this entire model is based, spoke about God as Creator.

Having seen how well established this tradition was long before Alfonsi, it is easier to observe his considerable originality in the few passages he devotes to the rational proof of the Trinity. First, in line with the Christian tradition before him, he focusses on God as the Creator. Secondly, he uses the anthropological analogy, but in a somewhat original way.

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<sup>364</sup> Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 61.1–2; trans. according to Thomas B. Halton in Michael Slusser (ed.), *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 94.

When a human being creates, three powers – no less, no more – are indispensable: First, the ability to create, given with human nature or substance; second, the ability to plan what is going to be created, and third, the decision, or will, to realize the plan. The creative power of God is given in his divine substance, the ability to plan is given in his wisdom, and his free decision to create is dependent upon his will. No doubt Alfonsi is exploiting the potential for constructing a triad in the Creator by using the anthropological analogy, but his particular version of it comes out as rather original, at least compared with Trinitarian models in Latin theology before him. Resnick observes: “Alfonsi’s Trinitarian speculation here is unusual, to say the least.”<sup>365</sup>

The Trinitarian model of Alfonsi could be his own idiosyncratic construction, but even if that be the case, there is good reason to consider it grounded in Oriental as well as Andalusian *Kalam* theology – Muslim, Jewish and Christian.<sup>366</sup> It was common in this tradition to rationalize the different names of God in the holy scriptures (Hebrew Bible and Qur’an) by equalizing them with God’s essential attributes. “A typical list of these most fundamental attributes would include the following: life, knowledge, power, will, sight, hearing, eternity, and word.”<sup>367</sup>

Not unexpectedly, Saadia belongs to this tradition. He focusses on *three* attributes: God is the living, the omnipotent, and the omniscient.<sup>368</sup>

I have found by means of logical speculation proofs of God’s vitality and His omnipotence and omniscience. All this is evident from the fact that He created all things, for, according to what our reason discloses to us, it is clear that only he that possesses power can create, and that only one who is alive has the power, and that whatever is created and well-made can emanate only from one who knew, before he made it, how the thing to be created was to come into being.<sup>369</sup>

The way of arguing this point is strikingly similar to that of Alfonsi, to say the least. For example, the anthropological analogy is implicit in the quote above, and is explicated in the

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<sup>365</sup> Resnick, *Dialogue*, 164.

<sup>366</sup> Cf. Gilbert Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au moyen âge* (Patrimoines: Judaïsme; Paris: Cerf, 1990), 493. See the instructive reviews of this tradition in Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 168–72; and Harry Austryn Wolfson, “The Muslim Attributes and the Christian Trinity,” in idem, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 112–132.

<sup>367</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 169.

<sup>368</sup> For this and the following, see the perceptive analysis of Harry Austryn Wolfson, “Saadia on the Trinity and Incarnation,” in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neuman* (ed. M. Ben-Horin, B. D. Weinryb and S. Zeitlin; Leiden: Brill, 1962), 547–68.

<sup>369</sup> *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2.4, Rosenblatt, 101.

context after it. But not only that, Saadia attributes the same triad of divine attributes to Christian Trinitarians.

[T]hey adopted their belief in the trinity as a result of rational speculation and subtle understanding, and ... it was thus that they arrived at these three attributes and adhered to them. Declaring that only a thing that is living and omniscient is capable of creating, they recognized God's vitality and omniscience as two things distinct from His essence, with the result that these became for them a trinity.<sup>370</sup>

It seems Saadia knew Christians who ascribed omnipotence (or power) to God's essence, the Father, and possibly omniscience (or wisdom/knowledge) to the Son and life to the Spirit.<sup>371</sup> Or perhaps he has no intention of being that precise, but only wants to say that there are Christians who, like himself, argue that three characteristic aspects of God are necessary to understand him as creative.<sup>372</sup> The only problem Saadia has with this is the lacking insight of the Christians that in God his essential attributes are only different names or aspects of his one indivisible essence. They cannot be hypostasized the way they are in Christian trinitarianism.

On this background, it is interesting to note that the first to introduce Alfonsi's Trinitarian model in his *Dialogue* is not Petrus, but Moses. When, in *titulus* 1, Petrus blames the talmudic sages of ascribing corporality and, accordingly, a specific locality to God, Moses defends this by saying that God can nevertheless act everywhere because "he can possess such wisdom and will that he may know through wisdom what is somewhere else, and act upon it through the will."<sup>373</sup> Petrus objects that if God is corporeal and therefore locally limited, the same will be true of these two attributes. If they are not limited, they are distinct from God, and able to create independently of God, which is clearly unreasonable. Moses: "These can be in him and radiate to every place while knowing and operating, as the sun, although it exists in one place, nevertheless continually diffuses its rays both while heating

<sup>370</sup> Treatise 2.5, Rosenblatt, 103.

<sup>371</sup> This, in fact, would correspond perfectly with the Eastern-Nicene type of Trinity: the Father is *Pantokrator*, the Son *Logos* or Wisdom, the Spirit *Zōopoion*, Life-giver.

<sup>372</sup> As Wolfson points out, Saadia may have had Christian as well as Muslim sources for his own triad of attributes. For example, the Christian apologist Abu Qurrah (a contemporary of Saadia) used the anthropological analogy to describe the creator as existent (essence), living (the Father), knowing (the Son) and wise (the Spirit). See Wolfson, "Saadia on the Trinity," 550–52, and especially Sidney H. Griffith, "Faith and Reason in Christian Kalam: Theodore Abu Qurrah on Discerning the True Religion," in *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Studies in the History of Religions 63; ed. S. K. Samir and J. S. Nielsen; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 15–16. This way of describing the Trinity was influenced by the Muslim counterpart against which Abu Qurrah's apologetics was directed. See Wolfson, "Muslim Attributes," 120–28.

<sup>373</sup> *Titulus* 1, Mieth, 14:6–7; Resnick, 64.

and bringing light.”<sup>374</sup> No doubt Moses comes very close here to arguing exactly the same way as Petrus is doing himself in *titulus* 6 and later in *titulus* 8 (see below, pp. 144–45). But in *titulus* 1, Petrus cuts the discussion short because he thinks that as long as Moses holds a corporeal notion of God, he is unfit to discuss such issues. In this way he indirectly concedes that his own Trinitarian concept of God is similar to concepts current among some Jews, but also that such ideas and similes might imply three-theism when the concepts are employed by people who hold God to be corporeal. In this way he may also, indirectly, answer criticism like that levelled against Christian Trinitarianism by Saadia or other Jewish polemicists.

When pursuing and debating the Trinitarian model presented by Petrus, the two partners discuss a number of issues raised by it. For example, are the attributes of wisdom and will created by God, or are they parts of him and co-eternal with him? Moses and Petrus agree that the latter alternative is correct. It follows from this that the logical priority of substance before wisdom, and wisdom before will, is only “in the order of speech ... in the order of the nouns, not in nature.”<sup>375</sup>

Moses now only wonders which persons in the Christian Trinity are to be identified with God’s wisdom and will respectively. Petrus does not argue the point, but simply states as a fact that wisdom corresponds to the Son and will to the Holy Spirit. In so doing, he avoids embroiling himself with the subtleties of the Christian tradition on this point. As already pointed out, Alfonsi’s triad does not correspond to the traditional attributes ascribed to the three divine persons in Christian tradition. Identifying the Son with God’s Wisdom or Word (Reason) is traditional but equating the Father with the divine substance is not, and even less so the identification of the Spirit with the divine will. Especially this last point makes it very likely, in my view, that Alfonsi’s anthropologically modelled Trinity could well be of Muslim or Jewish rather than Christian origin. Alfonsi himself perhaps indicates the “adapted” character of his Trinitarian model when he has Petrus say:

We have deliberated with you over a matter of such weight so that in this way you, who do not perceive the more subtle things, may at least be able to perceive something. If we

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<sup>374</sup> *Titulus* 1; Mieth 14:16–18; Resnick, 64.

<sup>375</sup> There is a remarkable parallel in Saadia here. In Treatise 2 he says that saying God has three attributes as Creator does not mean that he is divided in three. “Yet although these three attributes are grasped by our mind at one blow, our tongues are unable to convey them with one word, since we do not find in language an expression that would embrace these three connotations. We are, therefore, compelled to employ in designating them three expressions, after remarking ... that the mind has recognized them simultaneously” (Rosenblatt, 101-102).



were to speak about this with any Christian, we would be able to discuss it with him with much more subtlety.<sup>376</sup>

Moses is humble enough to let Petrus get away with this, and now requests biblical texts that would support the points established by reason so far. In response, Petrus first quotes two texts that say God created the world “by wisdom”, Proverbs 3:19, and by his will, Psalm 135:6.<sup>377</sup> Very likely, Hurwitz is right to state that these two testimonies are not found in earlier Christian polemic concerning the Trinity.<sup>378</sup> Petrus then proves from Psalm 33:6 that wisdom and word – the latter a more common name for the Son among Christians – refer to the same entity.<sup>379</sup>

Moses now requests direct Scriptural sayings about a plurality within God. Petrus first points to the two most common nouns for God in the Bible, God (*elohim*) and Lord (*adonay*), and points out that they are both plurals.<sup>380</sup> Moses counters, as was done by the talmudic sages before him, that though the nouns are in the plural, the adjacent *verbs* are in the singular.<sup>381</sup> Petrus answers: true—but that only proves my point. God *is* three persons but *acts* as one divine essence. That the plural forms of the nouns should be taken with full seriousness so as to indicate a plurality in the one God, is also indicated by the verses in which also the verb describing the divine act has plural form, as in Genesis 35:7; 2 Samuel 7:23; Jeremiah 10:10.<sup>382</sup> “Therefore, since in the Scriptures the name of God and his action are sometimes

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<sup>376</sup> Mieth, 75:14–17; Resnick, 167.

<sup>377</sup> This reference given by Mieth and Resnick ad loc. Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*”, 57, gives Ps 115:3 as the reference, but only Ps 135:6 has the exact phrase quoted by Alfonsi: *Omnia quaecumque voluit Dominus fecit; kol asher chafez YHWH asa*. “The Lord” is lacking in Ps 115:3.

<sup>378</sup> Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*”, 57.

<sup>379</sup> As correctly noted by Hurwitz, “*Fidei causa*”, 57, this testimony is traditional, but not the purpose for which Alfonsi quotes it. He is only interested in this text as proving that God created by his word, whereas in earlier tradition, beginning with Irenaeus, this verse was quoted to prove that the Son (the Word) *as well as the Spirit* were mediators in creation: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath (*ruach*) of his mouth.” Interestingly, Saadia also quoted this verse as a proof-text used by Christians to support their contention of God creating by his word (only), *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2, Rosenblatt, 106.

<sup>380</sup> Saadia also devotes a passage to discuss these two names, *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2.3. It seems directed against dualists who took the two names to refer to different deities, or different aspects of the one God (the latter view not unknown in rabbinic sayings, see Rosenblatt’s note 20, p. 99, referring to *Gen. Rab.* 33). Saadia’s own point is that the two names are equivalent and are used interchangeably in the Bible. He does not discuss the plural form of the names.

<sup>381</sup> In fact, the rabbinic Sages had to defend their strong monotheism against heretics who posited two or three divine powers at work in creating the world. This heretical argument was backed by pointing out that in biblical texts, two or three divine names were attributed to the deity creating the world or human beings. Peter Schäfer, in his very interesting discussion of these rabbinic texts, makes a good case for these heretics being Christian Trinitarians. See his study *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 24–54.

<sup>382</sup> Saadia quotes Jer 10:10 as one among several testimonies for God’s unity. *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2.1, Rosenblatt, 95.

expressed in the singular, and sometimes in the plural, the two reveal both that God is one, and that he is several persons.”<sup>383</sup>

Here Alfonsi, as the first among Christians, enters the field of kabalistic lore. He presents a typically kabalistic deciphering of God’s name. The four letters YHWH can be divided into three groups of letters, two in each:

YHWH: YH HW WH

In this way three different names, YH, HW, and WH can be discerned in the one divine name YHWH, thus indicating in a mystical way the Trinity. Having observed this, one discovers that there are many texts in scripture that exhibit a threefold structure echoing the triune God: Deuteronomy 4:39 calls God by his one name, YHWH, but also by the plural appellative *ælohim*, indicating his oneness as well as his trinity.<sup>384</sup> And there is more: The fringes of the garments (Numbers 15:38) are, according to Jewish tradition, to have three knots on the upper fringe, symbolizing the Trinity, and two on the lower, symbolizing the two testaments. Numbers 6:24–26 orders Aaron and his sons to say three blessings, and to raise three fingers of their hands, the thumb, the index and the middle finger, when saying these blessings – again indicative of the Trinity. So is the threefold “Holy!” of Isaiah 6:3. Finally, David implied the Trinity when he said, “Seek the Lord and his strength and always seek his face” (Ps 105:4), that is: Seek the Father and his Son, always seek the Holy Spirit.<sup>385</sup>

In conclusion, let me note once again that Alfonsi explicitly characterizes his presentation of Trinitarian doctrine in this *titulus* as a simplified one, adapted to the non-subtlety of his Jewish interlocutor. As far as philosophical argument is concerned, this is no doubt an apposite description, while his comments of a linguistic nature (Hebrew grammar and terms, plural and singular forms) display considerable competence, and probably his own original searching and finding good examples in different biblical books. This chapter is thus seen to be an attempt at making a palatable presentation of one of the more demanding pieces of Christian doctrine, one adapted to a Jewish audience rather than a Christian. Alfonsi probably knew that the Christian readers of his *Dialogue* would find his presentation here

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<sup>383</sup> Mieth, 78:5–7; Resnick, 171.

<sup>384</sup> Deut 4:39 is one of Saadia’s major testimonies for divine unity, refuting proponents of divine dualism, *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2.2; Rosenblatt, 98.

<sup>385</sup> According to Hurwitz, Alfonsi is the first to use this verse as an argument for the Trinity (“*Fidei causa*,” 60), but the text is quoted by Saadia in a context in which he is “polemizing against the Christian exegetes of the Old Testament who endeavored to support their doctrine of the trinity by means of such passages,” Rosenblatt in *Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise 2.3, p. 100, note 22.

wanting in precision, but he may also have wanted to show them a good way of presenting it to Jews.

*Titulus 7* “concerns how the Virgin Mary, conceiving by the Holy Spirit, gave birth without intercourse with [her] husband.” Alfonsi does not offer any arguments from reason in this matter but says this point can be proved by authoritative prophecies. The entire chapter is devoted to an extensive and detailed exposition of the well-known prophecy in Isaiah 7:10–16. Moses advocates the common Jewish understanding that the royal child announced in this prophecy is Hezekiah, son of king Ahaz and his queen (the *almah*). Petrus retorts that since Ahaz (according to 2 Kings 16:2) reigned for 16 years, and Hezekiah (according to 2 Kings 18:2) was 25 years when he was enthroned upon the death of his father, Hezekiah must have been at least nine years old when Isaiah said the prophecy. But the prophecy clearly predicts a future birth, so Hezekiah could not be the child. The child did not have to be born during Ahaz’ lifetime (as claimed by Moses), because the prophet did not say “Hear, Ahaz,” but “Hear, O House of David,” so that future generations could well be the addressees of the prophecy.<sup>386</sup>

The traditional bone of contention in Jewish/Christian debate here, the word *almah*, which already the Jew Trypho in Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue* claims should be translated *neanis* (young woman) rather than *parthenos* (virgin, *betulah* in Hebrew),<sup>387</sup> is given a fresh treatment by Alfonsi: *betulah* signifies a virgin, regardless of age; *na’ara* signifies a young woman regardless of whether she is a virgin or not; *almah* signifies a woman who meets both criteria: a young virgin—and therefore describes Mary perfectly.<sup>388</sup> When the prophet says that “the Lord himself will give you a sign” it means that the Lord himself will come and be the sign, which points to the incarnation of God’s Son. When it says, “*she* will call his name Immanuel,” this indicates he will have no human father. The child eating honey and butter to distinguish evil and good (Isa 7:15) cannot be understood literally, since such nourishment

<sup>386</sup> I have traced the patristic origin and early history of this Christian argument in Skarsaune, “Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue – from Matthew to the Rabbis”, *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok 77* (2012): 25–45, especially 30–37. The argument is first documented in Eusebius, *Eclogae propheticae* IV.4C (PG 22:1204) and *Demonstratio evangelica* VII.1.40–41, repeated in Jerome *Comm. Isa.* III, 7:14, but may have originated in a lost writing of Origen.

<sup>387</sup> Justin, *Dialogue*, 43.8; 67.1; 71.3; 77–78; 84.1. For extensive analysis, see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 32–34, 200–203.

<sup>388</sup> Alfonsi may be inspired by Jerome here but adds precision to his argument. In his *Commentary on Isaiah* Jerome says that he has not been able to recall a single text in which ‘*almah* refers to a married woman. As far as he can tell, the exact meaning of ‘*almah* is a young virgin ready for marriage (she is not below or above this age). (*Comm. Isa.* III.7.14, CCSL 73:104). In *Against Jovinian* he says that ‘*almah* describes a peculiar kind of virgin: the one who has been carefully secluded from the sight of men, as Rebecca was, Gen 24:42–44 (*Jov.* 1.32; PL 23:254D–255A).

does not make anyone wise. Honey and butter point allegorically to the two laws—that of Moses and that of the Gospel.

Moses then asks: What about the child in Isaiah 8:4, this child is surely the same, and is clearly born in the time of Ahaz? It is of interest to note here that the early Church Fathers from Justin onwards all share this premise, and often quote Isaiah 8:4 as if it were part of the text in Isaiah 7:10–17, referring to the royal child.<sup>389</sup> But Alfonsi objects that Isaiah 8:4 refers to another child altogether, viz. the prophet's own son, introduced in the preceding verse. Moses retorts that in Isaiah 8:8 the royal Immanuel child is addressed as if already living in the prophet's days. Alfonsi now explains that this is entirely correct, but Immanuel is Christ's name according to his divine nature, which is eternal and therefore was as present in the prophet's time as in any other. To bolster this exegesis with more prophecies, Petrus now introduces allegorical readings of Isaiah 45:8–10<sup>390</sup> and Isaiah 66:9.

Here again one observes that even when Alfonsi covers the well-trodden ground of the traditional controversial issues in the Jewish-Christian debate, he offers new and original arguments, apparently based to a great extent on his own creative examination of the biblical text, guided by equally original hermeneutical principles.<sup>391</sup>

*Titulus* 8 discusses “how the Word of God was incarnate in the body of Christ and how Christ was God and man at one and the same time.” In reality, two questions are discussed: How could the non-composite divine nature be united with composite human nature; and how could the Son of God be united with human nature apart from the Father and the Spirit, with whom he is inseparably united? In treating these questions, Alfonsi makes clear that the fact of the incarnation cannot be shown to be necessary by reason alone. It is neither contrary to reason, nor can it be shown to be necessitated by reason. This is because this event came about because God freely willed it. Therefore, as far as reason is concerned, all one can show is that the incarnation is not contrary to reason. That God willed it to happen, can only be shown by the testimony of “authority”, i.e., Scripture.

That divine nature could unite itself with the composite human nature, is no more contrary to reason than what we see happen all the time: a human soul is united to a

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<sup>389</sup> Justin, *Dial.* 43.5–6, 66.2–3 and 77.2–78.10, repeated in Tertullian, and later in several Church Fathers.

<sup>390</sup> There is some patristic precedent for a Christological reading of Isa 45:8, but, to my knowledge, not for Alfonsi's detailed exegesis of the entire passage as prophesying the virgin birth. For Leo the Great's Christological exegesis of Isa 45:8, see Leo, *Sermon* 24.3; CCSL 138:111–13.

<sup>391</sup> For a detailed study, see C. Jódar-Estrella, “La interpretación de Is. 7,14 en el *Diálogo* de Pedro Alfonso y su fundamentación hermenéutica,” *Cristianesimo nella storia: ricerche esegetiche teologiche* 22/2 (1999): 275–98.

composite human body, but together they make one undivided person. Concerning the fact that the Son alone was incarnate, apart from the Father and the Spirit, Alfonsi employs the Patristic simile of the Father being like the sun, and the Son and the Spirit being like the light and the heat going forth from the sun.<sup>392</sup> Sometimes the only part reaching us here on earth is the light, without the sun itself or its heat accompanying the light. In other cases, heat may touch us without any light being perceived, as with hot iron.

Alfonsi uses most of the chapter, however, in substantiating the incarnation and the double nature of Christ with scriptural testimonies. (1) Genesis 1:26 speaks about man being created according to God's image, that is, like God, whereas Isaiah 40:25 and other prophecies clearly deny that God can be likened to anyone or anything not himself. How should we resolve this contradiction? By believing that God's image spoken of in Genesis 1:26 was the human form of God's Son. This image had an eternal existence in God's mind, and therefore can be said to be simultaneous with the creation of human beings according to this image. (2) Isaiah 9:6 says about the (human) Messiah-child that his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, God, Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace—clearly names describing a divine being. Moses objects that the verse should rather be translated “He who is wonderful, who is counselor, who is God, who is mighty, and who is the father of the world to come, he, I say, will call him the prince of peace.”<sup>393</sup> The argument for this interpretation is that “he shall call his name ...” requires a subject that calls the Messiah his name; therefore the first names are really the names of the caller, God, not of the Messiah. Alfonsi counters this rather forced exegesis by pointing out that also in other places a “he” doing something with a “him” is really the same person in both references, so that the meaning is: he shall call himself. Apart from that, the talmudic rabbis have said that the Messiah shall have seven names, the implication being that apparently, they took all the names in Isa 9:6 as being names of the Messiah. (3) Isaiah 11:1–4 clearly speaks about a human Messiah having divine characteristics. Moses objects, however, that these powers are said to be conferred upon the Messiah by his receiving them from the divine Spirit. If he were divine, he should rather impart them than receive them.<sup>394</sup> Petrus: The seven gifts of the Spirit were Christ's own according to his divinity but were *received* by his truly human soul.

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<sup>392</sup> See above p. 111 concerning Moses' use of this simile in *Titulus* 1, and Petrus' apparent rejection of it. Alfonsi's view may have been that Moses, in that place advocating God's corporeality, could not make any profitable use of this simile, while Petrus could do so when the incorporeality of God was taken for granted.

<sup>393</sup> *Dial.* 8; Mieth, 86:31–32; transl. Resnick, 188. This interpretation of the verse is advocated by Joseph Kimhi, *Book of the Covenant*, 29–30. Again, Alfonsi demonstrates his awareness of contemporary Jewish exegesis.

<sup>394</sup> This Jewish objection, based on the same scripture, is first stated by “Trypho” in Justin's *Dialogue*, 87.2.

Moses now requests scriptural testimony for the fleshly nature of the Messiah, and as a corollary of the seven divine gifts of the Spirit, Petrus points to the seven trees growing in the desert (Isa 41:19) as an allegory of the Messiah's body. He follows up with more scriptures in which divine as well as human characteristics are attributed to the Messiah: Isa 25:9; (God becoming visible, so that the people of Israel could point to him with their fingers);<sup>395</sup> Isaiah 52:8; 40:5 (the same point); Zechariah 12:8; Psalm 8:6; Micah 5:2; Psalm 45:7–8; 72:1,5,11,17,19; 1 Chronicles 17:11–14 (Temple = Christian church to be built by the Messiah, not Solomon).

In this *titulus* as well, Alfonsi adds new scriptural testimonies to the traditional dossier, and treats the traditional ones in new and creative ways.

*Titulus 9* has for its topic “that Christ came in that time when it was predicted by the prophets that he would come, and that whatever they predicted concerning him was revealed in him and his works.” In line with patristic tradition, Alfonsi's main testimonies concerning the fact that the Messiah must have come already, are Genesis 49:10 and Daniel 9:24–27. According to Genesis 49:10 the Davidic kingdom in Judah will last until the coming of the Messiah. Since it has become extinct, the Messiah must have come—a favorite argument in Christian *adversus iudaeos* literature since Justin Martyr (*I Apol.* 32.1–11 and *Dial.* 52).<sup>396</sup> Since Tertullian's *Adversus Iudaeos*,<sup>397</sup> Daniel 9:24–27 was also a favorite testimony on this topic, allowing a more or less precise calculation of the period at which the Messiah should appear (although the details in this calculation varied a great deal).<sup>398</sup> Alfonsi has the following

<sup>395</sup> Based on *b. Ta'anit* 31a. Alfonsi correctly points out that this interpretation is in accord with that of the Jewish sages of old. See Resnick's note ad loc.

<sup>396</sup> For a comprehensive record of all known interpretations of this important prophecy before the modern period, see Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre. Erster Teil: Die Auslegung von Genesis 49,10 im Altertume bis zu Ende des Mittelalters* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1904). A direct Jewish answer to Alfonsi's use of this verse as proof of the Messiahship of Jesus came from Jacob ben Reuben (active 1170–1190), also from Huesca, in his book *Milhamot ha-Shem (The Wars of The Lord)*. For a German translation of the relevant psassage, see Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 141–43; and for further comments, see below, pp. 231–37.

<sup>397</sup> *Adv. Iud.* 7–8, see next note. Tertullian was in part anticipated by Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* I.126.3.8. See the detailed analysis in Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naissance d'une exégèse: Daniel dans l'église ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 28; Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 329–343.

<sup>398</sup> From the very beginning of Christianity, Dan 9:24–27 and especially verse 27 was an important testimony on end-time events. The earliest Christian interpretation seems to have been that verse 27 predicted an end to the temple and sacrifices after a “half week” (3,5 years) of persecution during which the “abomination which desolates” had stood in the temple (cf. Jesus in Mk 13:14–20 and Matt 22:15–22). During and after the Jewish war 66–70 C.E., the prophecy was understood as pointing to this event; a similar interpretation was probably current among other Jews as well. Peculiar to the Christian interpretation after 70 was the idea that verse 26a (“after the 62 weeks anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing”) was taken as pointing to Jesus' passion and death, which thus preceded the destruction of the temple. Accordingly, the Messiah must have come prior to 70 C.E. This exegesis is found in Tertullian, *Adv. Iud.* 7–8. He follows a Jewish tradition that identifies the endpoint of the “seventy weeks” (=490 years) with the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. The decisive point in Tertullian, however, is that he eliminates any reference to Jesus' second coming in this prophecy. The

chronological scheme: the “seventy weeks” of Daniel 9:24 equal 490 years, which is the time span between Daniel’s uttering the prophecy and Titus’ destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This period is subdivided in the following way: The first seven weeks = 49 years (9:25) cover the period of the Babylonian exile, the next 62 weeks = 434 years (9:25–26) cover the period between the return from Babylon and the Roman siege of Jerusalem, the final week = seven years (9:27) represent the siege and conquering of Jerusalem by Titus.

The most striking fact about this exegesis of the prophecy is that it departs significantly from the traditional Christian one, but agrees, as far as chronology concerns, almost exactly with the Jewish interpretation advanced by Saadia.<sup>399</sup> According to Saadia, the 70 weeks designate the period between the fall of the first and the fall of the second temple. Saadia’s interpretation is consciously anti-Christian since he eliminates all traces of a predicted Messiah from the Daniel text. The stem *m-sh-ch*, “anoint,” occurs three times in vss. 24–26: (1) “to *anoint* the holy of holies”; (2) “until the time of *an anointed prince*”; (3) “*an anointed one* shall be cut off and have nothing.” Saadia explains the first term as referring to the anointing of the priesthood, and he takes the verb *achtom* (“ending”) in the preceding phrase in the text to be understood here as well: the anointing of priests will *end* with the destruction of the temple [in 70 C.E.]. The second term is explained as referring to Cyrus (but also to the High Priest Joshua ben Jozadak). The third term is taken to refer to the cessation of the priestly as well as the royal offices, the two offices for which one was anointed. “An anointed one” is a generic reference to all anointed officeholders. In this way Saadia eliminates any reference to one particular Messiah from the Daniel passage.

We have observed already that Alfonsi’s exegesis departs significantly from the Christian exegetical mainstream – which Saadia had criticized severely. Alfonsi’s interpretation seems tailor-made to refute Saadia’s. He accepts the chronological scheme of

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prophecy only concerns the first, historical, coming of Jesus, and was fulfilled in its entirety by the temple’s destruction. In his successors Hippolytus and Julius Africanus, however, the Christianization of the prophecy is carried further. In Hippolytus the 69 first weeks terminate in the birth of Jesus, while week number 70 is detached from the 69 first ones and transposed to the end-time (see Gustave Bardy and Maurice Lefèvre, *Hippolyte: Commentaire sur Daniel* [SC 14; Paris: Du Cerf, 1947], 194–201). In Africanus, the 70 weeks are taken as one connected period, but now they terminate in Jesus’ death and resurrection. This was taken over by Jerome, and by his influence became the standard interpretation in the Christian West during the Middle Ages, as seen, for example, in Bede. In conscious contrast, rabbinic interpretation stuck to the earlier idea, and made it simple by saying that the 70 weeks period marked the time between the destruction of the first temple and that of the second. (See further on this in the main text above.) For details and references, see Bodenmann, *Naissance d’une exégèse*, 107–138 and 316–70.

<sup>399</sup> For details and references, see Robert Chazan, “Daniel 9:24–27: Exegesis and Polemics,” in *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (ed. Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 143–59; esp. 146–52. Saadia’s interpretation of Dan 9:24–27 is to be found in *Beliefs and Opinions*, VIII.9, Rosenblatt, 319–22. He introduces it by saying: “There applies to them... I mean the Christians ... another refutation; namely, that which is alluded to by the prophet, peace be upon him, in the passage Seventy Weeks [Dan 9,24–27]” (Rosenblatt, 320).

Saadia but re-introduces the Messianic dimension. But, quite strikingly, this is not made for the second term, “an anointed prince”. Here, Alfonsi has the same identification of this figure as Saadia: King Cyrus. But the first and the third terms are taken as referring to Christ by Alfonsi, and in the third, he sees a reference to Christ’s death.

It is thus evident that here, as so often, Alfonsi is not just rehearsing traditional arguments in Jewish/Christian debate, without taking notice of new arguments from the Jewish side, inputs that made earlier Christian answers seem obsolete and out of date. Alfonsi is drawing on his considerable knowledge of what Jewish scholars – in particular Saadia – had been saying in response to traditional Christian interpretations, and he made a decent attempt at answering new arguments by new Christian exegesis of the disputed texts.

After this extensive argument concerning the end time prophecy in Daniel 9, a rather traditional Christological “proof from prophecy” is presented.<sup>400</sup> But as usual, Alfonsi is often quite original in many of his exegetical comments, and his through going rationalism is again evident. The same is true in the final paragraphs, in which Moses objects that Petrus has overlooked prophecies which were not fulfilled by Jesus, like Isaiah 2:4 about universal peace among the nations, and Jeremiah 23:6 speaking about peace for Judah and Israel, whereas “Judah and Israel still remain in misery and captivity.” Petrus answers that the first prophecy is really speaking about Christ *teaching* the Gentiles the way of peace, and the second is valid only for those within Judah and Israel who believed in Jesus. Isaiah 11:6–7 is also discussed. Petrus sharply rebukes Moses’ literal understanding of the peace among animals spoken of in the passage. The only rational interpretation is to take the passage allegorically. The same is true of Isaiah 30:26 (“the light of the sun will be sevenfold”), which is absurd if taken literally: the sun enlarged seven times would burn everything and obliterate all life. Finally, Isaiah 60:5–6 is shown to have been actually fulfilled by Jesus endowing the second temple with greater glory than the first (Solomonic), by being himself present in it.

*Titulus* 10. An adequate summary of its contents is given in the beginning of the chapter itself: “First, what is the devil; second, why did human beings fall into his power; third, why did God free human beings from his control when he had permitted them to fall under it; fourth, why, when he wanted to redeem them, did he not accomplish this by his power, but instead preferred to become incarnate and to suffer?” In other words, the central topic in this chapter

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<sup>400</sup> Comprising Deut 18:15–19: the prophet like Moses is not Joshua, but the Messiah; Isa 42:1–4: Jesus fulfilling the prophecy as being himself the prophet who was God as well as man; Isa 55:6–11: the Word going out of God’s mouth and returning to him is God’s Son; and, as the final climax, Isa 52:13 – 53:12, which is interpreted in detail, phrase by phrase.



is Christian doctrine about the fall and its anthropological consequences, and the corresponding Christian doctrine of salvation.

(1) The devil was created a good angel, otherwise God would not have said about all of creation that it was good. This and some other angels sinned and fell from the uppermost heaven and took up their abode in the heavens below the firmament. Human beings were created with a material body made up of the four elements in a perfect balance. In themselves mortal (because composite) human beings had the possibility of obeying God's commandment, and then pass directly into a blessed state of immortality.

(2) Instead, they chose by their free will to disobey God's commandment, being tempted by the devil. This sin caused the balance between the elements of their body to become disturbed, and their souls lost their immortality, hence fallen man is subject to death.<sup>401</sup> Therefore, all human beings, be they sinners or saints, are destined to descend to *sheol*, under the custody of the devil, and to remain there until Christ came and freed them. That even just men are now in *sheol* is shown in the story of the widow of Endor calling Samuel up to confront Saul.

(3) The fact that just men were confined to *sheol* through no sin of their own, but because of Adam's sin in the beginning, called God's pity and mercy into action.

(4) He did not solve the problem by an almighty *fiat*—something he had not done when he released his people from Egypt either. In such things, one should not pry into God's reasons for choosing the remedies he used. At that time the sacrifice of the lamb and the smearing of its blood on the lintels were the means chosen by God for effecting the redemption of his people. When the salvation of all humanity was at stake, God again chose a similar way of effecting it, only on a much larger scale, and at much higher cost for himself: the paschal lamb was substituted by his own Son having become man. Otherwise, an immeasurable number of sacrificial lambs would have been necessary, but even so, they really could not have made up for the graveness of Adam's sin and the sins of all his descendants. Therefore, a sinless man was the only sufficient ransom. But no merely human being is sinless, only God's Word made flesh. Hence the necessity of the incarnation.

The question of the necessity and possibility of the incarnation of God's son was very much in the air in Latin theology in Alfonsi's time. There is clear evidence that the question *Cur Deus homo?* (Why did God become a human being?) was raised by learned Jews in

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<sup>401</sup> Alfonsi again has a "rational" explanation ready: Having disobeyed God, Adam's four body liquids (humors) lost their balance, making Adam mortal in body and soul. See Irven M. Resnick, "Humoralism and Adam's Body: Twelfth-Century Debates and Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogus contra Judaeos*," *Viator* 36 (2005), 181–95.

disputations with Christians, and that good and ready-made answers based on reason were in short supply among the Latin theologians.

Gilbert Crispin, the Abbot of Westminster (1085–1117), tells in his *Disputation of a Jew and a Christian* (between 1090 and 1095) that during a debate in London with an old Jewish friend from Mainz, the Jew had raised serious questions about the possibility of, as well as the need for, God’s son’s incarnation. Some Christians (probably monks of Westminster) and some Jews had been present during the discussion, and some of the Christians had asked Crispin to write a book about the exchanges that had taken place, since such a book would be extremely useful – probably an indication that the question as well as Crispin’s answer were new to them. Crispin complied with this request. In his book, he argues that only someone without sin could break the power that the devil had over mankind since the fall, and that the only sinless human being after Adam was Jesus, who was also God’s son, and therefore up to the task. Only God is absolutely sinless.<sup>402</sup>

Crispin sent a draft of the book to Anselm, then Bishop of Canterbury (1093–1109) for his approval. It seems that Anselm made some useful remarks on the *cur deus homo*-question in Crispin’s draft, and used some of Crispin’s material in his own *Cur Deus homo* of 1098.<sup>403</sup> But while Crispin kept the traditional concept of Christ liberating the pious in *sheol* from the custody of the devil, Anselm abandoned this idea, and argued that the sin of human beings was exclusively a problem between them and God, and that Christ’s vicarious satisfaction for the sins of human beings had to do with sin being an offence against God.<sup>404</sup> A few years after Anselm’s famous book, Odo of Tournai, bishop of Cambrai (1105–1113), wrote a short *Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God* (1105–1106), in which he employed Anselm’s argument in a debate with a Jew.<sup>405</sup>

But this Latin material is not the only relevant foil for Alfonsi’s argument concerning the incarnation. Saadia also has critical remarks on this theme in his *Beliefs and Opinions*. He

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<sup>402</sup> See, for Crispin, Anna Sapir Abulafia, “The *ars disputandi* of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster (1085–1117),” in *Ad fontes: Opstellingen aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. C. van de Kieft* (ed. C.M. Cappon et al.; Amsterdam: 1984), 139–152; reprinted as essay VI in Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute: Disputational Literature and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)* (VCS 621; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1998). “[T]he disputation is very valuable for the cohesive Jewish critique of Christianity it contains” (p. 140).

<sup>403</sup> On the relationship and the cooperation of these two, see Richard William Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 197–202.

<sup>404</sup> For Latin text and German translation, see Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, *Anselm von Canterbury: Cur deus homo – Warum Gott Mensch wurde, Lateinisch und Deutsch* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1986).

<sup>405</sup> For English translation, introduction, and commentary, see Odo of Tournai, *On Original Sin and A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God: Two Theological Treatises Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (trans. Irvn M. Resnick; University of Pennsylvania Press: Middle Ages Series; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

first formulates his criticism in a passage in which he attacks those who deny God's creating from nothing, and instead propose a theory of creation by emanation, i.e. by transforming a part of God into a creature.<sup>406</sup> This is absurd because "an eternal being that is subject to neither form nor quality nor dimension nor limit, can [not] be so changed that a part of it becomes a body possessing form and dimension and qualities and time and other attributes belonging to corporeal beings."<sup>407</sup> Besides, it is inconceivable that the All-Wise should want to suffer all the limitations that this would imply: pain, hunger, thirst, fatigue etc., especially since none of this is necessary to achieve any good God might want. No doubt Saadia has the Christian concept of incarnation in view here and says as much when he returns to explicit criticism of the Christian doctrine in Treatise II.7.<sup>408</sup>

The fundamental objection against the incarnation stated by "Moses" in Alfonsi's *Dialogue* can be summarized like this: When God wished to free the righteous ones who were in the devil's custody in *sheol*, why did he not simply free them by his divine power, but instead let his Word become incarnate and suffer? This is too general to allow us a precise identification of exactly which Christian or Jewish argument (of those presented above) could be Alfonsi's immediate target. But the material presented, is more than sufficient to provide Alfonsi's discussion of the incarnation issue with a contemporary context and setting. While he here – as so often – comes across as strikingly independent and original in his handling of a controversial issue, he also betrays a keen awareness of issues that were high on the agenda in contemporary Jewish/Christian disputes all around him.<sup>409</sup>

In conclusion, Alfonsi leaned on Latin discussions of the incarnation issue which was a live one especially in the years immediately before his writing the *Dialogue*. With characteristic efficiency, Alfonsi avoids the subtleties of the Latin discussions, and presents a simple argument that leads directly to the conclusion: since only a sinless man could pay the ransom for every human sin, and only God is sinless, God's Son had to become man for the atoning sacrifice to be made. We observed a similar avoidance of Latin subtleties in his treatment of the Trinity in *Titulus 6*.

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<sup>406</sup> This criticism is found in Treatise I.3, Rosenblatt, 56–57. For pertinent comment on Saadia's texts, see Daniel J. Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977), 109.

<sup>407</sup> Rosenblatt, 56.

<sup>408</sup> Rosenblatt, 109–10. Here Saadia refers to the Christian sect claiming that "a portion of God became the body and spirit of Christ," – possibly a reference to the Monophysites – and says that the criticism levelled earlier in the book against the emanationists, apply to these Christians also.

<sup>409</sup> On the relationship between Anselm and other Latin theologians on the one hand, and Alfonsi on the other, see now Santi, Francesco, "Pietro Alfonso e Anselmo di Canterbury," in Carmen Cardelle de Hartmann and Philipp Roelli, eds., *Petrus Alfonsi and his Dialogus: Background, Context, Reception* (Micrologus Library 66; eds., Firenze: SISMEL Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 13–41.

Almost as an afterthought, Alfonsi comes to treat the question raised in the Prologue's summary of the chapter: If Christ voluntarily gave himself as a sacrifice, why accuse his murderers, the Jews, of any sin? Petrus gives several analogies that are intended to prove that even in such a case, the perpetrator of murder is guilty of his own sin. The guilt derives from the evil intention of the act, and is independent of the good consequences, since these were unintended. In addition, Christ was murdered based on a false accusation—that he was a magician leading Israel astray by his magic. Petrus presents an extensive argument for the view that Christ's miracles were not due to magic, but to his double nature as divine and human, and that therefore they should be regarded as one more proof of the reality of the incarnation. That Christ did not redeem himself from humiliation and death on the cross—inflicted upon him by the Jewish Sages who rejected him—was not because he was unable to do so, but “he acted in this way owing to his great goodness and mercy.”

*Titulus* 11 discusses “the resurrection and the ascent of Christ to heaven, and his second coming.” Concerning the resurrection of Christ, Moses raises the following issues: why did Christ have to be burdened with a body in the resurrection, when the task for which he took on a body was finished? And if this could be explained (as Petrus does), why could not Christ wait until the end of time to be raised together with all other human beings in the final and general resurrection? And how can a material body ascend to heaven, against the laws of physics? To these questions Petrus responds by showing off his scientific and philosophical learning, drawing on the logical consequences of Christ's double nature and his freedom from sin, and by pointing to biblical precedents, like Elijah. The latter example evokes some remarks, from Petrus as well as from Moses, that on the one hand illustrate elements of Aristotelian physics, and on the other, and for precisely that reason, strikes a modern reader as quite amusing:

Petrus: Since, then, Christ's body after the resurrection was extremely light and subtle—indeed, since at death it lost all weight and thickness, a proof of which is that it no longer required either food or drink—since, I say, it was such as this and it had with it both spirit (that is, soul) and divinity in addition (...), could it not ascend to heaven when it pleased? As far as Elijah is concerned, whose body acquired no subtlety from death and nevertheless ascended on high in the presence of his disciple Elisha, how do you believe this to have been accomplished both according to reason and according to science [*phistica*]?

Moses: To be sure, Elijah fasted a great deal and ate very little, so that his body acquired so much lightness and subtlety that it could rise up into the air, where the angels received him and carried him off, as it pleased God.<sup>410</sup>

To these and other “scientific” arguments Alfonsi adds, as is his wont, scriptural testimonies that speak about Christ’s ascension, provided one accepts Alfonsi’s allegorical exegesis of them. Interestingly, at least one of his allegorical interpretations is based on the Hebrew text where the Vulgate would provide no basis for it. It is very likely that these interpretations are Alfonsi’s own brainchildren. As the final and crowning testimony concerning Christ’s heavenly session at the Father’s right hand on the divine throne, Dan 7:9–14 is quoted, a passage with which the rabbis had struggled a great deal.<sup>411</sup>

*Titulus* 12 argues “that the law of Christians is not contrary to the Mosaic law.” First, Petrus emphasizes that the moral commandments of Moses are confirmed by Christ; here there is no difference. Moses does recognize this, but asks how Christ’s disciples, the Apostles, could abrogate other commandments, some of which had a death penalty for transgressors. He doubts that Christ and his Apostles were in agreement here, because Jesus himself obeyed all these commandments. Petrus answers that one cannot discuss these ritual commandments in general and *in abstracto*; one must address them one by one. He therefore discusses in turn circumcision, the Sabbath, Passover, Yom Kippur, sacrifices in general, and unclean meats.

Even if Alfonsi once again exhibits great knowledge of things Jewish, and therefore is often original in his detailed comments on and critique of these rites, there is nevertheless a common and quite traditional argument that is, so to speak, the backbone in everything he says in these passages: These Jewish rites were, in different ways, signs and types of things to come, things fulfilled by Christ. When the fulfillment is there, the model or sign loses its function and is abolished.<sup>412</sup>

Alfonsi sums it all up by saying that Isaiah 2:2–3 and Jeremiah 31:31–32 both speak of an old law (that of Moses) being superseded by a new law (in the days of the Messiah), and

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<sup>410</sup> *Dial.* 11, Mieth, transl. Resnick, 242.

<sup>411</sup> For a review of rabbinic interpretations of this passage, see Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 68–79 and 127–131.

<sup>412</sup> The first Christian author to state this principle in so many words is Melito of Sardis, *Peri Pascha*, 34–45; Greek text and English translation in *Melito of Sardis, On Pascha and Fragments* (ed. and trans. Stuart George Hall; Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 16–23. Alfonsi’s nearest source may be Isidore of Seville

that even some of the Jewish sages recognized this.<sup>413</sup> Here again, Alfonsi draws on his considerable Jewish learning and can muster arguments that are not traditional in *Adversus Iudaeos* literature.

Moses now declares himself fully satisfied and convinced—except for one final difficulty, which, however, is great enough to overthrow everything Petrus has established so far: God clearly prohibited any making of any image cut in wood (Isa 44:13–20), but isn't that precisely what Christians are producing all the time and in great quantity with their numerous crucifixes? Petrus explains that Christians do not worship these images; they rather function as altars. Even for the Israelite priests, the altars functioned as their focus of attention when praying, but they prayed to God, not to the altar which signified his presence. It is the same with Christian prayer apparently being addressed to crucifixes. It is Christ who is being worshipped, not the crucifixes.<sup>414</sup>

This concludes Alfonsi's presentation of his faith to his Jewish interlocutor, and he ends by the following concluding remarks:

Moses: Certainly, God gave a great deal of his wisdom to you and illuminated you with a great reasoning power [*ratio*] that I am unable to vanquish. Instead, you have confounded my objections with reason.

Petrus: Undoubtedly, this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, whom we receive in baptism, who also illuminates our hearts, lest we presume to believe something that is false. If you believe what we believe and have yourself baptized, you will enjoy the same illumination of the Holy Spirit, so that you will recognize what things are true and repudiate those that are false. Now, then, since I have pity upon you, I implore God's mercy to illuminate you with the fullness of his Spirit and to give you a better end than beginning. Amen.

In conclusion: When I first introduced Alfonsi (in Part Four, chapter 4A above), I mentioned him as an example illustrating that Judah Halevi's fear that too much philosophical

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<sup>413</sup> On rabbinic sayings concerning Isa 2:2–3 as referring to a *new* Torah, proclaimed in the last days from the mountain of Sion, not like the old Torah proclaimed from Sinai, see Jacob Jervell, "Die offenbarte und die verborgene Torah: Zur Vorstellung über die neue Tora im Rabbinismus," *ST* 25 (1971): 90–108; Peter Schäfer, "Die Torah der messianischen Zeit," *ZNW* 65 (1974): 27–42; Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 356–59.

<sup>414</sup> For a similar argument concerning the role of holy images and objects in Christian worship, see below, pp. 404–405.

rationalism in Jewish theology could pave the way for apostasy – conversion to Islam or Christianity – was not unfounded. In these religions, the tangible, concrete, physical realities so central to Jewish faith and culture – the Land of Israel, the Jewish people, the Torah with its many specific and in part non-rational commandments – all of this was lacking, apparently making these religious rivals more amenable to purely rational underpinnings. I think that the analysis of Alfonsi’s *Dialogue* presented above, to a considerable degree substantiates this point of view. All along Alfonsi’s text, one senses his intense dislike of the “irrational” God-language of the talmudic sages, so unsophisticated, unphilosophical, and unscientific as at all possible. His own enthusiasm over the fact that as a Christian he could allow reason and science free reign in the “Hall of Wisdom” does not come across as feigned or pretended. As a Jewish convert, I believe Alfonsi can be classified as the typical “intellectual convert.”

Alfonsi, this one man, embodied in himself the vibrant exchange of knowledge and ideas shared and contested by the three faiths of Spain. The unique cultural mix in Spain made the peninsula function as the crucible of the European “renaissance” beginning in the eleventh and peaking in the thirteenth century. At the end of this period, the rest of Latin Europe had caught up and taken the lead in many respects, peaking in the towering figure of Thomas Aquinas. But in the beginning, we find Alfonsi, the Jewish convert to Christianity, very typical for his era, the seeker of the best available scientific knowledge, the religious rationalist, invoking reason as the arbiter when rivalling faiths compete. Alfonsi was a loner, a pioneer. But after him, there came a whole band of learned Jews and Christians who took over his baton. Altogether 75 manuscripts of Alfonsi’s *Dialogue* – from the first third of the twelfth century right into the fifteenth, and scattered in many different locations, testify to Alfonsi’s wide and long *Wirkungsgeschichte*. In Spain, we must move from Huesca in Aragon to Toledo in Castille, however, to find those who carried on his project of sharing Arabic science and philosophy with the Latin world.

##### 5. ‘Convivencia’ in Toledo: Translators and Polemicists

After Alfonsi’s time, it was Toledo – the old capital of the Visigothic kingdom – that became the leading center for Christian-Jewish-Muslim cultural interchange.<sup>415</sup> After the conquest of

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<sup>415</sup> See, e.g., Louis Cardaillac, ed. *Tolède, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup>. Musulmans, chrétiens et juifs: le savoir et la tolerance* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1991); Francisco J. Hernández and Peter Linehan, *The Mozarabic Cardinal: The Life*

Toledo by the Muslims in the second decade of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Christian presence in the city was still strong, and Visigothic forms of architecture and other arts exerted a strong influence on Muslim achievements in the same areas. Architectural features like the horseshoe arch, long regarded as the typical hallmark of Muslim architecture in Al-Andalus, is now seen as being taken over from earlier Visigothic architects.<sup>416</sup>

Jewish presence in the city was not lacking, so one can reasonably say that even before the Christian reconquest, Toledo was, like many other leading cities in Al-Andalus, a city of three religions. But the reconquest brought to the city many new citizens, first and foremost old Mozarab Christians from Al-Andalus, and new Latin Christians from the north, but also a substantial group of Jewish refugees from Al-Andalus. The Muslim element in the city was weakened, however, since most of the Muslim elite emigrated after the Christian take-over, and of the remaining Muslim population, many converted to Christianity.<sup>417</sup> But some “Mudejares,” Muslims under Christian rule, remained.

The first newcomers were the Latin Christians from the north. From now on, Toledo was the main center of the Leonese-Castilian kingdoms. Its conqueror, Alfonso VI of León (1065–1109), regarded himself as the true successor of the Visigothic Roman Emperors of old. This was expressed in the title he had already claimed for some time: *Imperator constitutus super omnes Hispaniae nationes*, or, more briefly, *Imperator totius Hispaniae*, “Emperor of all Spain.”<sup>418</sup> Now, as the conqueror of the old capital of the Visigoths, he added a new one, *Imperator toletanus*.<sup>419</sup>

The Latin Christians were unfamiliar with the Arab language and the Arab culture, inclusive liturgy, that they met among the old Mozarab Christians of the city, and this created some tension in the following decades, not only in Toledo. The city had long been the spiritual “capital” of the Mozarabic Christians, embodying the proud Visigothic heritage. In 1101 they were granted a charter of privileges by Alfonso VI. Until the end of the thirteenth century they remained the secular lords of Toledo, dominating the lay City Council.

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and *Times of Gonzalo Pérez Guidel* (Firenze: Sismel, Editioni del Galluzzo, 2004), 3–19; Lucy K. Pick, *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and Jews of Medieval Spain* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 2004) [Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada was archbishop of Toledo 1209–47].

<sup>416</sup> See Jerrilynn D. Dodds, María Rosa Menocal, and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008; 82–85 with splendid illustrations.

<sup>417</sup> See María Jesús Rubiera Mata, “Les premiers Mores convertis ou les prémices de la tolerance,” in Cardaillac (ed.), *Tolède, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup>*, 102–111.

<sup>418</sup> On the imperial pretensions of the León-Castile kings, see Julián Montemayor, “Le rêve imperial,” in Cardaillac (ed.), *Tolède, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup>*, 54–67.

<sup>419</sup> O’Callaghan, *History of Medieval Spain*, 207.



From the south, from remaining Al-Andalus, came many Mozarab Christians who found the new regime of the Almoravids to be repressive, and that of the Almohads unbearably so. They found a safe haven in Toledo and were more easily assimilated by the “old” Mozarabs there than the Latin newcomers.<sup>420</sup>

Dominant among the Latin newcomers were the upper strata of the city’s clergy. Most members of the chapter of the cathedral, and all the archbishops until 1180 came from southern France, especially Aquitaine.<sup>421</sup> It was under the auspices of these French and Latin archbishops of Toledo that a creative encounter between Arabic and Latin scholarship was initiated in the city and had its first flowering. As so often, here also the meeting of distinctively different cultures, the Latin and the Arabic, resulted in cultural innovations and new developments.

The most concrete expression of this has been called “the Toledan school of translators.” We see the rare phenomenon of Jewish (or Mozarab) experts in Arabic literature in philosophy and science working together with Christian experts in the same disciplines. The expert in Arabic made an intermediate translation into the vernacular language (Castilian), or into somewhat poor Latin, and the Christian Latinist then turned this into perfect Latin. It was in the latter half of the twelfth century that this new model of Jewish/Christian co-operation developed in Toledo.

Christianized Toledo in the twelfth century became one of the most important cultural crossroads of late medieval Europe. The great Arabic library that fell into the hands of the Christian conquerors, the tolerant atmosphere that enabled the Muslim population to remain in the city and to retain its Arabic speaking culture and finally the stream of Jewish and Muslim refugees from the southern part of the peninsula ruled by the Almohads in the mid-twelfth century, all created an ideal and rather unique intellectual climate. This developed into one of the most impressive intellectual movements of the Middle Ages.<sup>422</sup>

A few words are in place concerning the Jewish participants in this cultural process. Some of them would be natives of Toledo, having lived there a long time before the Christian conquest

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<sup>420</sup> See especially Jean-Pierre Molénat, “Les Mozarabes: un exemple d’intégration,” in Cardaillac (ed.), *Tolède, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup>*, 95–101.

<sup>421</sup> See the vivid portrait of “Christian divisions and city government” in Hernández and Linehan, *The Mozarabic Cardinal*, 6–12.

<sup>422</sup> Yosef Schwartz, “The Medieval Hebrew Translations of Dominicus Gundissalinus,” in *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies* (2 vols., ed. Gad Freudenthal and Resianne Fontaine; Leiden: Brill, 2013) vol. 2: 19.

of 1085. But after the Christian conquest there also came new Jewish immigrants in considerable numbers, especially following the Almohad conquest of Cordoba in 1148. Until then, Cordoba had retained its position as a kind of second Jerusalem for Jewish scholars and courtiers, a position created under the benevolent reign of the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Rahman III and his successors. Now some of these Jewish luminaries found themselves gathered anew in Toledo, foremost among them the philosopher Abraham Ibn Daud. He had spent his youth and received his Jewish education at Cordoba but migrated to Toledo sometimes during the 1140ies.<sup>423</sup> He wrote his two main works in Toledo 1161 (see below) and in one of them describes the Jewish exodus from Almohad Al-Andalus to Christian Leon-Castile under Alfonso VII like this:

This king [of Castile-León], Don Alfonso son of Raimund, was a king of kings,<sup>424</sup> and a righteous king. He prevailed over all the Ishmaelites living in Spain and compelled them to pay tribute. His kingdom grew mighty, “and the Lord gave him rest from all his enemies round about” [2 Sam 7:1 referring to David]. Now the time that he reigned over Edom [Christian Spain] was thirty-eight years.<sup>425</sup> ... [At about that time] the [Almohad] rebels against the Berber [Almoravid] kingdom had crossed the Sea to Spain [1146–47], after having wiped out every remnant of Jews from Tangiers to al-Mahdiya... They tried to do the same thing in all the cities of the Ishmaelite kingdom in Spain... When the Jews had heard the report that the [Almohad] rebels were advancing upon them to drive them away from the Lord, God of Israel [by forced conversion], those who feared the Lord’s word fled for their lives... Some were taken captive by the Christians, to whom they willingly indentured themselves on condition that they be rescued from Muslim territory. Others fled on foot, naked and barefoot, their feet stumbling upon the mountains of twilight, with “the young children asking bread, and none to break it to them” [Lam 4:4].

However, He who prepares the remedy before afflictions, exalted be His name,... anticipated [the calamity] by putting it into the heart of King Alfonso the *Emperador* to appoint our master and rabbi, R. Judah the Nasi b. Ezra, over Calatrava and to place all

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<sup>423</sup> For a superb review of Ibn Daud’s time, life, and work, see Gershon D. Cohen’s Introduction in Abraham Ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah): A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes* (ed. G. D. Cohen. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), XIII–LXII.

<sup>424</sup> This is Ibn Daud’s biblical term equaling Castilian *Emperador*, which term he uses together with King of kings some lines above the text here quoted. In his time, the prime qualification of having the right to be called an Emperor was supreme rule over many nations.

<sup>425</sup> In reality, 31 years (1126–1157), but Ibn Daud, living in Toledo, may have reckoned Alfonso’s entry into Toledo on Nov. 16, 1118, as the real beginning of his reign. See Gershon’s note ad loc. in *Book of Tradition*, 96.

the royal provisions in his charge... Now when [he] was appointed over Calatrava, the city of refuge for the exiles, he supervised the passage of the refugees, released those bound in chains and let the oppressed go free by breaking their yoke and undoing their bonds... [He] fed the hungry, provided drink for the thirsty and clothed the naked. Then, providing animals for all the feeble, he had them brought as far as Toledo in great dignity. [This was possible] by virtue of the awe and respect which he commanded among the Christians... Since he had no regard for silver, nor did he delight in gold, he did not keep for himself any of his share of the King's pay... Indeed, if he had performed but these works of charity, his merit would have been more than enough, "for it was to save life that God had sent him ahead" of the refugees [Gen 45:5]. When all the [Jewish] nation had finished passing over [the border] by means of his help, the King sent for him and appointed him lord of all his household and ruler over all his possessions.<sup>426</sup>

The biblical models of this story, in which Ibn Daud had himself been a part, are obvious. Young Judah the Nasi was like Joseph, who was sent ahead of his family to become a high servant of a good Pharaoh, in this case the Emperor Alfonso. Working closely together with the Christian king, Judah was able to liberate and feed the refugees from Al-Andalus, the old land of Canaan, in the new Egypt, the Christian North. This very positive view on the Christian kingdom of León-Castile may not have been shared by all Ibn Daud's countrymen, but his story no doubt reflects the enormous relief felt by the Jewish refugees from Almohad persecution. We shall have to keep this in mind when we take a closer look at some of Ibn Daud's writings below.

The presence of Jewish scholars in Toledo, who had come there to escape persecution and possible death in Cordoba and other centers of Jewish life in Al-Andalus, goes a far way in explaining why we observe this rare phenomenon mentioned above: Christian and Jewish scholars working together in translator teams, engaged in a large-scale project of translating Arabic works of philosophy and the sciences into Latin, now the dominant Christian language for scholars.

Let me add a relevant point in this context: Recent scholarship has added a new perspective concerning this joint effort of Jews and Christians. Traditionally, Jews assisting Christians in the work of translation has been seen as a one-way traffic – from Arabic or Hebrew into Latin. In 2013 a two-volume work was published under the title *Latin-into-*

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<sup>426</sup> Abraham Ibn Daud, *Book of Tradition*, English translation, *Epilogue* lines 66–119 (pp. 96–99).

*Hebrew*.<sup>427</sup> The editors and authors point out that there was, in fact, no one-way street here. On the contrary, some works by Christian scholars in Latin were found to be of such interest to Jewish scholars that they were translated into Hebrew.<sup>428</sup> This serves to underline the *mutual* exchange that took place in Spain, Provence, and Italy in particular. This is to be kept in mind, e.g., when we come to speak of Dominicus Gundissalinus of Toledo below. Before I present in chronological order the translators of Toledo as far as they are known to us, I will add some further remarks on the setting and significance of the “Toledan school” of Jewish and Christian scholars.<sup>429</sup>

### A. Christian and Jewish Translators in Co-operation and Dialogue

The earliest mention of Toledan translators occurs in texts stemming from the Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable (b. 1092/4– d. 1156, Abbot from 1122). In the years 1142–43 he made a journey to Spain, and *en route* to Santiago de Compostela he met with a whole team of translators whom he commissioned with translating Islamic texts for his own (polemical) use, including excerpts from the Qur’an. One of the translators, *Peter of Toledo*, occurs in the following quote from Abbot Peter’s Letter 4.17 which informs Bernhard of Clairvaux about the translation of an Arabic anti-Muslim tract (by the Arabic Christian apologist Al-Kindi).<sup>430</sup>

I took care to have [Al-Kindi’s book] translated from Arabic into Latin. It was translated by a man knowledgeable of both languages, Master Peter of Toledo. Since, however, the Latin language was not as familiar to him as the Arabic, I provided him with an assistant, the learned man and our notary, Peter, my beloved son and brother...

<sup>427</sup> See two groundbreaking volumes: Gad Freudenthal and Resianne Fontaine (eds.), *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies* (Two volumes; Vol. 1: *Studies*. Vol. 2: *Text in Contexts*; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>428</sup> See the general introduction in vol. 2: 1–10, Alexander Fidora, Resianne Fontaine, Gad Freudenthal, Harvey J. Harnes and Yossef Schwartz, “Latin-into-Hebrew: Introducing a Neglected Chapter in European Cultural History.”

<sup>429</sup> For the following, see James Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton Oriental Studies 23; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 51–55; Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny, “Les traductions à deux interprètes: d’arabe en langue vernaculaire et de langue vernaculaire en latin,” in *Traduction et traducteurs au moyen âge: Actes du colloque international du CNRS organisé à Paris, Institut de recherché et d’histoire des textes les 26–28 mai 1986* (ed. G. Contamine; Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1989), 193–206; Danielle Jacquart, “L’École des traducteurs,” in *Tolède, XII<sup>e</sup>–XIII<sup>e</sup>. Musulmans, chrétiens et juifs: le savoir et la tolérance* (ed. L. Cardaillac; Paris: Éditions Autrement, 1991), 177–91; Charles Burnett, “The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century,” in *Science in Context* 14 (2001): 249–88; repr. as Essay VII in Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Variorum, 2009); idem, “Arabic into Latin: The Reception of Arabic Philosophy into Western Europe,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (ed. Peter Adamson and Richard. C. Taylor; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 370–404.

<sup>430</sup> On Peter of Toledo, see Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 31–36 and 56–58.

This man polished and set in order the Latin words, which had for the most part been set forth by him [Peter of Toledo] in an unpolished and confused fashion, and thus he produced an epistle, indeed a little book, of much use to many, I believe, on account of the knowledge it communicates of things unknown.<sup>431</sup>

This graphic description of a two-men translator team, one man being expert in Arabic and the other in Latin, would seem to be the norm rather than the exception in this very productive period as far as such translations are concerned. The translation here mentioned, however, was of a Christian anti-Muslim tract, and was thus not directly concerned with Jews and Judaism.

There is one peculiarity of the translation, however, that may make Peter of Toledo himself an interesting man in our context: van Koningsveld argues persuasively for the view that Peter based his translation of Al-Kindi's work on an Arabic text *written in Hebrew characters*. This would explain some otherwise inexplicable misreadings of the Arabic text. But if, in fact, Peter's *Vorlage* was written in Hebrew characters, it was in all likelihood made by Jews for Jewish readers, and Peter's own competence in using this Jewish text as his *Vorlage* may indicate that he was himself a Jewish convert.<sup>432</sup>

It is therefore quite possible that Peter of Toledo was also the source of Peter the Venerable's Latin paraphrases of selected passages from the Talmud in his *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews*. These passages were not taken from Petrus Alfonsi (from whom he elsewhere borrows freely) or from the Jewish writing *Alphabet of Ben Sira*.<sup>433</sup> Be that as it may, the fact that Peter the Venerable probably was dependent on Jewish converts to Christianity as sources for talmudic lore, suggests that, as a Jewish convert, Petrus Alfonsi

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<sup>431</sup> Latin text of the Letter in Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable*, 212–14; first part of the quote above translated by me, the latter part according to Kritzeck, 31.

<sup>432</sup> See in particular P. Sj. van Koningsveld, "La apologia de al-Kindī en la España del siglo XII. Huellas toledanas de un 'animal disputax'," in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo: Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20–26 Mayo 1985)* (Serie Historica 5; Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico–Mozárabes de Toledo, 1989), 107–29, especially 117–119. Van Koningsveld went on to identify Peter of Toledo with Petrus Alfonsi; this part of his argument is less convincing, cf. Resnick, *Dialogue*, 22–24. Recently, Cyril Aslanov has argued that in several cases translations of Latin into Hebrew made use of Latin texts with insertions of words in the local vernacular language – all of which was written with Hebrew characters. See Aslanov, "From Latin into Hebrew through the Romance Vernaculars: The Creation of an Interlanguage Written in Hebrew Characters," in *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies Vol. 2: Texts in Contexts* (ed. by Gad Freudenthal and Resianne Fontaine; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 69–84. Could it be that use of such "interlanguage" versions could also have taken place when translating the other way?

<sup>433</sup> See Irvn M. Resnick's Introduction in Peter the Venerable, *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews* (The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation 14; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 28–29; and also Yvonne Friedman's "Introduction" in Friedman (ed.), *Petri Venerabilis Adversus Iudaeorum inveteratam duritiem* (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 58; Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), XIV–XX.

was not an absolute loner in serving the Latin Church as transmitter of Jewish knowledge. We shall see more examples later.

While Peter of Toledo and his translator colleagues worked in the 1140ies under the Toledan archbishop Raymond (1124–1152), it is under the tenure of Raymond's successor, John, (1152–1166) that we meet the most famous translators of Toledo, and it is in these and the following years that Toledo hosted such an assembly of gifted scholars, Jewish and Christian, that the city rightly overshadowed even Cordoba as the Iberian capital of scholarship and learning – and of dialogue and even collaboration between Jewish and Christian scholars. Some of these scholars remain nameless in our sources, but those who are named give us a vivid impression of the truly international character of the Toledan scholarly milieu.

Charles Burnett points out two conditions that were necessary to produce such an intense activity of translation. The first was good libraries of Arabic philosophical and scientific texts. Good libraries existed in Toledo even before the Christian conquest, and after the conquest the city's treasure of books was significantly enriched by the transfer to it of the excellent library of the Muslim Banu Hud dynasty in Saragossa around 1140.<sup>434</sup> The second necessary factor was the presence of a Latin readership eager to receive Arabic learning. Many of these readers were present in Toledo itself. After the Christian reconquest in 1085 there was a constant influx of Christian clergy and other men of learning, finding their religious and scholarly home in the precincts of the grand Cathedral. The archbishops until 1180 were all French Cluniacs, and they recruited French clergy to serve under them. These Frenchmen gradually discovered that their own Latin learning was inferior to that found among the Arabic-speaking Mozarabic Christians, Muslims, and Jews. One should probably not underestimate the impact of Petrus Alfonsi's writings in this process of discovery. He had not minced his words, as we have seen, when describing the superiority of Arabic learning. The same insight was not hidden to Christian scholars in France, especially in Chartres, and in Sicily.

Among the translators whose names are known, and who worked for longer or shorter periods in Toledo from the 1120ies and into the thirteenth century, we find the following, mentioned here in a roughly chronological order:

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<sup>434</sup> See for this and the following Charles Burnett, "The Coherence of the Arabic-Latin Translation Program in Toledo in the Twelfth Century," *Science in Context* 14 (2001): 249–88; reprinted as Essay VII in Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Variorum, 2009), 249–51.

*John of Seville (and Limia)*.<sup>435</sup> Two of his translations may be dated; one to the 1120ies, the other to 1133, a third is dedicated to Archbishop Raymond (1125–52). He was probably a Mozarab Christian, in some manuscripts called a bishop, but apart from his dedicating one of his books to the Toledan Archbishop, there is no documentary evidence that he worked in Toledo. Most of the fourteen works translated by him treated astronomical problems.

*Peter of Toledo* (see above)

*Gerard of Cremona* (1114–87) was an Italian but came to Toledo early in his career because he wanted to learn Arabic so that he could read and translate a famous Arabic manuscript of Ptolemy's *Almagest* that was kept there.<sup>436</sup> Gerard belongs to the second generation of translators. He became a cleric of the cathedral and is documented as such by a signature in 1157, but probably arrived in Toledo somewhat earlier. He is credited with translations of altogether some seventy works and was reckoned as the greatest of translators by his contemporaries. After his death in 1187, some of his students wrote a short *vita*, followed by a list of 71 works translated by him, and a short poetic eulogy. Echoing eloquently the sentiments prevalent among learned readers of this new Arab-Latin literature, some lines from this *vita* may confer to the modern reader the enthusiasm evoked by the great translation program being carried out in Toledo under the patronage of Archbishop Raymondo:

Just as a lit candle should not be put in a secret place or under a bushel, but must be raised up on a candlestick [Luke 11:33], so the glowing deeds of good men should not be left unspoken of, as if buried under silence and neglect, but should be presented to the ears of the people of today, since they open the door of virtue to those coming afterwards, and the examples of the ancients, worthily commemorated, as it were instill an ideal image of life into the eyes of those now living. Lest, then, master Gerard of Cremona lie hidden under the darkness of silence, lest he lose favor of the renown that he has merited, lest through presumptuous theft an alien heading be affixed to the books translated by him – especially since he himself inscribed none of them with his name – all the works translated by him... have been listed very carefully by his students ... so

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<sup>435</sup> On him and the translations indubitably his, see Lynn Thorndike, "John of Seville," *Speculum* 34 (1959): 20–38; and esp. Charles Burnett, "John of Seville and John of Spain: A *mise au point*," *Bulletin de philosophie médiévale* 44 (2002): 59–78; reprinted as Essay VI in Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Variorum, 2009).

<sup>436</sup> On Gerard, see, first and foremost, Burnett, "The Coherence," 252–87.

that if anyone who is an admirer of their aims is looking for one of his works, through this list he might find it more quickly and become more confident about it. For although Gerard spurned the glory of fame... nevertheless the aroma of the fruit of his works, diffused through the centuries, announces and declares his goodness. ... An enemy to the desires of the flesh, he adhered to spiritual values only; he labored to benefit all present and future generations... Although from his very cradle he had been educated in the lap of philosophy and had arrived at the knowledge of each part of it according to the study of the Latins, nevertheless, because of his love for the *Almagest*, which he did not find at all among the Latins, he made his way to Toledo, where, seeing an abundance of books in Arabic on every subject and, pitying the poverty he had experienced among the Latins concerning these subjects, out of his desire to translate, he thoroughly learnt the Arabic language, and in this way, trustworthy in each [the subject matter as well as the language of the books], in the manner of a prudent man who, walking through green meadows, weaves a crown from flowers – not from all of them, but from the more beautiful – he read through the writings of the Arabs, from which he did not cease until the end of his life to transmit to Latinity, as if to a beloved heir, in as plain and intelligible way as was possible for him, books of many subjects – whatever he esteemed as the most choice.<sup>437</sup>

What transpires through these words is not only the enthusiasm accompanying the acquirement of new philosophical and scientific knowledge in this circle, regardless of the religion of the authors, but also the deep *piety* that permeated the entire translation project.

Gerard was probably sufficiently fluent as a reader of Arabic to skim through the Arabic tomes and select what he found most valuable. When it came to the translation itself, he did, at least some of the time, avail himself of assistants, probably because they were better experts in Arabic than he was himself. So here we have a second example of translation done by a pair of translators. One of his assistants is named: the Mozarab Christian Galippus assisted Gerard in translating the *Almagest*.

But there is more to be learned from the quoted passage. It says that Gerard from his youth was well educated in “each part of it [philosophy] according to the study of the Latins.” This refers to the Latin curriculum of the “seven liberal arts”, first, the triple sciences (*trivium*) about words or language: grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (logic), then, the

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<sup>437</sup> The Latin text of the *vita* with list and eulogy is edited anew in Burnett, “The Coherence,” 275–281, the English translation here quoted is also Burnett’s, *ibid.*, 254–56.



foursome (*quadrivium*) of sciences about things: arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy. Among the Latins, these sciences were subsumed under the general concept “philosophy.” But in the *Vita*, this curriculum, mainly based on Latin textbooks by Boethius (480–524) and Martianus Capella (5<sup>th</sup> cent.), is characterized as “poor”, which in fact it was. The towering authority behind it all was Aristotle, but in the sciences about things, in other words the sciences of nature, it was only the mathematical or formal disciplines that had been rendered in Latin, next to nothing of what we nowadays would call Aristotle’s books about physics and metaphysics. In astronomy, one of the liberal arts, the greatest authority was Ptolemy (fl. 130–60), especially his “Great Treatise” (Greek *megale syntaxis*, arabicized *al-magest*), but Boethius did not get that far in his project of translation, so the Latins knew about the book, but did not have its text.

It was thus to fill an important lacuna in the Latin textbooks of the arts that Gerard travelled to Toledo, only to discover that the Arabic books he found there had a lot more to offer than the full text of the famous classic that had drawn him in the first place. So, Gerard’s translation program came to comprise not only important supplements to and improvements of existing Latin textbooks on the seven arts, but also, and more importantly, a whole set of entirely new textbooks on disciplines unknown in the Latin curriculum of the seven arts. These new books were, for the most part, Aristotle’s books of natural philosophy and metaphysics. They had been arranged in a “canonical” order in the peripatetic school of Alexandria in Late Antiquity; this order had been taken over by the Muslim philosopher Al-Farabi (d. ca. 950).<sup>438</sup> It is clearly outlined in his *On the classification of the sciences*. Here he lists eight “inquiries,” or themes, of natural science, and points out which Aristotelian books or parts of books that are appropriate for each theme. Burnett has shown that in the *Vita* Gerard’s translations are mentioned in two successive sequences, first those supplementing the existing Latin corpus of texts for the Latin seven arts scheme, then those books pointed out by al-Farabi for the “new” Late Alexandrian canon of natural philosophy and metaphysics.<sup>439</sup> It is this that makes Burnett speak of a “translation program” being carried out by Gerard and his co-workers.

Interestingly, another translator team, roughly contemporary with Gerard, seems to have had a kind of agreement with him about their own translations: they only translated Aristotelian works not translated by Gerard. Unlike Gerard, however, both members of this

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<sup>438</sup> See David C. Reisman, “Al-Fārābī and the philosophical curriculum,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy* (ed. P. Adamson and R. C. Taylor; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 52–71.

<sup>439</sup> Burnett, “The Coherence,” 258–61.

team were authors in their own right, leaving us books in which we can study their own thoughts and their motives for acting as translators in what may indeed be called an interfaith project. In Gerard's case, we are left with the inferences we can make from what he did: He translated texts from a Pagan Greek philosopher transmitted to him by Muslim translator-commentators; texts he, as a Christian, regarded as precious instruments for providing his own faith with a more solid foundation in rational arguments. It lies near to hand to assume that Gerard was convinced that in these philosophical texts one could find a religious rationality that was a common and "neutral" ground, shared by Jews, Christians, and Muslims. As we now turn to the other translator team, we will see such an idea explicitly expressed.

*Dominicus Gundissalinus, and Avendeuth (=Abraham ibn Daud?)* are perhaps the most famous of the Toledan translator teams.<sup>440</sup> Dominicus Gundissalinus (ca. 1110 – 1190) was Archdeacon of Cuellar but spent most of his life in Toledo (from around 1140) as a translator of Arabic books, but also as author of his own Latin works.<sup>441</sup> In the latter, he shows himself to be an able theorist of the sciences. He creates his own synthesis of the older Latin paradigm of the seven liberal arts in the tradition of Boethius and on the other hand the Arabic pattern of the Muslim philosopher al-Farabi that we have just presented.<sup>442</sup> Gundissalinus is not only interested in systematizing philosophy and the sciences; he is also strongly committed to the view that reason is the supreme authority when it comes to practicing a sound and correct exegesis of Scripture. Alexander Fidora sets out a telling example of this.<sup>443</sup> In one of his philosophical writings,<sup>444</sup> Gundissalinus arrives at the philosophical conclusion that the matter and the form of the primordial chaos (of Gen 1:1-2) were created *ex nihilo* simultaneously. In this he agreed with the Jewish philosophers Ibn Gabirol and Abraham ibn Daud but disagreed with his Christian fellow believer Hugh of Saint Victor, who understood Genesis differently: Genesis 1:1 described God's creation of unformed matter, whereas the rest of the chapter

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<sup>440</sup> For the following, see especially Alexander Fidora, "Abraham Ibn Daūd und Dominicus Gundissalinus: Philosophie und religiöse Toleranz im Toledo des 12. Jahrhunderts," in *Juden, Christen und Muslime: Religionsdialoge im Mittelalter* (ed. M. Lutz-Bachmann and A. Fidora; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 10–26.

<sup>441</sup> The most recent extensive study of Gundissalinus, his life, works and thought, is Alexander Fidora, *Die Wissenschaftstheorie des Dominicus Gundissalinus: Voraussetzungen und Konsequenzen des zweiten Anfangs der aristotelischen Philosophie im 12. Jahrhundert* (Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel 6; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003). On Gundissalinus' life, see esp. pp. 12–19. Gundissalinus is credited with 20 translated works and five authored ones. See also Fidora, "Dominicus Gundissalinus and the Introduction of Metaphysics into the Latin West" *The Review of Metaphysics* 66 No.4 (June 2013): 691–712.

<sup>442</sup> For this, see in general Fidora, *Wissenschaftstheorie*.

<sup>443</sup> For the following, see Fidora, "Abraham Ibn Daūd und Dominicus Gundissalinus," 18–21.

<sup>444</sup> *De processione mundi*, for editions and translations, see Fidora, "Abraham Ibn Daūd," 18, note 23.

described God's imposing of form on the unformed chaotic matter. In other words: rational arguments overrule interpretative traditions, even those of one's own faith.

Gundissalinus did not have such a command of Arabic that he could translate Arabic works single-handedly. He worked together with collaborators, experts in Arabic. Two of these are named in the sources, John of Spain and "Avendeuth, Israelite and philosopher." It is with the latter that I am now primarily concerned. It is in the preface of the joint translation of Avicenna's *On the soul* that Gundissalinus' coworker identifies himself by these three words. Since there is no reason to assume Avendeuth (ibn Daud) had any wish to hide his identity by calling himself by his patronym only, since he added that he was a Jew and a philosopher, it seems reasonable to suppose he was a celebrity in Toledo, easily identified by the patronym and the two characteristics added to it. We know of only one Jewish philosopher called ibn Daud living in Toledo at the same time as Gundissalinus made his translations, and he is Abraham ibn Daud.<sup>445</sup>

Abraham ibn Daud was a refugee to Toledo from Cordoba.<sup>446</sup> In Cordoba he had enjoyed a privileged upbringing and education, and soon stood forth as the most excellent scholar of his generation. The learned men of Cordoba are eloquently portrayed by Gershon Cohen:

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<sup>445</sup> This is not the only proposed identification, nor the earliest one. In 1819 Amable Jourdain (*Recherches critiques sur l'âge et l'origine des traductions latines d'Aristote et sur commentaires grecs et arabes employés par les docteurs scolastiques* (1819): 113–115) suggested that Avendeuth might be the same translator as a more well-known one, viz. John of Seville (also known as John of Spain). Since John of Spain was no doubt a Christian, but as Avendeuth called himself an Israelite, this meant he was a Jewish convert to Christianity. This proposal was sanctioned by the great German orientalist Moritz Steinschneider (in 1893 and 1904–5), and later repeated as an established fact by many scholars in standard works, e.g. Baer, *History* I: 52 (1961): "The second archbishop of Toledo [Raymond 1124–1152] ... established in Toledo a famous center for the translation of philosophic and scientific works from Arabic into Latin, and among the participating scholars was the Jewish astronomer, Johanan ibn Daud (Johannes Avendehut);" O'Callaghan, *History*, 313 (1975): "... Joannes Hispanus, a converted Jew also known as Ibn Dawd or Avendaut." The tenacity of this identification is surprising, since it was effectively refuted in 1954 by Marie Thérèse d'Alverny in her article "Avendauth?" (in *Homenaje a Millas Vallicrosa*, vol I, Barcelona, 1954, 19–43); she was soon seconded by Lynn Thorndike, "John of Seville," *Speculum* 34 (1959), 20–38. D'Alverny instead identified Avendeuth with Abraham ibn Daud. She has had several followers, most significant among them is Gershon D. Cohen (see next note). Recently, Alexander Fidora has supported this identification with new and, to my mind, very convincing arguments (Fidora, "Abraham Ibn Daūd und Dominicus Gundissalinus"). Strange to tell, Dodds, Menocal, and Krasner Balbale in their *Arts of Intimacy* accept both proposals, thus splitting Avendeuth in two persons: the partner of Gundissalinus (Avendeuth), writing the Preface of *De anima*, is said to be "Iohannes Hispalense, the Mozarab John of Spain." Below, on the same page (210), Avendeuth is mentioned a second time: Among Gundissalinus' coworkers was also "Abraham Ibn Daud—his name appears as Avendauth—a Jewish philosopher who ended up in Toledo..."

<sup>446</sup> For a superb study of ibn Daud's life, work, and ideas, see Gershon D. Cohen's "Introduction" and "Analysis and Interpretation" in Abraham Ibn Daud, *The Book of Tradition (Sefer ha-Qabbalah): A Critical Edition with a Translation and Notes* (ed. G. D. Cohen; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), XIII–LXII and 149–303.

Only through a synthesis of dogmatic disciplines with “Greek wisdom” did a man become a gentleman, and a pious Jew an understanding one.... Physics, logic, mathematics, astronomy, ethics, metaphysics and even rhetoric, all of them in Arabic translations of, and commentaries on, the classical philosophers, were to be harmoniously blended with Bible and Talmud, midrash and the codes, liturgy and dogma. Scrupulous adherence to the law of the rabbis was to be molded and adorned by courtly bearing and dignified speech. Cunning and wit and beauty in every expression were the indispensable limbs to the body of faith and observance that they had inherited from the ancients.<sup>447</sup>

Ibn Daud’s own profile was very much like this general description of the milieu to which he belonged. More specifically, he comes out in his writings as thoroughly read in Saadia; and also in his Spanish predecessors Solomon ibn Gabirol, and Judah Halevi. He has learned from both but does not agree fully with either of them. He was equally well read in Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, and Galen – and the Qur’an and an Arabic version of the New Testament. But lastly, and above all, he had familiarized himself thoroughly with the *oeuvre* of Ibn Sina (Avicenna), which only at this time became known in Al-Andalus. He “appropriated the Aristotelian thought which the great Arab philosopher had expounded in his commentaries.”<sup>448</sup>

But ibn Daud’s happy days in Cordoba did not last. In 1147 the Almohad general ibn Tumart crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and in violent raids overran the still Muslim part of al-Andalus, massacring Christians, Jews and opposing Muslims in the process. This fate also befell the Jews and Christians of Cordoba. Those who survived found a new home in Toledo, which, partly because of this influx of learned men, now “more than any other city of the twelfth century, reflected a cosmopolitan atmosphere reminiscent of Baghdad and Cordoba in the ninth and tenth centuries.”<sup>449</sup> Among the refugees was ibn Daud. His interpretation of these dramatic events, in which a Christian king played the role of a friendly Pharaoh receiving Jewish refugees with benevolence, has been quoted already (above, pp. 158–59).

In Toledo, 1160–61, ibn Daud wrote his two classics; one, *The Exalted Faith*,<sup>450</sup> demonstrating the harmony between sacred revelation and philosophical reason; the other,

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<sup>447</sup> Cohen, “Introduction,” XIX–XX.

<sup>448</sup> Cohen, “Introduction,” XXIV.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., XXVII.

<sup>450</sup> For an edition of the Hebrew translation of the lost Arabic original, and a richly annotated English translation, see Abraham Ibn Daud, *The Exalted Faith* (Sara F. Yoseloff Memorial Publications in Judaism and Jewish

*The Book of Tradition*, demonstrating the historical continuity and reliability of the transmission of sacred revelation. Contrary to Halevi, ibn Daud defended the harmonization of revelation and reason. The title of his book, *The Exalted Faith*, may probably be a conscious contrast to the subtitle of Halevi's book: *The Book of Refutation and Proof on behalf of the most Despised Religion*. Ibn Daud's commitment to reason as a valid arbiter of religious truth leads him to develop an interesting theory about what is common to and what is different in the three rivalling faiths. What is common is the basic rational truth shared by the three religions. What divides is seen in the rivalling claims about which religious tradition embodies the authentic tradition of divine revelation. In his *Exalted Faith* ibn Daud focusses primarily on the common rational basis, while in no way hiding his conviction that Jewish tradition is the authentic one. The latter theme is the main focus of the *Book of Tradition*. It is worthwhile to hear what he says himself in a couple of passages from *The Exalted Faith*.

In the first passage, he begins by saying that there are two kinds of religious truths, or "rules." The first kind is represented by judgements based on reason. These are seen to be universal and unavoidable for all intelligent human beings. Example: Righteousness is good, injustice is evil, it is good to praise him who is good, etc. (Without any doubt ibn Daud would also include belief in one Creator God among these truths, as well as a rational theory of the existence and nature of the human soul). The second kind is represented by such commandments as observing the Sabbath, not eating pork, etc., i. e., commandments specific to one or two, but not all the three faiths. The first group of religious truths constitutes a shared common ground between the three faiths, making peaceful coexistence possible.

[People with different beliefs] are brought together by generally acknowledged religious rules. [Also], different nations agree about these, so that there may be in a single [political] state communities of human beings [who have] many [different] religious rules, [who] believe in opposite traditions, and [who] degrade, deny, and mock each other's tradition. [But] the generally acknowledged rules bring them together, and their business unites them and [thereby] forms them into a single [political] state [which is] like a single body. Therefore, it is not possible for generally acknowledged religious rules to change in any way.<sup>451</sup>

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Affairs; Hebrew text ed. G. Weiss; transl. N. M. Samuelson; Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1986).

<sup>451</sup> *Exalted Faith*, 172b15 – 173a5, trans. according to Samuelson, 204, slightly altered, cp. his note 6, p. 212.

The second passage proceeds along the same lines of thought. It distinguishes between several different types of commandments in the Tora, basically two. First, there are the political commandments.

The Torah obliges this [type of commandments] more perfectly than [the different types of domestic conduct]. The first of this [kind] is to love one's fellow as oneself. There enters under this [rule] honesty in business; just scales and measures; forsaking interest and doing damage to the poor, returning a lost object...[etc.]. When an examiner examines [this topic] in detail he will find everything that the conclusions of the science of the philosopher reach. [The reason for] this is that practical philosophy [also] exists in the Torah in a more perfect way... [The three pillars in the Torah are] faith, virtue, and conduct. If it were not for them the ordering of the world would cease and civilization would be destroyed. Thus, you find that all nations agree or almost agree about state laws.<sup>452</sup>

The second kind of commandments in the Torah is made up of those for which the reasons are unknown.<sup>453</sup> As examples of this kind of commandments ibn Daud enumerates many of the commandments about different kinds of sacrifices and how they are being brought.<sup>454</sup> “All of this testifies to the feebleness of the grade of this part of the Torah. ... [A]ny other [part] is more proper to worry about than [this part].”<sup>455</sup> No doubt ibn Daud is here dividing the Torah commandments into basically two classes, the first being on a higher level than the second. The first class would correspond to the “natural law” of the Stoic philosophers, a term borrowed in Christian tradition already by Justin Martyr: The law does not only contain ceremonial laws that were necessitated by the special hardness of heart of the Jewish people and therefore applied to them only. It also contains precepts “that by nature (*physei*) are good, holy and just,” and which further can be characterized as “universally, naturally, and eternally good.”<sup>456</sup> Ibn Daud is making a similar distinction within the commandments of the Torah.

<sup>452</sup> *Exalted Faith* 213b, 4–6; 13–15; 214a, 13–15; Samuelson, 263.

<sup>453</sup> *Exalted Faith* 214b, 3–4. The German translation Fidora is following says “Gebote, deren Ursachen uns dunkel sind” (Fidora, “Abraham Ibn Daud und Dominicus Gundissalinus,” 15).

<sup>454</sup> *Exalted Faith* 214b, 4–12, Samuelson, 263–4.

<sup>455</sup> *Exalted Faith* 214b, 12–13; Samuelson, 264.

<sup>456</sup> *Dialogue with Trypho*, 45.3–4, cf. *Dial.* 93.1: “God shows every race of man that which is always and in all places just, and every type of man knows that adultery, fornication, murder, and so on are evil.” Translations according to Thomas P. Halton in Michael Slusser (ed.), *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho* (Selections from the Fathers of the Church 3; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press), 68 and 144, slightly adapted.

Again, the strong rationalism of his age sets its marks in an otherwise very tradition-obedient Jewish thinker. It places him in a position to collaborate in good faith with representatives of the other faiths in issues where they agree – for the common good of their society. I believe Fidora is right in making this a buttressing argument for identifying Abraham ibn Daud with the translator Avendeuth collaborating with the Christian scholar Gundissalinus in bringing a Latin version of Avicenna's *De Anima* before the learned world of Christian scholars.

Let us hear how Avendeuth presents this translation in the Preface he wrote, dedicated to Archbishop John of Toledo:

To John, the Most Reverend Archbishop of the See of Toledo and Primate of All Spain, I, Avendeuth, Israelite and Philosopher [dedicate this work] with the humble gratitude owed by Your servant.

While all human beings are made up of soul and body, not all of them are as certain concerning the soul as they are concerning the body. The latter is, of course, known by our senses, while the former is attainable only by the intellect. Accordingly, those who are addicted to their senses either believe that there is no soul, or if they postulate, perhaps, the existence of a soul based on the movements of the body, most people hold their view on what and how the soul is by faith alone, while few are convinced by reason.

It is unworthy of a human being, if he does not know that part of him which makes him a knowing being, and if he does not grasp by his reason that part of him which makes him rational. How can he have due respect for himself or God, when he has been led to ignore that which is best in himself? With regard to his body, man is inferior to almost all the other creatures; it is only by his soul that he excels above them. In his soul he carries the image of his Creator more clearly than any other creature.

Therefore, My Lord, I took care to make it my task to effectuate Your order that the book of Avicenna *On the Soul* be translated. By Your assignment and my work, the Latins will now know for certain that which hitherto was unknown, viz. whether there is a soul, and what and which kind it is according to its essence and effects. This is now proven by most true reasons.

So, please receive this book which I have translated from Arabic – I took care to say the meaning of each [Arabic] word in our common language, Archdeacon Dominicus then

turned each word into Latin.<sup>457</sup> Rest assured that in this book the author [Avicenna] has collected whatever Aristotle said in his book concerning (1) the soul, (2) the senses and sensible things, and (3) the intellect and intelligible things. Accordingly, after You, God willing, have received this volume, You should not be in any doubt that in it these three themes receive the most complete treatment.<sup>458</sup>

After what we have seen of ibn Daud's consequent rationalism, nothing in this Preface comes as a surprise; quite the contrary, the Preface is fully in line with the method of the author of *The Exalted Faith*: First, the main points in Jewish faith are established by reason alone, then supported by select Scriptural quotes, so that truths held by faith alone hitherto can now be proved by rational argument.

So, in this rare team of translators, we have two theologian-philosophers, one Jewish, one Christian, translating a compendium of Aristotle's psychology written by a Muslim philosopher, and doing so based on a shared conviction that there are – in the Aristotelian philosophical tradition – insights that constitute a common ground of the three faiths. On this common ground they can meet and let reason be the arbiter of religious truth. I am inclined to agree with A. Fidora that this translation project may be called “translation of Avicenna as dialogue between religions.”<sup>459</sup>

To strengthen this point of view it is relevant here to note the following: Gundissalinus was not satisfied by letting Avicenna speak flawless Latin to the Christian world of scholars; he also composed his own book on the same subject, the *Tractatus de anima*. Some decades after the publication of this book, a Jewish scholar found it so interesting and useful that he translated it into Hebrew!<sup>460</sup> What we see here, I believe, is a well documented example of something that has been going on elsewhere and in other periods as well: in the world of scholars, ideas have been exchanged across the religious borders to a surprising degree, in spite of the sharp polemic that was at the same time voiced by religious authorities.

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<sup>457</sup> For this use of the vernacular language as an “interlanguage” between original and translation, only the other way round, see Aslanov, “From Latin into Hebrew through the Romance Vernaculars: The Creation of an Interlanguage Written in Hebrew Characters,” in *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies*, vol. 2: *Texts in Contexts* (ed. by Gad Freudenthal and Resianne Fontaine; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 69–84.

<sup>458</sup> Latin text in Simone van Riet (ed.), *Avicenna Latinus: Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus* (Louvain: E. Peeters, 1972), 3–4; my own translation.

<sup>459</sup> Cf. the title of the fourth part (pp. 21–26) of his article “Abraham Ibn Daud und Dominicus Gundissalinus,” “Das Project der Avicenna-Übersetzung als Dialog der Religionen.”

<sup>460</sup> See Yossef Schwartz, “The Medieval Hebrew Translations of Dominicus Gundisallinus,” in *Latin-into-Hebrew: Texts and Studies*, vol. 2: *Texts in Contexts* (eds. Gad Freudenthal and Resianne Fontaine; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19–45. Schwartz has also edited the Hebrew version of the *Tractatus de anima* (*Sefer ha-nefes*) in the same volume, pp. 225–79.



Otherwise, how should one explain the high degree of “cultural commonality,” even “methodological commonality,” that for many periods characterized the community of scholars, from Bhagdad to Spain, France, Germany, and England, be they Muslim, Jewish or Christian.

Before we leave Abraham ibn Daud, one interesting aspect of his relations to the Christian king and the Christian bishop of Toledo should be noted. In the mid-twelfth century, especially in Spain, an intense conflict had raged between the “Rabbanite” Jews and the “Qaraite” Jews. In a groundbreaking study, Marina Rustow has presented epistolary evidence from the Cairo Geniza which paints a new and more detailed picture of this conflict during the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.<sup>461</sup> Briefly put, her thesis is that relations between Rabbanite Jews and Qaraite Jews in Egypt and (Greater) Syria (including Babylonia) were rather peaceful during the centuries in question. The opposite was the case in Spain. Here, Rabbanite Jewish courtiers succeeded in having the Christian kings taking an active part in an internal Jewish conflict, resulting in a near complete “purging” of the Jewish community from its Qaraite members in Spain. This purging on occasion could include executions. Abraham ibn Daud was among those who applauded king Alfonso VII for his active role in this process: “[The Nasi Rabbi Judah] requested the King to forbid the heretics [Qaraites] to open their mouths throughout the land of Castile, and the King commanded that this be done. Accordingly, the heretics were suppressed and have not been able to raise their heads any longer. Indeed, they are dwindling steadily.”<sup>462</sup>

Translations in Toledo did not end with Ibn Daud and Dominicus Gundissalinus. They had several followers, but for our present concern they are of less significance than those treated so far. I therefore only mention them summarily below, mainly to give a picture of the breadth and the international significance of the Toledan “school” of translators. I put school in quotation marks because unlike other European centers of learning in this period, Toledo never got its own university. But there is no doubt that the translators of Toledo provided the early universities of Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge with priceless Latin translations of the rich Arabic literature of translated Greek texts from Antiquity and their excellent

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<sup>461</sup> Marina Rustow, *Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate* (Series “Conjunctions of Religion and Power in the Medieval Past;” Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>462</sup> Cohen, *Book of Covenant*, 99). See more in Rustow, *Heresy*, 349–55, and cp. my remarks above, pp. 87–88.

Arabic commentators. Without this input from Toledo the Western intellectual tradition would have looked quite different.

*Master John of Spain* (magister *Iohannes Hispanus*) was another co-worker of Gundissalinus, not identical with Avendeth, possibly not identical with the John of Seville mentioned above either.<sup>463</sup>

The Englishman *Alfred of Shareshill* may have been among those of Gerard's associates who wrote his *Vita*, in any case he continued Gerard's translation program after Gerard's death by translating that part of al-Farabi's curriculum which Gerard had left unfinished.<sup>464</sup>

Finally, the Italian canon of Padua, *Salio*, translated a text on geomancy from Hebrew into Latin while in Toledo. Whether his competence in Hebrew was due the fact that he was a Jewish convert, is not known.

The history of the school of translators in Toledo continued in the first decades of the thirteenth century. In 1209 a dynamic man was appointed as new Archbishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada.<sup>465</sup> Not only was he a powerful and able Church leader, but he was also the real architect behind the second round of the reconquest, casting it more clearly than ever before in the role of a real crusade. He was instrumental in uniting the competing Christian kings during the reconquest in the thirteenth century, which also gave him great stature as a political player. His time in office lasted until 1247. Under him, Toledo had its last golden period as the leading center of intellectual exchange between the Arabic and Latin cultures in Spain – and, via Spain, with the rest of Latin Europe. Not only was he the ecclesiastical patron of a new generation of translators in Toledo; he was also a theological ideologue and an effective author in his own right, setting forth an all-encompassing theological program that included the translations project. In a very instructive study of his theoretical as well as practical efforts, Lucy K. Pick has studied the theological and political achievement of Rodrigo. She demonstrates that his polemical writings against Islam and Judaism, in which he argues that they both are inferior compared with Christianity, in a

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<sup>463</sup> Lynn Thorndike, "John of Seville," seriously doubted the then usual identification of John of Seville with John of Spain, see now the thorough discussion of the issue in Burnett, "John of Seville and John of Spain," esp. 63–73 (cf. note 435 above). Burnett concludes with leaving the question open whether some of the works attributed to John of Spain and being written in Toledo in the 1150ies and -60ies could stem from the later career of John of Seville, active in the 1120ies and -30ies, after he hypothetically had moved from Seville to Toledo.

<sup>464</sup> See Burnett, "Coherence," 261–62.

<sup>465</sup> See Pick, Lucy K. *Conflict and Coexistence: Archbishop Rodrigo and the Muslims and the Jews of Medieval Spain*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 2004.

paradoxical way allows him to grant both religions a restricted but legitimate place within the greater unit and unity of Christian Spain, led by the Archbishop of Toledo.<sup>466</sup> After Archbishop John of Toledo (1152–1166) in the twelfth century, Archbishop Rodrigo in the thirteenth was the most significant Toledan patron of the “school” of translators working there. I list here this last generation of these translators, many of them also active in other locations.

*Michael Scot* (1175–ca. 1232) was, as his name indicates, a Scotsman who was recorded as a canon of Toledo in 1215, when he accompanied Archbishop Rodrigo to the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome, but he may have come to Toledo as early as around 1200. He took part in the translation program there until 1220, when he went to Italy. He was the proverbial wandering scholar and polymath (he probably began his studies in Oxford before he came to Toledo, afterwards he went to Bologna, Paris and Palermo, Sicily). He was competent in Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic (the latter acquired when he came to Toledo), mathematics and several sciences – especially astrology. This latter interest soon made him into a legendary figure who was believed to be an accomplished “wizard.”<sup>467</sup>

As a translator in Toledo, he appears to have quite consciously put himself in the role of successor to Gerard, Gundissalinus and John of Spain.<sup>468</sup> He continued their work where they had left off.<sup>469</sup> In at least part of this work, he availed himself of the assistance of a Jew called *Abuteus Levita* – another example of a Christian/Jewish team of translators.<sup>470</sup> During his later career in Bologna, Paris, and Sicily, Michael from Scotland became a significant figure in disseminating the Arabic scholarship of Toledo to the Latin centers of learning in Italy, France and Sicily (although in Sicily there had been at that time able translators doing their own part in transmitting Arabic learning into Latin).<sup>471</sup>

*Mark of Toledo* (fl. 1193–1216), born and raised in the city, fluent in Arabic, Castilian and Latin, was also a canon of the cathedral, most well-known for his Latin translation of the

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<sup>466</sup> Pick, *Archbishop Rodrigo*, passim.

<sup>467</sup> For the little that may be learned about his life from his writings and sources close to his time, see Lynn Thorndike, *Michael Scot* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 11–39.

<sup>468</sup> See Burnett, “Michael Scot and the transmission of scientific culture from Toledo to Bologna via the court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen,” *Micrologus* 2 (1994): 101–26, repr. as Essay VIII in Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2009).

<sup>469</sup> See the detailed study of this in Burnett, “Michael Scot,” 104–111.

<sup>470</sup> He may or may not have been identical with one “Andreas, a Jew” mentioned by Roger Bacon as being the real translator behind translations for which Michael Scot claimed credit, Thorndike, *Michael Scot*, 30.

<sup>471</sup> See, e.g., Charles Burnett, “Master Theodore, Fredrick II’s philosopher,” originally in *Federico II e le nuove culture, Atti del XXXI Convegno storico internazionale, Todi, 9–12 ottobre 1994* (Spoleto, 1995), 225–85; reprinted as Essay IX in Burnett, *Arabic into Latin in the Middle Ages: The Translators and their Intellectual and Social Context* (VCS 939; Farnham: Ashgate Variorum, 2009).

Qur'an (ca. 1210), but also translations of Galen and other scientific texts.<sup>472</sup> While he was studying medicine somewhere in France or Italy, his professors and fellow students, knowing that he knew Arabic, asked him urgently to provide Latin translations of the Arabic translations they knew existed, and which were deemed far superior to their Latin textbooks. Mark therefore returned to Toledo "in haste" and found that the Arabic translations of medical classics like Johannicius' (Hunain ibn Ishaq's) *Introduction* and several works of Galen were indeed widely superior to the Latin textbooks he had used during his studies in France/Italy.<sup>473</sup> Accordingly, he translated them and made them available to his study comrades in the Latin west.<sup>474</sup>

Once again, we get a glimpse of the avid craving among the European Latin scholars to profit from the superior scientific learning of the Muslims in Spain. And once again, we observe the significance of Toledo, this multicultural center of exchange of learning, intricately connected with al-Andalus on the one hand, and the Latin West on the other. Some of the Jewish partners in this translation program may have been converts to Christianity, but this cannot be said with certainty about any of them.

Before we leave Toledo, however, we must study one of the Toledan intellectuals who made his mark not as a translator, but as a theological author in his own right. In our context he is of special interest by being, highly likely, a Jewish believer in Jesus, a *converso* Jew in the terms of his own time. He made his mark as the author of a polemical defense of Christian faith against Muslim attacks, written in Arabic. There are indications of influence from Latin theology in his little book, so in a sense, he too can be said to be a mediator between Latin and Arabic, only in the opposite direction than those we have met so far.

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<sup>472</sup> On him, see Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Marc de Tolède," *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo: Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20–26 Mayo 1985)* (Serie Historica 5; Toledo: Instituto de Estudios Visigótico-Mozárabes de Toledo, 1989), 25–59. On Mark's competence and learning as a translator of the Qur'an, see the magisterial study of Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qu'rān in Latin Christendom, 1140–1560* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), especially 17–18, 21–29, 40–43, 122–133. Burman demonstrates here that Mark's Latin Qur'an is not very much stamped by his very polemical attitude towards Islam, but rather marked by a philological ambition to render the Arabic text according to the best Muslim interpretations, of which he sometimes was quite knowledgeable. Quite a tribute to Mark as a translator from Arabic into Latin!

<sup>473</sup> He tells this in a Preface affixed to his translation of three Galenic works, see d'Alverny, "Marc de Tolède," 25 (French translation) and 39 (Latin text).

<sup>474</sup> As Burman points out, translating works like these was Mark's main concern, he only put it temporarily on hold while working on his translation of the Qur'an, which was commissioned by his patron, archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, see Burman, *Reading the Qu'rān*, 14 and 17–18.

## B. A Jewish Convert defends Trinity, Incarnation, and Fulfilment of Prophecy

There are good reasons to assume that this author, whose name is unknown – I will therefore call him the Anonymous – wrote the work we are going to study, during the latter half of the twelfth century. There are also good reasons to think that this Anonymous belonged to the same Toledan circle of scholars that we have studied above.<sup>475</sup>

We know of his writing because a Muslim polemicist being called “The Imam of Cordoba,” *al-Imam al-Qurtubi*, wrote a refutation of it at the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>476</sup> The title of this latter work is long and “rather weighty” (Burman): *Information about the Corruptions and Delusions of the Christians, and Presentation of the Merits of the Religion of Islam, and Affirmation of the Prophethood of Our Prophet Muhammad*.<sup>477</sup> For the sake of brevity, I shall refer to it as *Information* in the following.<sup>478</sup> Quite recently, the identity of its author seems to have been convincingly established – he was Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Ibrahim ibn Umar al-Ansari al Qurtubi, a jurist and *hadith* expert, born in Cordoba 1182, dead in Alexandria in 1258. He left Cordoba in 1221, never to return to al-Andalus; his book must therefore have been written before this date.<sup>479</sup>

In this writing, al-Qurtubi proceeds by quoting, passage by passage, the text of the Anonymous and refuting each passage in turn. It seems that the larger part of the Anonymous’ work has been preserved in this way. The title given to it by its author, according to al-Qurtubi, was *Tathlith al-wahdaniyah*, rendered by Burman as *Trinitizing the Unity [of God]*.<sup>480</sup> The date of this writing must, of course, be somewhat earlier than that of al-

<sup>475</sup> For the following, see especially Paul Devillard, “Thèse sur al-Qurtubi,” (Thesis Aix-en-Provence 1969); P. van Koningsveld, “La apologia de al-Kindī en la España del siglo XII. Huellas toledanas de un ‘animal disputax’,” in *Estudios sobre Alfonso VI y la reconquista de Toledo: Actas del II Congreso Internacional de Estudios Mozárabes (Toledo, 20–26 Mayo 1985)* (Toledo: 1989), 107–29; Thomas E. Burman, *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050–1200* (Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 52; Leiden: Brill, 1994), esp. 70–80; Charles L. Tieszen, *Christian Identity amid Islam in Medieval Spain* (Studies on the Children of Abraham 3; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 202–211; Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi (d. 684/1285)* (History of Christian-Muslim Relations 23; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 82–86.

<sup>476</sup> For a French translation of the two first parts of al-Qurtubi’s work, discussing Trinity and the Incarnation, see Devillard, “Thèse,” second volume. For an English translation of the first part of the Anonymous’ work, discussing Trinity, see Burman’s translation in Olivia Remie Constable, *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (2. ed.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 194–98.

<sup>477</sup> Burman’s translation, *Religious Polemic*, 71.

<sup>478</sup> The book has an Introduction and Four Parts, each divided in Chapters. I refer to “Introduction” or, e.g., “I.4” meaning Part one, Chapter four. For the Introduction and the first two Parts, I add the page in Devillard’s translation (Devillard vol. 2).

<sup>479</sup> For this, see Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 83–84.

<sup>480</sup> For studies on the Anonymous and his work, see Paul Devillard, “L’écrit de Tolède: ‘La Trinité de l’Unicité’ a travers la refutation qu’en fait al-Qurtubi,” *Études Arabes* 24 (1970): 24–36 (Arabic text, brief introduction, and French translation of the first two parts of the *Trinitizing the Unity*); van Koningsveld, “La apologia de al-Kindī,” 123–29 (suggesting the Anonymous might be Peter of Toledo = Petrus Alfonsi); Burman, *Religious*

Qurtubi's – let say before ca. 1200, but in order to narrow down the period in which it was written, one should take note of the scraps of information that al-Qurtubi provides about it. He says that it was sent by its author from Toledo (“may God return it [Toledo] to us!”) to Cordoba (“may God protect it!”), thus placing the Anonymous and his book in Christian Toledo, Cordoba still being held by Muslims.<sup>481</sup> Of even greater interest is a remark towards the end of al-Qurtubi's refutation of the Anonymous' Introduction.<sup>482</sup> Here he says that the Anonymous only copied a letter attributed to one “Abd al-Rahman ibn Gh.sn Yerno de Shabib”, but in reality written by some bishops who had convened for this purpose in Toledo.<sup>483</sup> This probably means that the bishops were Latins who used a local Toledan Mozarab Christian as their Arabic penman. Their letter only comprised some 30 lines. They addressed it and sent it to “the Imam and *qadi* Abi Marwan ibn Maysara.”<sup>484</sup> Al-Qurtubi further asserts that the *qadi* answered this letter with a work of his own, in which he refuted the Letter of the Toledan bishops. It seems that another Muslim author refers to this work when he says that Ibn Maysara wrote *The Balance of Truth Which Separates the People of Wrong from the People of Right* in answer to a letter sent him by some bishops.<sup>485</sup>

This, then, was the first round of polemics exchanged between Toledo and Cordoba. The second began with the Anonymous' *Trinitizing the Unity* being sent from Toledo to Cordoba. One could imagine that this writing was a direct answer to ibn Maysara's *Balance of Truth*. Throughout his writing the Anonymous quotes objections against his own exposition, objections that seem genuinely Muslim. Was he referring to objections stated by the *qadi*?<sup>486</sup> Or was it only a rhetorical device to enliven the discourse? In any case, the Anonymous, in his turn, was answered from Cordoba around 1200 by al-Qurtubi. This, I believe, makes the Anonymous a contemporary of Gerard, Gundissalinus and Ibn Daud. All that has been said

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*Polemic*, 70–80; idem, “Christian Kalam in Twelfth-Century Mozarabic Apologetic in Spain,” in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Robert I. Burns S.J. Volume 1: Proceedings from Kalamazoo* (The Medieval Mediterranean Peoples, Economics and Cultures, 400–1453, Vol. 4; ed. Larry J. Simon; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 38–49; idem, “‘The Tathlith al-wahdāniyah’ and the Twelfth-Century Andalusian-Christian Approach to Islam,” in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam* (ed. J. V. Tolan; New York: Routledge, 1996; paperback ed. 2000), 109–128; Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 84–86. For an English translation of the first part of *Trinitizing the Unity*, see Burman's translation in Olivia Remie Constable, *Medieval Iberia: Readings from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Sources* (2. ed.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 194–98.

<sup>481</sup> *Information*, Introduction, 3.

<sup>482</sup> Introduction, 15.

<sup>483</sup> Van Koningsveld deems his name to have been corrupted in the text, suggesting Abd al-Rahman ibn Yahya ibn Harith as the correct name, a Mozarab Christian mentioned in documents in Toledo for the first time in 1166. See van Koningsveld, “La apologia de Al-Kindī,” 124, n. 36.

<sup>484</sup> He has recently been identified as Abu Marwan ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Maysara al-Yashubi al-Shantamari (d. 1157) who lived in Cordoba. See Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 85, n.79.

<sup>485</sup> The Muslim author is Ibn Khayr al-Ishbili (d. 1179), Cucarella, loc. cit.

<sup>486</sup> If so, this does not necessarily imply that the Anonymous wrote his book during the *qadi*'s lifetime. From a tactical point of view, the Anonymous could well wait until the *qadi* was in no position to answer a second time.

about the religious, philosophical, and cultural milieu in Toledo in those days is therefore also relevant to situate the Anonymous. But what we have seen concerning Cordoba being a kind of Muslim counterpoint in this period, adds an important aspect relevant for the Toledan scholars in general.

Cordoba had been taken over by the Almohads in 1147, and, accordingly, the Cordoban *qadi* Ibn Maysara had to represent their kind of Islam – a rather militant one, militant not only on the battlefield, but also in the world of thought. The Almohads got their (latinized) name from the all-dominating concern of their founding ideologue Ibn Tumart: first and foremost, Muslims are “*those who confess the Unity,*” *al-Muwahhidun*.<sup>487</sup> The unity of God, his *tawhid* or *wahdaniyah*, takes center stage, and any understanding of God’s attributes that makes them into more than different ways of characterizing his one, indivisible being, is branded as tritheism and therefore anathema. I believe Burman is right that the very title of the Anonymous’ little book is consciously anti-Almohad: *Trinitizing the Unity*, that is, showing that the Unity that God is, on closer inspection turns out to need a triad of attributes to be able to be a Creator – and Muslims did not deny that he was.<sup>488</sup>

It would surely have been impossible for the Anonymous to live in Cordoba and publish his book there. In good Almohad spirit al-Qurtubi has the following to say: Writing the book has become a personal obligation for him, because “wounding the enemy by means of proof and words is more effective than wounding them with sword and spearhead, and the King of the Two Worlds expects that we combine the two ways and obtain the recompense for both actions.”<sup>489</sup> The Anonymous, for his part, may not have had any illusions that his book would convince Muslims; he could rather have written it to boost morale among the Mozarab Christians living under an oppressive Almohad rule.<sup>490</sup>

One more characteristic of the Anonymous must be mentioned before we turn to a brief summary of his tract. He was, almost certainly, of Jewish background, hence a Jewish convert to Christianity. The main argument for this assumption is what he says himself about his competence in discussing biblical texts:

Notice that I have written down for you in the Hebrew language and the Aramaic language some of the scriptural evidences of the prophets sent by God from the books in

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<sup>487</sup> See Madeleine Fletcher, “The Almohad Tawhid: Theology Which Relies on Logic,” *Numen* 38.1 (1991): 110–127.

<sup>488</sup> Tieszen follows Burman by pointing out that the terminology of the Anonymus is strikingly similar to that of the chief Almohad ideologue, Ibn Tumart, see Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 205 and 207, and further below.

<sup>489</sup> Introduction, 8. Translation according to Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics*, 84.

<sup>490</sup> As argued by Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 205–6.

their [the Jews'] hands, and that the Jews are not able [therefore] to deny a word of them when I advance [these scriptural evidences] in argument with them in Hebrew and Aramaic.<sup>491</sup>

Not only do these linguistic competences indicate a Jewish background. When he says that here, discussing with a Muslim, he follows his usual practice in debating with Jews, he sounds very much like Petrus Alfonsi in his *Dialogue*. He uses the Hebrew and the targumic versions of the biblical texts to beat the Jews – like Alfonsi said – with their own weapons. Indeed, there are so many similarities with Alfonsi's *Dialogue* that van Koningsveld considered identifying the Anonymous and Alfonsi.<sup>492</sup> Like Burman, I consider that unlikely from a chronological point of view, and for all the similarities, there are also significant differences between the two. I am therefore more inclined to think that the Anonymous knew and utilized Alfonsi's *Dialogue* but giving what he took from it his own peculiar twist. (As for other, probably Latin, influences on him, this will be explored as we go along).<sup>493</sup>

In the quoted passage he comes across as one experienced in debating with Jews about biblical prophecies, competent in the Hebrew and targumic texts, “almost conclusive proof that he was a *converso* Jew, since knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic by non-Jews in Christian or Islamic Spain was virtually non-existent.”<sup>494</sup>

I would like to add one more characteristic of the Anonymous. Al-Qurtubi repeatedly complains about his poor Arabic.<sup>495</sup> This could indicate that the Anonymous was better at reading Arabic than at writing it. If we consider him a Jewish convert living and working in the latter half of the twelfth century in Christian Toledo, we see him in a Christian milieu that was by then Latinized to a high degree, and in which active use of Arabic as the preferred medium of writing was steadily decreasing, among Mozarab Christians as well as among Jews. Among the Jews, the second half of this century saw the first flowering of Hebrew translations of Arabic classics, Jewish and Muslim.<sup>496</sup> I believe the complete picture we get of

<sup>491</sup> Al-Qurtubi, *Information*, IV; translation according to Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 74.

<sup>492</sup> Van Koningsveld, “La apologia de al-Kindī,” 123–29.

<sup>493</sup> Since I also disagree with van Koningsveld in identifying Peter of Toledo with Petrus Alfonsi, I think one could leave the possibility open that the Anonymous was in fact Peter of Toledo, whom we have seen reason to consider a Jewish convert. But this, of course, is only guesswork.

<sup>494</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 76. Tieszen seconds Burman strongly on this point, *Christian Identity*, 203.

<sup>495</sup> In so doing, he points to Hafs ibn Albar as a striking contrast, praising this Mozarab Christian author (of Jewish descent) for his excellent Arabic. See above, pp. 69–70.

<sup>496</sup> Esperanza Alfonso speaks about a movement of translations from Arabic into Hebrew from the mid-eleventh century well into the early fourteenth. “This involved the translation of more than one thousand titles from Arabic into Hebrew, in answer to an increasing demand by a [Jewish] public who either had not been Arabized, or was becoming progressively unfamiliar with Arabic.” Esperanza Alfonso, *Islamic Culture Through Jewish Eyes: Al-Andalus from the tenth to twelfth century* (Routledge Studies in Middle Eastern Literatures 20; London:



the linguistic competences of the Anonymous rhymes well with the hypothesis that he was a Jewish convert well integrated in Christian Toledo during the latter half of the twelfth century.

With this, we turn to a survey and some brief analyses of the short writing that has come down to us by way of al-Qurtubi's quotations.

### *Trinitizing the Unity*

In a short proem, styled as a doxology of God, the author states that he and his fellow Christians give thanks, praise, and glorify God's essence, but do not claim to comprehend it or any part of it. "Rather we know only the names of His acts in His creation and in His sustaining [of His creation] through His lordship."<sup>497</sup> As Burman has shown, this idea that God is unknowable in his essence *per se* and can only be known from his acts as a Creator, corresponds closely with the theology of the Almohad ideologue ibn Tumart.<sup>498</sup>

In the exposition following the proem, the Anonymous first makes the following points concerning the Trinity:

(1) His Muslim opponent recognizes that God, to be a Creator, must have the Power, the Knowledge, and the Will necessary to create. If these are different names for the same divine essence, it results in an anthropomorphic conception of God. Such an idea is absurd, therefore false. Accordingly, these attributes are names for God's acts when He creates. That God is "the Omnipotent", "the Knowing", and "the Willing" – this is the Trinity.

(2) Jesus the Messiah in Matthew 28:19 equated these names with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Omnipotent is the Father as creator; the Son is the Knowing, since he transmits the divine Word to us, and is called "Son" since "knowledge cannot be comprehended until it is born as speech." The Willing is the Holy Spirit since God's Spirit is the agent of the end of the temporal world and the appropriate reward for the actions of human beings.

(3) If the Muslim opponent objects that there are more divine names than these three, the answer is that other names for God come in two types: (1) Most of them are names for God's acts, but these different names can be shown to derive from the three non-reducible names; they are thus included in them. (2) Names like "Eternal" and "Living" are not names of God's acts, but of his eternal essence.

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Routledge, 2008), 22; see the instructive chapter on this, "Across the border: translation and translation-related literature", *ibid.*, 22–26.

<sup>497</sup> Translation according to Burman in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 191.

<sup>498</sup> See Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 163–64, and Fletcher, "The Almohad Tawhid."

(4) If someone objects that nothing can be one and three at the same time, then the answer is that God is one with regard to his essence, and three with regard to the divine persons (agents). There is thus no contradiction here, because the principle of contradiction requires that contradictory statements be made *with regard to the same aspect* of the thing in question.<sup>499</sup>

Let us compare this with Alfonsi's treatment of the Trinity in his *Dialogue, titulus six* (cp. above, pp. 135–42). Alfonsi says that the Trinity consists of the divine substance, i.e., the Father, and his two attributes, wisdom (knowledge), i.e., the Son, and will, i.e., the Holy Spirit. The proof of this is to imagine God as creator: in order to create, he must *know* what to create, and have the *will* to do it. This is a Trinitarian model attested very early in Christian literature and anticipated in Philo: God and his two highest attributes constitute a triune God. From Origen on, this model was gradually supplanted by the model found in the Anonymous: The Father is no longer equated with the substance of God, but the divine essence *per se* is equated with the one common essence of the *three* attributes. Roughly speaking, one could say, perhaps, that the first model is “biblical” in the sense that relevant verses of Scripture speak of a double mediatorship in creation: God creates the world by his Wisdom/Word and by his Spirit. For Alfonsi, this was probably the preferable idea when addressing a *Jewish* opponent. For the Anonymous, the opponents were *Muslims*, and for them, the plurality of divine names and the unity of the divine essence would be a more familiar framework of discussion.<sup>500</sup> Therefore, he substitutes God's substance in Alfonsi with the attribute of (creative) Power, otherwise he is quite in line with Alfonsi in identifying the Son with Knowledge and the Spirit with Will.

This observation, I think, should be added to Burman's analysis which finds the Anonymous' Trinitarian model to be borrowed from Peter Abelard.<sup>501</sup> Abelard describes the divine persons as *potentia*, *sapientia*, and *benignitas/(bona) voluntas*. Abelard died in 1142, while the Anonymous most probably wrote his work during the latter half of the same century, so there is nothing to prevent our author from being acquainted with Abelard's triad. There are also other elements in the text of the Anonymous which clearly seem inspired by Abelard,<sup>502</sup> for example the author's use of new Arabic equivalents for Latin terms in

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<sup>499</sup> Aristotle's formulation of the principle runs like this: “It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and *in the same respect*” (*Metaph IV 3 1005b:19–20*; Tredennick, LCL 271: 161, slightly altered).

<sup>500</sup> See Wolfson, “The Muslim Attributes,” and Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 168–71.

<sup>501</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 175–81.

<sup>502</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 184–89.

Trinitarian discourse.<sup>503</sup> One could add to this the evaluation of al-Qurtubi that the Anonymous' Arabic was far from perfect. All this goes well together with the assumption that the Anonymous was well at home in Latin and in Latin theology, and that he belonged to that generation of Mozarabic Christians in which Arabic gave way to Latin as their first language.

I therefore consider Burman's thesis of an Abelardian inspiration as quite probable, my own suggestion of an inner-Mozarabic prehistory, especially in Alfonsi, being a supplement rather than an alternative. Be that as it may, I fully subscribe Burman's characteristic of the theology contained in *Trinitizing the Unity* as being "a hybrid" of Mozarabic and Latin elements.<sup>504</sup>

When our author comes to explaining the three names of the Trinity, he once again departs from Alfonsi in an interesting way. While Alfonsi, discussing with a Jewish opponent, explained all the three names of God from his creation of the world, the Anonymous only associates the Omnipotent, the Father, with *creating* the world, while the Son as Knowledge and Word is the (incarnate) divine *teacher* of mankind. This comes very close to describing him as *a prophet* and is perhaps motivated by the Muslim audience with whom the author is debating. Alfonsi as well as the Anonymous have the greatest problems in explaining the Holy Spirit as being referred to by the name Will. This is probably because Will as the third divine attribute is of Muslim/Jewish, not Christian origin.<sup>505</sup>

It remains to explain why the Anonymous ascribes three different divine acts to the three "names." The Omnipotent Father creates the world, the Son or Logos becomes incarnate and preaches God's knowledge or wisdom, the Spirit or will is active in terminating this world and providing appropriate awards for the acts of human beings in the next world. I would like to suggest that the explanation could be that he is simply following the Nicene Creed, Latin version: Christians believe (1) in One God, the omnipotent Father, creator of heaven and earth; (2) in the Lord Jesus Christ... onlybegotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages ... who was incarnate...; (3) and in the Holy Spirit... and we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life in the world to come.

If we take account of the fact that the divine acts of the three divine persons mentioned in the creed on the one hand, and the triad of Power, Knowledge and Will, on the other, had very different and entirely independent histories of origin, then the somewhat forced harmonization of the two triads becomes understandable.

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<sup>503</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 159–62.

<sup>504</sup> Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 163, further developed in 181–89.

<sup>505</sup> Also suggested by Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 168–69.

The next section of *Trinitizing the Unity* is devoted to the incarnation of God's Son. This theme is not unconnected to the previous one, it rather reads as a quite natural follow-up of the Trinitarian section. The (fictive or real) Muslim opponent asks why only God's Knowledge, alias His Son, is subject to becoming incarnate, while the other two, God's Power and His Will, alias the Father and His Spirit, are not. It seems the two latter names are inseparable from the divine substance in a way the Knowledge/Son is not.

In his answer, our author refers back to his definition of the three divine hypostases: The creation of the world "in the beginning" is rightly attributed to God's power (the Father), while the activity of preaching is attributed to God's knowledge, born (eternally) as Word, but his preaching only took place in his incarnate state; he assumed flesh only in order to preach. Therefore, the knowledge of God is associated with the incarnation of the Word in a way the other two hypostases are not. God did not take a body in order to create the world – had he done so, we would have to attribute this body to the Father. He only took a body in order to preach to men, this preaching must be attributed to God's knowledge born as Word and called God's Son. It is therefore the Gospel says: "The Word became flesh and has dwelled among us." Preaching is reserved for God's *Word*, not his power or will.

This is something Christians affirm because of their faith in the gospel of the prophets and God's Envoy. If a Muslim asks how it is possible that He who is from eternity should unite Himself with him who is temporal, the Creator with the creature, the answer is that this is not what Christians believe. They rather believe that a temporal being became God. In a simile: Christians do not say that fire became coal, they say that coal became fire. This happened because of God's will, just like the world was created by his will. If one asks: is this union [between God and man] eternal or temporal, the answer is: eternal and temporal. It is eternal by God's power, manifest in time as an act of God. In God's perspective, all things are eternally present with him, he does not measure things in duration and sequence; in him, everything is existent and present always.

Again, in "your Book" something similar is said: Moses heard God [speaking from the burning bush], and "Allah clearly spoke with Moses."<sup>506</sup> The speech of God in the fire was an intermediary between God and Moses, otherwise an anthropomorphic God would result, which Muslims rightly deny. On the other hand, this intermediary cannot have been a creature, since he said to Moses: "I am God, there is no God beside me, worship me."<sup>507</sup> The fire, from which the voice was heard, was a created thing, but the voice itself was God's own

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<sup>506</sup> *Qur'an*, 4.164, referring to the extensive narrative about the burning bush in 20.9–35.

<sup>507</sup> *Qur'an*, 20.14.

Word, therefore was God himself, concealed in the created fire. Therefore, Moses did right in approaching the burning bush with an attitude of worship. It is the same way with Jesus: When he said, “I am God,” his disciples were right in worshipping him (even though his divinity dwelled in a created body).

This entire argument is clearly dressed in the language of Muslim *Kalam*, as pointed out by Burman.<sup>508</sup> Exactly the same Qur’anic verses were quoted and discussed in internal Muslim debates about whether the Qur’an as God’s word was uncreated and eternal, or created, since Moses heard God’s word from the created substance of fire.

The author rounds off the second section with a detailed refutation of some thinkable Muslim objections against the validity of this analogy, and then proceeds to the third section in which he enters the question of how the Christian faith can be substantiated by a comparison of the Jewish holy writings (the Hebrew Bible), the Christian New Testament, and the Muslim holy book, the Qur’an.<sup>509</sup>

He begins by stating that men of all three faiths, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, proclaim their own religion as the only true one, often for worldly motives and without valid arguments. If a pagan came and wanted to find out which of these were true, he would face the following situation: all three hold that the Jewish prophets are true, Christians say that the New Testament abrogates the Jewish law, and Muslims say that the Qur’an replaces the Christian scriptures.<sup>510</sup> The Jews argue that there are no true scriptures except their own. The pagan could be convinced of the truth of Christianity rather than that of Judaism if one could show that the Messiah announced in the Jewish scriptures had indeed come in the person of Jesus. The truth of Islam could be demonstrated in an analogous way if Muslims could prove that their prophet was predicted by the Hebrew prophets as well as the New Testament.

Accordingly, the author begins by demonstrating that Jesus came in fulfilment of the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew prophets. As examples of these, he quotes passages like Genesis 49:10 and Jeremiah 31:31–34, classics, one might say, in this kind of Jewish–Christian dispute. Genesis 49:10 prophesies an end to Jewish dominion with the coming of

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<sup>508</sup> See especially his article “Christian Kalam in Twelfth-Century Mozarabic Apologetic in Spain,” in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages: Studies in Honor of Robert I. Burns S.J. Volume 1: Proceedings from Kalamazoo* (The Medieval Mediterranean Peoples, Economics and Cultures, 400–1453, 4; ed. L. J. Simon; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 38–49, here at 45–48.

<sup>509</sup> Since no translation of this section is known to me, I rely here on the extensive paraphrase of this section in Burman, *Religious Polemic*, 73–75; cf. also the paraphrase in Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 209–211.

<sup>510</sup> The argumentative technique of letting a pagan be confronted by representatives of the three monotheistic faiths was, by this time, already traditional. See, e.g., Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 209, note 179. One could add to his examples the *Kuzari* of Judah Halevi, in which he makes the Kuzari King ponder which of the three religions he should convert to, Hirschfeld, *Kuzari*, 40. Halevi’s *Kuzari* was published only few decades earlier than *Trinitizing the Unity*.

the Messiah, the Jeremiah prophecy speaks of a new covenant. These prophecies have been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus and the founding of the Church. The author quotes these prophecies in Hebrew or Aramaic, and then translates them into Arabic. He justifies this procedure in the passage quoted above (p. 180), stating that in this way he is wont to beat the Jews with their own version of the biblical texts.

Having refuted Judaism in this way, he challenges the Muslim opponent to do the same: Prove Muhammad a true prophet from the Bible. This is impossible, and Christians have good reasons not to accept Islamic revelation because it contains vile laws, e.g., marriage laws that encourage adultery.<sup>511</sup>

In conclusion, the author points to the biblical narrative about Hagar and Ishmael: they were excluded from God's covenant with Abraham, and so are their offspring, the Muslims. Therefore, Muslims should rather "believe in the religious law (*sharia*) of the Messiah," which, as demonstrated, is the true faith.

## 6. Concluding Comments

What we have seen in this chapter, is that during the greater part of the twelfth century, Toledo emerged as the leading center of a new type of dialogue as well as controversy between the three faiths of Spain. As such, the city was, for a period, the leading European center for this new type of intellectual endeavor, characterized by a new confidence in reason as the highway to truth, also religious truth. In this endeavor, two of the Christian spokesmen for this approach were quite certainly Jewish converts, walking in the footsteps of the convert Peter Alfonsi. Others may also have been Jewish converts, but in their case the evidence is insufficient for saying this with certainty.

In short, the twelfth century saw a new kind of interreligious encounter taking place in Spain. Traditional encounters had been dominated by disputes about Holy Scripture – how to interpret the Hebrew Bible (Jews versus Christians), and what writings were holy (Christians adding the New Testament, Muslims replacing both Testaments by the Qur'an). In the European context, Spain housed the very first pioneers of a new approach – the quest *for a rational common ground* from which the different holy writings and their right interpretation could be evaluated. What strikes the modern or post-modern reader about the theological writings of the twelfth century is their throughgoing rationalism, the constant appeal to

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<sup>511</sup> At this point the Anonymous displays his intimate knowledge of ancient and contemporary Islamic tradition by quoting verbatim from a text in an authoritative collection of Hadit, see Tieszen, *Christian Identity*, 210.

reason. It is seen elsewhere in Europe, but nowhere else with such consequence as in Spain. In Christian Europe, the transmitters and midwives of this type of “trialogue” were no doubt the Spanish Muslims of Al-Andalus. The original impetus for this approach came from the East, especially Baghdad, from the ninth century onwards, as I explained in the beginning of this part (pp. 89–95).

Let me add, anticipating the next part, that in the thirteenth century this theological rationalism was taken to its climax, as were the Christian claims for supremacy and dominion. This resulted in a change of atmosphere as far as the *convivencia* of the three religions is concerned. The quest for common ground was, in large measure, replaced by intensified polemic and new strategies for winning over the two other communities of faith, the Jews and the Muslims, to the Christian fold.

## ***Part Five: Christian Spain: The Thirteenth Century***

### *The Second Period of “Reconquest”*

*Almohad Demise, Christian Supremacy* (see Map nr. 3, p. 462)

As was told above, the first period of the reconquest came to a halt around 1150, due to a new and formidable Muslim enemy, the Almohads. They regained a firm grip on Muslim al-Andalus until 1212, when a combined Christian army dealt the Almohads a severe blow at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. With that, the second phase of the reconquest began, but it took some years before it gained momentum. This had in great part to do with internal conflicts among the Christian victors at Las Navas. But at the same time, internal fragmentation of Almohad rule prepared the way for the completion of the Christian takeover of all Muslim territories in al-Andalus except Granada.

In Aragon, Jaime I acceded to the throne in 1213, five years old, and it was only from 1227 that he himself was able to exercise any kind of unifying royal authority in the kingdom. But from then on and until his death in 1276 he proved to be an able monarch, in battle as well as in ruling his kingdom.

In Castile, another infant king was enthroned, eleven years old, Enrique I (1214–17). Infighting in the royal family and among the highest nobility did not end with his early death, and the first years of his successor’s reign, Fernando III (1217–52), were troubled by a protracted conflict with the neighbor king Alfonso IX of Leon, which at that time was again a separate kingdom apart from Castile. In the thirteenth century it was therefore rather the kingdom Aragon that was in the ascendancy on the Christian side. This does not mean, however, that Castile was passive during this phase of the reconquest.

In 1224 the reign of the last Almohad Caliph came to an end, and Almohad demise gained speed. Some of the Muslim governors offered their assistance to Christian kings in attacking Almohad pretenders to the extinct Almohad caliphate, and a slow but steady process of Christian expansion southward towards Granada began. The last Almohad pretender fled to Marocco in 1229. In the power vacuum that now prevailed in al-Andalus, the Christian kings and counts had good opportunity for expansion of their own domains.

The complicated details in this wargame need not detain us here, suffice it to say that in the late 1220ies and the following two decades the kings of Castile and Leon (unified for



good in 1230 under Fernando III), sometimes also Portugal, “reconquered” the western part of the Iberian Peninsula, while the kings of Aragon did the same with the eastern part.

For the Western part, the following list shows the progress of this reconquest:

Taken by the Portuguese king Sancho II (1223–1248): Moura and Serpa 1232, Aljustrel 1234, Mertola 1238, Tavira and Cacela 1239.

His successor Alfonso III (1248–79) conquered the rest of the southern province Algarve in 1249, and with that, Portugal had attained the shape it still has.

Taken by the Castilian king: Caceres 1227, Merida 1230, Ubeda 1233, *Cordoba 1236*, Murcia 1244, Jaén 1246, *Seville 1248*. (See Map nr. 3, p. 462).

The most important of these conquests, politically as well as symbolically, were those of Cordoba and Seville. Cordoba had been the seat of the Umayyad Caliphs, “the ornament of the world”, the cultural center of Muslim and Jewish Spain. We have seen already how the proud Muslim al-Qurtubi, “The Cordoban”, in the first decades of the thirteenth century asked God to protect Cordoba and return Toledo to the Muslims. None of these wishes were fulfilled, and after the fall of Cordoba some years later, another Muslim bewailed its fate: “Where is Cordoba, the seat of great learning, and how many scholars of high repute remain there?”<sup>512</sup> After a temporary halt in the reconquest of some ten years, Seville, the second most important city in Muslim al-Andalus, fell to the advancing Christian armies in 1248, completing the Castilian reconquest and leaving Granada as the only remaining Muslim territory in Spain. In practice, the Muslim ruler of Granada became a vassal under Christian overlordship.

This end result was not due only to the armies of the Portuguese and Castilian kings, however. There was also a Christian reconquest in the eastern part of the Peninsula which had by now almost entirely come under the authority of the kings of Aragon (since the union of Aragon and Catalonia since 1137). During the reign of Jaime I (1213–76), the king reconquered Valencia 1238, Alcira and Jativa 1244, and Biar 1245. There were some problems here because a treaty from 1179 had detailed which Andalusian territories were to be “liberated” by the Castilian and Aragonese kings, the treaty now being broken from both sides. An internal Christian war between the two kingdoms was avoided only by intensive diplomatic efforts. But it was now Aragon that emerged as the leading Christian power in Spain, not least because superb war tactics as well as diplomacy allowed Jaime I to build a

<sup>512</sup> From a poem of al-Rundi, quoted here from O’Callaghan, *History*, 356.

Christian “Mediterranean Empire,” comprising, in addition to the old core area of Aragon, first and foremost *Catalonia*, an old Christian county south-east of Aragon, with its capital Barcelona by the Mediterranean (united with Aragon 1137). These two parts of the Aragonese kingdom were never united on a deeper level, their only political unity consisted in the person of the king of Aragon, who was also Count of Barcelona. When scholars speak of a “Mediterranean Empire” of the Aragonese Crown, they often, and rightly, also characterize it as “Catalan.”<sup>513</sup>

The first important take-over in the Mediterranean itself was Jaime’s conquest of Majorca in 1230. Majorca had been the base of operations for pirates, and an independent stronghold for Muslim rulers. From a commercial point of view, this conquest was very important. From now on, Barcelona became part of a sea-trade network comprising Genoa in Italy, Marseille in France, Ceuta in Morocco *vis-à-vis* Gibraltar, and other North African seaports, first and foremost Bougie (present Bejaïa in Algeria). The greatest city on Majorca, now called Palma, was until the 19<sup>th</sup> century called by the name of the island, “(city of) Majorca.”

The Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon did not end at Majorca, however. It comprised, in chronological order, Minorca 1232, Ibiza 1235, Sicily 1282, Corsica and Sardinia 1295. At the high point of this trading empire in the latter half of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the next, the Catalan language had become an international *lingua franca* “as a result of the dominant role of Catalan and Majorcan merchants in the western Mediterranean.”<sup>514</sup> This Catalan empire only began to crumble from 1327 onwards.

In our context, the Aragonese colonization of Majorca, organized from Barcelona, set the scene for two important events in the Spanish history of Jewish/Christian encounters, as we shall see: the high-profile Disputation of Barcelona in 1263, and the much lower profile disputation in Majorca 1286.

To sum up: the final result of this second round of reconquest was Christian rule in all of al-Andalus, executed by the three dominating kingdoms of the “reconquest,” Portugal, Castile, and Aragon. Muslim Granada was the only non-Christian enclave left in Spain, not fully

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<sup>513</sup> For this and the following, see O’Callaghan, *Medieval Spain*, 340–43; 382–406; Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, “The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327,” *The English Historical Review, Supplement 8* (London: OUP, 1975), 1–54; reprinted as Essay II in Hillgarth, *Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages: Studies in Political and Intellectual History* (VCS 764; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

<sup>514</sup> Anthony Bonner, *Selected Works of Ramon Llull (1232–1316)* (2 vols.; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985) vol. I: 8. See also Hillgarth, “The Problem,” 54.

independent, but rather a vassalage under the Castilian king. For the rest of the century, the kings of Castile were busy securing their control of the newly conquered territory, sometimes crushing Muslim rebellions and attempted invasions from across the Strait of Gibraltar. The kings of Aragon, on the other hand, had to give up their territories north of the Pyrenees, while at the same time gaining new lands in the Mediterranean, building a “Catalan Mediterranean Empire.”

### *The Role of the Jews*

During this second round of reconquest, the Jews of Spain played much the same role as during the first.<sup>515</sup> They served as soldiers in Christian armies, they participated in settling devastated areas, they took part in rebuilding and resettling abandoned quarters in the conquered cities, joining the Jews who had remained there from the Muslim period. The Castilian kings Ferdinand III (1217–52) and Alfonso X (1252–84) showed themselves more friendly towards the Jews than towards the remaining Muslims. For example, in Cordoba as well as Seville, the local Jews were allowed to remain in their old quarter. Alfonso X “dealt harshly with the Arabs and befriended the Jews.”<sup>516</sup>

In and around Seville, Jewish courtiers received houses, vineyards, olive groves, fields, and mills as recompense for their invaluable assistance during the reconquest. All mosques in Seville were converted into churches except three within the *juderia*. The king allowed the Jews to convert these into synagogues, in flagrant contradiction of canon law. The *juderias* protected the Jews, since they were often fortified, but did not restrict them. Jewish houses were not all located within the *juderias*, while some Christians had houses inside them. All in all, the Jews contributed actively to the economic rehabilitation of both Cordoba and Seville.

In Aragon much the same favorable conditions prevailed for the Jews. Yitzhak Baer has chronicled in great detail the Jewish officials of Jaime I (1213–1276) and his son and successor Pedro III (1276–1285), and also the generally very favorable legislation concerning the Jews that these officials obtained from their kings.<sup>517</sup> The Jews had been of great use to the Christian monarchs during the period of reconquest, and they continued in their many roles even during the latter half of the thirteenth century, when the new conquests needed

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<sup>515</sup> See the detailed and well documented survey in Baer, *History* I: 111–15.

<sup>516</sup> Baer, *History*, 112.

<sup>517</sup> Baer, *History* I: 138–85.

consolidation. “The wide range of functions performed by Jews in the colonization of the new territories and the extent of their authority are truly remarkable.”<sup>518</sup>

This can be said to represent the sunny side of the picture concerning how the Jews fared under the Christian kings of Castille and Aragon during the thirteenth century. But all through the same century, the picture also had darker aspects. Spain, having been the best place for Jews to be until now, also became the first place in which a quite new strategy for dealing with the Jews was tried out. It is to this development and its long-term consequences that we now turn. In the twelfth century, beginning with Alfonsi and continuing with the translators in Toledo, a pioneering transfer took place between Spain and Latin Europe, a transfer of Arabic learning, Arabic science, Arabic philosophy and theology of a clearly rationalistic type. In the thirteenth century, Spain is again at the helmet of new philosophical and theological developments, but Latin Europe is catching up, rapidly, and at the end of the century there are signs that the golden age of Arabic culture in Spain is over (Muslim Granada excepted). In order to understand the thirteenth century in Spain, I therefore find it necessary to insert here a whole chapter on the same century in Latin Europe in general.

### *The Thirteenth Century in Latin Christendom: An Age of Confidence and Anxiety*

#### 1. The Increase of Ecclesiastical and Papal Authority

The early Medieval period can be characterized by one word: feudal. It meant that power belonged to the great local landowners, be they secular or ecclesiastical. Very often, the local secular ruler was also the real ruler of the Church. The rich landowners who had built, and therefore owned, the church buildings, would normally also appoint and fund the clergy of these churches. Cloisters were often rich landowners, and local bishops were mostly left to themselves as far as governing their diocese was concerned.

The papacy was originally the see of the city of Rome, and remained so for a long time, until the papacy also became a secular state with a territory of its own, of varying extent, since the eighth century. Electing a new Pope was a business for the uppermost class of Roman patrician families, and few outside Rome cared very much about it.<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Baer, *History* I: 165.

<sup>519</sup> For this and the following brief sketch of Papal history in the Medieval period, see the excellent reviews in Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), especially 39–140; and Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2003), especially 28–

In the feudal societies the secular kings and lords were many and rather locally limited in the territories they “owned” and could control. The idea of the “Roman Empire” lived on, but mainly as an idea. It was not until the turn from the eighth to the ninth century that Charlemagne tried to reestablish the idea as a political reality. From then on there would be a “Roman Emperor” in Western Europe right until the final end of the “German-Roman Empire” in 1806. But the extent of the realms governed by these “emperors” and the real authority wielded by them varied very much through the centuries.

Beginning from the tenth century, national kings began to subjugate the local lords under their own centralized national rule, with varying degrees of success. The idea of Europe comprising independent “nation-states” had been born, although they were not states in the modern sense, rather “kingdoms” or “princedom”. It is perhaps not by accident that the territories that heeded directly under the Roman Emperor, in Germany and in Italy, were the last to realize the ideal of nation-states (1871 and 1860 respectively). Outside the Emperor’s territories, national kings had better opportunities of developing their own ideas of their territories as national units, like “France”, “England” and “Spain”.

In the other center of power – the Church – the thirteenth century was a period of great changes as well. The first seeds were sown in the tenth century. We see the first beginnings of a spiritual awakening movement that took great offence at the way in which the Church was governed, and at the way clerics conducted their lives – with catastrophic results in lax morals among the laity. One of the worst scandals in the eyes of this reform movement was the custom of buying a position in the Church for money or secular goods – all the way up to the election of the Pope himself. This was called “simony” after Simon in Acts 8:18–24, the man who wanted to pay money to attain the apostolic gifts of Peter. The result of this praxis was a clergy and a Church dominated by very secular interests in power and politics, the higher ranges of the clergy being more interested in wealth and worldly status than in spiritually pastoring their flocks and inculcating the way of life taught by Jesus and exemplified by the Apostles.

In contrast, the reform movement idealized “evangelical poverty.” These people also emphasized New Testament teaching concerning the Church as one body, not as composed of self-governed national or local churches. Later, in the fourteenth century, this reform

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278. There is also much relevant information contained in the entries on the individual Popes, in chronological order, in John Norman Davidson Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

movement was re-awakened under the slogan “the Church needs reform of head and members,” from head to foot, and in that order.

During the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073–1085) these reform ideas were represented by the Pope himself, but with a twist: For Gregory, the precondition of the needed reform was the absolute supremacy of the Head of the Church, the Pope, not only *vis-à-vis* the secular rulers, who had, by definition, no say in ecclesiastical matters, but also regarding the local clergy, the bishops included.

It goes without saying that this was met with intense opposition, not only from secular rulers in the emerging nation-states, and first and foremost by the German-Roman Emperor – the clashes between Gregory VII and the Emperor Henry IV have long since become legendary, e.g., Henry’s “going to Canossa.” But the bishops also opposed the new Pope’s request that all major – and with time also the smaller – ecclesiastical cases should be transmitted to Rome for decision by the Pope.

Pope Gregory died in exile in 1085, apparently having lost the cause for which he had fought so intensely during his entire pontificate. But “although his efforts seemed to end in failure, the ideas for which he struggled were to prevail through his successors and helped to shape western Christendom.”<sup>520</sup>

Among his first successors was Urban II (1088–99) who took the first steps in establishing a kind of centralized ecclesiastical administration and court of law in Rome, the Roman *curia*. During the next century, two dominant Popes continued this development, Alexander III (1159–81) and Innocent III (1198–1216). From now on, the papacy had an effective and powerful bureaucracy at its disposal, to make papal rulings effective in practice.

Under the very able leadership of Innocent III, the medieval papacy reached its zenith.<sup>521</sup> Pope Innocent was a great Church leader and a great theological ideologue. In his sight, Christian orthodoxy as formulated by the Apostolic See in Rome, gave the Universal Catholic Church its unity and its firm foundation. Secular rulers had their part in securing this uniformity and unity by wise use of their means of force. This they did only with the Pope’s consent and preferably at his bidding. The ideals of Gregory VII were now in part translated into political reality.

The most spectacular triumph was won for the Pope when the Crusaders during the “Fourth Crusade” – called by the Pope – in 1204 captured Constantinople and enthroned

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<sup>520</sup> Kelly, *Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, 156.

<sup>521</sup> Ullman, *Short History*, calls his chapter 9 on the papacy of Innocent III “The Zenith of the Medieval Papacy,” for good reasons (pp. 201–226).

Baldwin I Emperor of the East and established a Latin-Roman Patriarchate in Constantinople. The Latin Empire of Constantinople lasted until 1261. At least ideally, the longstanding dream of the Roman Popes of restoring universal church unity under Roman leadership in a united Roman Empire seemed to be realized. But it proved to be a Pyrrhic victory: after this Latin interlude, the schism between the Roman and the Byzantine churches became deeper than ever.

The second signal event symbolizing the apparent unity of the Church and the supreme leadership of the Pope was the Fourth Lateran Council at Rome in 1215.

Attended by some 70 patriarchs and archbishops (from the West and East), nearly four hundred bishops and more than 800 abbots and priors and monastic representatives, this council assumes great significance because it was the first genuinely universal council in the medieval West and was intended to be equal in importance to the great councils of Christian antiquity. That indeed was the point stressed in Innocent's convocation edict. ... [I]n contrast to the [three] twelfth-century Lateran councils the participants were not only bishops, but also abbots and provosts as well as *plenipotentiaries of the secular powers*. They all 'represented' Christendom over which Innocent as vicar of Christ presided, because (...) he had been given the power not only over the priesthood but also over the secular world. The assembly was an impressive testimony of the standing and function of the papacy as the monarchic instrument of governing Christendom (my emphasis).<sup>522</sup>

The council promulgated 70 statements called "constitutions." The first carries the title *De fide catholica, On the Catholic Faith*.<sup>523</sup> The immediate occasion for this statement was the allegedly heretical teaching of the abbot Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1130 – 1202) concerning the Trinity. But the intention of this new "profession of faith" ("We firmly believe and simply confess...") – actually the first since the "Nicene" Creed of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople 381 – had a wider horizon. Abbot Joachim is dealt with in the second constitution, and we see the rare phenomenon of an Ecumenical Council declaring its

<sup>522</sup> Ullmann, *Short History*, 221–22.

<sup>523</sup> For Latin text and English translation, see Norman P. Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils vol I: Nicaea I to Lateran V* (London and Washington DC: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 230–31. See also the analysis of this constitution in Skarsaune, "The Literary Genre of the Augsburg Confession," in Torleiv Austad, Tormod Engelsen and Lars Østnor (eds.), *Kirkens bekjennelse i historisk og aktuelt perspektiv: Festskrift til Kjell Olav Sannes* (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk, 2010), 99–110, especially 104–107.

agreement with one scholastic theologian (Peter Lombard) against another (Joachim): “We, however, believe and confess with Peter Lombard that there exists a certain supreme reality, incomprehensible and ineffable, which truly is the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three persons together and each one of them separately...”

The third constitution reveals the very general address of the first one (*On the Catholic Faith*) already by its title: *De haereticis, On the heretics*. It is one of the longest constitutions, and it refrains from naming separate groups of heretics, because, in general, all who do not share the Catholic faith as defined in the first constitution, are heretics. More constitutions on how to concretely deal with heretics follow; one notes especially the title of number 8: *De inquisitionibus, On inquests*. The modern reader immediately thinks of “The Inquisition,” and with some justification, but what we see in this constitution is an early attempt at formalizing the procedures to be followed by local ecclesiastical superiors when laypeople or clerics are accused of grave misconduct. I will return to this below. The point here is to emphasize that the theme of heretics and how to detect and deal with them is an entirely new theme in Western conciliar history. It is no exaggeration to say that at the Fourth Lateran Council this new theme loomed large – a sign of a new concern in the Church.

There are also signs of new concerns about the Jews. Constitutions 67–70 deal with them. In none of the four constitutions do we find the customary assurance that the Jews are allowed to practice their religion under the protection of secular princes and the Church. All the four constitutions are of a restrictive nature, and one of them, nr. 68, insinuates that the Jews are often guilty of blasphemy against Christ, which makes them equal with heretics – an important point that will occupy us later.

## 2. The Rise of Heresy

Parallel with this apparent upward progress of power within the Church, making the Church seem fully united under one all-powerful head, the Pope, another phenomenon threatened to undermine this development from within the Church itself. This other movement had its roots in much the same reformist circles that stood behind the new centralized and all-powerful papacy, beginning with Gregory VII, and completed under Innocent III.

Many felt that along the way, the spiritual ideals of the reform movement had been lost, and that the new ecclesiastical leadership had made its own power and authority ends in themselves. From the eleventh century and even more so in the twelfth, many devout



Christians again felt that the Church leadership, headed by the all-powerful Pope, gloried in their own execution of spiritual as well as secular power.

A marked increase of literacy among lower clergy as well as laypeople made many compare, on the one hand, the way of life that Jesus had advised for his 12 Apostles and 70 disciples in the Gospels, and on the other, the way of life they saw practiced by the clergy, high and low. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were the first high season of translations of biblical texts into the vernacular languages, enabling laypeople without Latin to read the texts for themselves, e.g., the Gospels, and comparing what they found there with the behavior of contemporary servants of the Church. The pomp and glory of church buildings, clerical dress, worships, – and the monopolizing of the sacraments by the ordained clergy – all this matched badly with the picture of Jesus and the Apostles that was to be found in the Gospels. The wealthy Church seemed utterly out of synch with the poor, wandering disciples of Jesus. What became of the ideal of “evangelical poverty”?<sup>524</sup>

There were also, of course, non-theological factors at play here. International trade between port cities, and between the growing metropolises inland, flourished as never before since Antiquity. People in these centers of commerce met people from abroad and were wont to be masters of their own life, not subserviently obeying the reigning authorities. Not only material goods and money changed hands; also, ideas were exchanged. A well-to-do and resourceful bourgeoisie grew up in the cities. Under such circumstances, movements of dissent and protest have other and better seedbeds than in a rural, feudal society. In other words, the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century was a “great” period for different heresies.<sup>525</sup>

Two geographical areas stand out as especially fertile seedbeds of heresy: the southern crescent of France along the Mediterranean coast, the Languedoc; and Northern Italy. In both, central power was weak, the secular powers were many and in constant conflict. Here, dissenting groups of faith could align themselves with different local lords, and practice their alternative ways of Christian life surprisingly unmolested.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>524</sup> For early heretical communities as “textual communities,” see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), especially chapter II.1: “Literacy and Early Heresy,” pp. 92–151.

<sup>525</sup> For comprehensive and detailed reviews, see Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, Third Edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), somewhat heavy reading, though; and the more easily readable one by Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, *A History of Medieval Heresy and Inquisition* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011).

<sup>526</sup> For these political and sociological factors, see especially Kolpacoff Deane, *History*, 36–48.

The threshold for gaining the verdict of heresy had been lowered proportionately with the heightening of ecclesiastical or papal claims for monopoly in defining orthodoxy. Now any disobedience against ecclesiastical authority became heretical in itself. You could be branded a heretic if you did not submit to your bishop, not to mention ecclesiastical councils or the Pope himself. Paradoxically, this fact lowered the threshold of doctrinal heresy for those who had cast loose from ecclesiastical authority as such. Since their disobedience in itself qualified as heresy, they had little to lose by entertaining heretical points of doctrine as well.

We see this exemplified in the two most extensive and lasting movements of heresy in this period – the Waldensians and the Cathars, the latter also called Albigensians after Albi in southern France. The Waldensians have their name from the rich merchant Peter Waldo of Lyon (ca. 1140–1205).<sup>527</sup> He sold his property and advocated a life in evangelical poverty; an early name of his adherents was “The Poor Ones of Lyon.” One of his supporters was the reform-minded Archbishop Guichard of Lyon!

[O]ne of Waldo’s first actions upon his conversion [to poverty] was to hire two priests to copy and translate into the French vernacular many books of the Bible and extracts from key patristic writings. After studying the sacred texts and learning many of them by heart, Waldo committed himself to the goal of evangelical perfection in the footsteps of the apostles. The translation of scripture into the French vernacular was a vital step toward making portions of the Bible accessible to laypeople, a process that would continue for centuries.<sup>528</sup>

Waldo himself never taught doctrinal heresies. But with time, his teaching of obligatory renunciation of property came to be branded heresy. The Waldensians got their strongholds in Languedoc in France, and in Italy. Despite severe persecution they have managed to survive to the present day, and since the Protestant reformations in the sixteenth century they have joined the Calvinist branch of Protestantism.

The Waldensians strongly opposed the other significant heresy contemporary with themselves, the Cathars. These were full-fledged heretics in the sense that they renewed a dualist theology reminiscent of Manichaeism in Late Antiquity, which was well known to

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<sup>527</sup> On Waldo and his followers, see Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 70–85; and Kolpacoff Deane, *History*, 57–85.

<sup>528</sup> Kolpacoff Deane, *History*, 60.

Medieval theologians through Augustine's polemic against them.<sup>529</sup> The Cathars were possibly influenced by Byzantine heretics called Bogomils, in any case, there is no doubt that they deviated significantly from traditional Christianity on a number of crucial points: the God of the Old Testament was identified with Satan; the Cathars therefore rejected the material universe created by him, and they taught sharp dualism between evil matter and good spirit. They were radical ascetics, abstaining from all food coming from animals born from sex between their parents, they were fasting regularly three days a week and also for longer periods. The Cathars came in two classes: an elite group of "the perfect" which adhered to the very strict asceticism preached and idealized by the sect, and a much larger group of adherents, who found this way of life admirable, but in practice impossible for themselves. Catharism became with time well organized, in part mimicking the offices of the Catholic Church (but no Pope).

Let me make a preliminary summing up: At the beginning of the thirteenth century, we find a completely renovated Papacy, nearly all-powerful in the Church, and claiming supremacy over secular authorities as well. The Pope is surrounded by a steadily growing bureaucracy, the *curia*, which runs the daily business of the Papacy, financially, legally (judging cases small and large), and doctrinally (adjudicating charges of heresy). The Latin Church has been centralized to an extreme degree.

Parallel with this development, open protest against the hegemony of the Catholic Church had sprung forth, branded by the Church as heresy. A common denominator for most of these heretical movements was the ideal of "evangelical poverty," a rekindling of the ideals that one could read directly out of the Gospels, and that were not seen practiced by the contemporary Church and its clergy. Bible-reading laypeople and even some priests could now read Holy Scripture in their mother tongue, and they openly questioned or rejected the interpretation of the scriptures authorized and monopolized by the Catholic Church.

Before the eleventh century none of this was seen – we have a largely Roman Papacy, concerned in large measure with running the bishopric of Rome and governing its secular territory, being little if at all concerned with doctrinal matters, and certainly not eager in hunting down heresies. The same is true of Latin Europe in general.

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<sup>529</sup> For good reviews, see Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 62–69 and 115–157; Kolpacoff Deane, *History*, 25–56.

From the late sixth through the tenth centuries, the doctrinal heresies that had been the subject of literature and legislation from the second to the sixth centuries ceased to trouble the Latin Christian community... From the sixth century on, the chief problems facing Latin Christian clergy were the preservation of internal discipline within the Church and the conversion of northern European pagan peoples who had never been in touch with Roman society and did not face Roman problems. It is the conversion of Western Europe, the acculturation of pagans to Christianity, and the creation of a new European society that greatly preoccupied the time and the minds of most churchmen.<sup>530</sup>

Against this background, the radical novelties of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries stand out in clear contrast.

We have seen how internal Christian heresy represented a dangerous challenge to the full unity and uniformity of the Catholic Church coveted so highly by the new Papacy. It is this I have in mind when I call the thirteenth century an age of self-confidence, but also of anxiety. How did the Church react to the challenge of Christian heresy?

### 3. The Ecclesiastical Response: Inquisitions, the Mendicant Orders

Again, Pope Innocent III is the man who hammers out the ecclesiastical policy, and it has two strategies. (1) As long as there is hope of re-integration of the heretics by means of argument and persuasion, that is the right method. (2) In cases where attempts at voluntary reconciliation fail and the heretic is obstinate in his heresy, means of force are in place, preferably to be used by the secular authorities after the Church has verified the charge of heresy. Capital punishment was standard, and increasingly, burning at the stake became the standard method.

Regarding the first strategy, Innocent III was lucky in so far as two new orders of a new type of monks sprang forth during his papacy. Strictly speaking, they were not formally declared monks at all, but in practice they were regarded monks by the populace, and when the Pope formally recognized them as Orders with their own Order Rules in 1216 (Dominicans) and 1221 (Franciscans), they could and can for all practical purposes be called monks. Unlike monks or nuns in cloisters, however, they wandered around and mixed with

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<sup>530</sup> Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 32.

ordinary people – preaching and teaching and caring for the poor. They themselves followed the ideal of a life in utter poverty, begging for their food. They were therefore called the mendicant (begging) orders, their self-designation was “The Brothers” (*fratres*, friars).

(1) The order commonly named Dominicans after the Spaniard Domingo (Latinized Dominicus), had Domingo as its founder and first ideologue.

In Languedoc in 1206, when a mission of Cistercians ... failed to make progress in a preaching drive [among the Cathars], the Castilian bishop Diego de Osma with his subprior Dominic [Domingo] hit on the idea of *preaching in poverty on terms of equality with their enemies* the Cathars. It proved a winning formula: a preaching campaign was held in 1206–7. ... [P]eaceful preaching ... was, long term, the way forward against Catharism. Dominic had a universal zeal for souls and a will to preach to all; circumstances gave him a special role in the battle against Cathars. Encouraged and aided by [Pope] Innocent [III], he established himself in Cathar country, and fostered a house founded at Prouille for women and girls rescued from the Cathars. In 1215 [the year of Lateran Council IV] he moved to Toulouse; in 1216–17 he obtained recognition for his order of preachers, known to history as Dominican friars...<sup>531</sup>

The official name was and is *Ordo Praedicatorum*, O.P., the Order of Preachers. In a surprisingly short time, the order had grown immensely in number of members. It became a great international brotherhood of wandering friars who were the vanguard in preaching the orthodox Christian faith to heretics. They met the heretics of evangelical poverty on equal terms as far as lifestyle was concerned; this gave them a moral authority that well-to-do clerics had not. The Dominicans *argued* with the heretics instead of condemning them *tout court*. No one could beat the Dominicans when it came to thorough study of the doctrines of those they sought to win back to the Catholic Church. – And they soon turned to preaching for Muslims and Jews as well, having studied their holy books more thoroughly than any Christian theologians before them. This heralded an entirely new age for these missions, as we shall see shortly.

(2) For the Franciscan Order and its founder, Francis of Assisi (1181–1226), the ideal of evangelical poverty was from the beginning the order’s very *raison d’être*. Imitating Jesus and his first disciples in their way of life: renouncing the safety of wealth and property; renouncing all means of force; trusting in the Creator’s care like the flowers and the birds;

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<sup>531</sup> Lambert, *Medieval Heresy*, 103, emphasis added by me.

following Jesus in devoting their lives to serve the needy – this was the summing up of Francis’ program. His demands of renunciation were nearly as radical as those of the Cathars, but unlike them, Francis had a great love of the Creator of all nature and of all the goods he bestows on his creatures. He required from the very beginning that his brotherhood should remain orthodox Catholics and respect the Church’s ordained ministers and their service.

He called the friars who joined him “the little brothers (of Jesus),” *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* (O.F.M.) – still the name of the order. In 1210 Francis and a few of his brothers went to Rome, begging Pope Innocent III for recognition of himself and his brothers in their way of life, made concrete in a simple “rule” which mainly contained relevant Gospel quotes about evangelical poverty.<sup>532</sup> Innocent, in his usual good sense, saw the potential of these men, and granted their request. Later, his successor Honorius III (1216–1227) made this recognition more formally solid by signing a preliminary rule in 1221 and the final one in 1223.

Francis was not an intellectual of the same caliber as Domingo, but he urged his brothers to study, and very soon the order had top-rate scholars in their midst. But a certain unmistakable difference in the profile of spirituality between the two orders was present from the very beginning and has continued to the present day.

The Franciscans took part in the strategy of winning back heretics for the Catholic Church, like the Dominicans; and, perhaps even more than the Dominicans, they had a zeal for mission to those of other faiths, Jews and Muslims. Francis is to this day famous for his encounter with the Sultan al-Kamil, a nephew of Saladin, taking place near the Egyptian walled city of Damietta. Crusaders were besieging the city and made an unsuccessful attempt at taking it in 1219. Francis arrived at this time, having travelled to Egypt with the express intention of having an audience with the Sultan and preaching the Gospel to him. Probably during a ceasefire after a failed attack by the crusaders, Francis and his companion were able to cross the enemy lines, and he did in fact come before the Sultan. He was courteously received, spent some days in the Sultan’s presence and returned in peace to the crusader camp. What happened between Francis and the Sultan is not documented in contemporary sources, but this gap of knowledge was soon filled with much legend.<sup>533</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> The event is immortalized in a group of statues at the foot of the hill leading up to the Lateran Basilica in Rome: Led by Francis, his hands stretched out in petition, the Franciscan brothers beg the Pope for recognition.

<sup>533</sup> For this brief sketch of Francis and his order, I lean on the entries K. S. Frank, “Franziskaner” and J. Lang, “Franziskus v. Assisi,” *LThK* 4:30–36 and 44–47.

With these two new orders, Pope Innocent and his successors got excellent workers in the field for his first strategy against heretics: winning them back through persuasive preaching and teaching. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the two orders also, with time, proved to be able agents with regard to the Pope's second strategy: punishing those who were intractable by argument. Here the Dominicans proved to be more zealous than the Franciscans, but participation of the latter was not lacking. Pope Innocent III and even more so his successors Honorius III and Gregory IX (1227–41) were far from satisfied with the willingness and the ability of local bishops towards making proper investigations (Latin: *inquisitiones*) in cases of heresy-charges. Accordingly, the Popes appointed their own investigators (*inquisitores*), beginning under Gregory IX in 1231. These men had not only power to investigate heresy cases; they had also the power to pass judgement. The execution of the verdict was normally up to the “secular arm,” since the Church had no mandate from Christ to kill anybody. Emperor Frederick II (1212–1250) followed this up by an imperial law mandating death by burning for obstinate heretics. “Thus, the pyre became the universal punishment for lapsed or unrepentant heretics throughout Christendom as heated debates and dialogues about heresy and law continued.”<sup>534</sup>

The completely devastating “crusade” against the Albigensians in Languedoc, southern France, 1209–1229, had ended without the desired result, only spreading death and devastation in its path without in any way eliminating heresy. In 1229 Pope Gregory IX called a council in Toulouse, and the first elements of a new anti-heretical strategy were hammered out. Noticing the fact that one important cause of heresy was lay reading of the Bible, especially the Gospels, the council issued the following canon:

We prohibit that laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or the New Testament; unless anyone from motives of devotion should wish to have the Psalter or the Breviary for divine offices or the hours of the blessed Virgin; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>534</sup> Deane Kolpacoff, *History*, 95.

<sup>535</sup> Quoted here from Kolpacoff, *History*, 96. This conciliar ruling was echoed in a decree by Jaime I of Aragon of 7 February 1235: “We likewise order that nobody shall have books of the Old or New Testament in the common language [*in Romanico*]; and, when anyone is nevertheless found to have any, he shall within eight days deliver them to the local bishop to be burned. Whoever does not, whether layman or cleric, will be considered as suspect of heresy until he has cleared himself [of this suspicion],” quoted and translated here from Thomas Willi, “Die ‘Perusche Aggadot’ des R. Salomo ben Adret,” in *Glaubensdolch und Messiasbeweis: Die Begegnung von Judentum, Christentum und Islam im 13. Jahrhundert in Spanien* (Forschungen zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog 2; ed. Ina Willi-Plein and Thomas Willi; Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 85–100; here at 92, note 13. This is of relevance for the lay dialogues that took place at Majorca 1286 and elsewhere, see below, pp. 353 and 411.

A ruling like this speaks volumes about the greatest fear that had taken hold within the ecclesiastical leadership of the thirteenth century – the fear of losing mind control of the laity. The growing literacy among laypeople was, in and of itself, a constant challenge in this regard. But rulings were not sufficient to curb heresy. Finding and prosecuting groups and individuals guilty of it was also required. In the years 1231– 1233 we see a new ecclesiastical institution being established: special investigators appointed by the Pope, vested with authority to investigate as well as pass sentence in cases of suspect heretics. It is incorrect to speak of *The Inquisition* at this stage; we have to do with appointed inquisitors conducting local and targeted inquisitions. But of these there were many, and in the 1230ies they had come to stay for a long time.

Above, I briefly mentioned the constitutions about the Jews of the Lateran IV council. For reasons that will be explained in the next chapter, the general tendency of the thirteenth century in Latin Europe was to restrict the old rights granted to the Jews as much as possible without explicitly withdrawing their right to remain Jews and practice their way of life. The old Augustinian doctrine (Jews allowed to retain and practice their religion, but in a subservient position) still held, but the rulings of Lateran IV signaled a sinister development: increasingly, the Jews were placed nearer the category of heretics. In the last part of constitution 68 we read: the Jews should not be allowed to utter blasphemies against the Savior, “since we ought not to ignore insults against him who blotted out our wrongdoings.” We shall see shortly that the accusations of Jewish blasphemy regarding Christ, his mother, and his Apostles, were to become a major and fateful theme in the Jewish policy of Church and State in the Latin West.

Around the transition from the thirteenth to the fourteenth century we see an end of tolerance for the Jews in many parts of Europe, resulting in major expulsions of the Jews: In England, all the Jews were expelled in 1290. Between 1290 and 1293, almost the entire Jewish community in the kingdom of Naples (southern Italy) was destroyed; in Germany a 50-year period of severe persecutions began in 1298; in 1306 all Jews in France were expelled. “These developments constituted a coordinated effort to eliminate Jews from the

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kingdoms of Western Europe, particularly those that were undergoing centralization and unification.”<sup>536</sup>

“For most of this period [13<sup>th</sup> cent.], the situation of the Jews in the kingdoms of Christian Spain was far better than that of the Jews in any other Christian region.”<sup>537</sup> While this is true, it is also true that a new policy concerning the Jews, first tried out in France in the 1240ies, was soon thereafter to spill over into Spain as well. To understand what happened, we must take account of a very significant event that took place in 1239, introducing a new factor altogether into the relationship between the Church and the Jews in the Latin West. Let us call it “the discovery of the Talmud.”

#### 4. An Epoch-making Discovery: The Talmud Contains Blasphemy and Heresy!

In the Early Middle Ages, the Christian understanding – at least in the Latin Church – of Jewish faith and practice was that the Jews continued to live as they had been taught in the Old Testament, – as if nothing had happened and nothing had changed with the coming and the ministry of Jesus. Christian *adversus Ioudaeos* literature therefore concentrated only on Old Testament texts when it sought to convince the Jews that Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah. Beginning with Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho* (ca. 160) and ending with Isidore of Seville’s *On the Catholic Faith against the Jews* (ca. 620?), a basic stock of Old Testament prooftexts was developed, augmented, and updated, to keep abreast of Jewish counterarguments that were set forth through the centuries. In this volume, we have seen how this Christian dossier of biblical prooftexts was recycled, but also augmented with new and original inputs by Spanish Jewish converts to Christianity: Julian of Toledo, Paulus Alvarus, and, last but not least, Petrus Alfonsi. Among these authors, there is considerable knowledge of post-Christian Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament texts, but only Alfonsi betrays direct knowledge of the Babylonian Talmud and the rabbinic Midrashim.

He characterizes rabbinical interpretation of Scripture as being irrational because it takes the anthropomorphic God-language of Scripture at face value, instead of recognizing its allegorical meaning. The rabbis, in their own haggadot, go further in anthropomorphic tales of

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<sup>536</sup> Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, “The Status and Economic Structure of Jewish Communities, 1096–1348,” in Ben-Sasson (ed.), *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 462–76, quotation at 465. See also his good review “The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century,” in the same volume, 484–88.

<sup>537</sup> Ben-Sasson, *History*, 486.

God than Scripture does. Alfonsi did not doubt that the rabbis meant their own anthropomorphic haggadot to be taken literally, and he probably found Saadia Gaon's argument to the contrary to be unconvincing (see above, pp. 106–134).

As I mentioned, when commenting upon Alfonsi, this knowledge of the Babylonian Talmud in Spain was not shared by Christian theologians in the rest of Latin Christendom. The Babylonian Talmud had reached Spain in a slow process of transfer westwards along the North African coast; this explains why it reached Spain before the rest of Western Europe. Christian scholars in France, Germany and northern Italy were simply ignorant of the Talmud's existence until the eleventh century, and the *Jewish* scholars in the same areas were not much better acquainted with this unwieldy piece of literature at the turn of the millennium.<sup>538</sup>

Only against this background can one understand the shock and furor that was created by a document submitted to Pope Gregory IX in 1239, put together by the Jewish convert Nicholas Donin, containing 35 “articles” with accusations against the Jews, each documented by excerpts from the Talmud translated into Latin.

What is known about Donin is not much, but the following data are certain or highly probable:<sup>539</sup> Born a Jew in La Rochelle on the West Coast of France, he had come into intense conflict with the Rabbanite leadership of the local Jewish community. He rejected out of hand and with much contempt the Rabbanite version of Judaism and wanted to discard radically the entire talmudic tradition of interpretation. This makes it likely that before his conversion to Christianity, he had made himself noted as an adherent of the Qaraite version of Judaism. In any case he seems to have been formally excommunicated from his local community and carried with him a bitterness against everything rabbinical for the rest of his life. Some scholars have, not implausibly, suggested that his ‘conversion’ to Christianity, and his contacting the Dominicans and Franciscans of Paris and the Pope in Rome, was motivated

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<sup>538</sup> The standard monograph is now Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011). See also, concerning the spread of the Talmud in Western Europe east of Spain, Federico Dal Bo, “Textualizing, De-Textualizing, and Re-Textualizing the Talmud: The Dimension of Text in the *Extractiones de Talmud*,” in Alexander Fidora and Görg K. Hasselhoff (eds.), *The Talmud in Dispute During the High Middle Ages* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Servei de Publicacions, 2019), 101–124; esp. pp. 109–110.

<sup>539</sup> On him, see Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIII<sup>th</sup> Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254, Based on the Papal Letters and the Conciliar Decrees of the Period* (Revised edition; New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 339–40; Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 124–29; and the same, “Trial, Condemnation, and Censorship: The Talmud in Medieval Europe, Historical Essay,” in *The Trial of the Talmud Paris, 1240* (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 53; ed. John Friedman, Jean Connell Hoff and Robert Chazan; Toronto, Ont.: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), 1–92, here at 39–43.

more by hatred of everything rabbinic than of love of Christianity. In any case, he soon got into conflict with the ecclesiastical leadership as well and seems to have ended his life tragically as an abandoned loner. After 1241 we hear no more about him.

What is not in doubt, because attested not only by his Christian admirers but also by his Jewish opponents, is his mastery of the main rabbinic writings, first and foremost the Babylonian Talmud, but also some of the Midrashim. His Jewish opponents were unable to catch him in severe mistranslations or severe misunderstandings of the rabbinic texts that he used in his *Articles* (on this, see more below). His selection of quotes from the Talmud betrays good knowledge of this voluminous collection of rabbinic law and lore. He was good at picking out some of the most “offensive” texts in the entire Talmud – offensive, that is, for a medieval Christian audience.

The most telling testimony of the expertise in rabbinica demonstrated by Donin comes in a later Hebrew report on the Disputation in Paris (1269ff) between another Jewish convert, Paul Christian (about whom, see below) and some of the leading rabbis of France. Here, one of the rabbis compared Paul Christian with Donin in the following way: “Indeed, the little finger of the first heretic [Donin] was broader than the thigh of this one [Friar Paul]. He [Friar Paul] would not even be considered, in comparison with him [Donin], as the skin of a garlic bulb.”<sup>540</sup>

The 35 *Articles* fill 18 full pages in Jean Connell Hoff’s English translation.<sup>541</sup> In this document, Donin exposed, in Latin, the talmudic doctrine of the Oral Torah’s (the Talmud’s) normative interpretation of and additions to the Written Law, and the very defamatory sayings about Jesus and his mother contained in it. Further, talmudic sayings about the Church and Christians were quoted, and sayings about the eternal fate of Christians (versus that of Jews). Donin had also assembled blasphemous and silly stories about God himself that were contained in the Talmud. For the first time Christian readers were able to see these passages in a language they understood.<sup>542</sup> Among the first readers it created shock and horror – first and foremost among the Dominican and Franciscan scholars, and at the papal curia in Rome. This document was destined to become a gamechanger as far as the relation between, on the one

<sup>540</sup> Quoted here from Chazan, “Trial, Condemnation, and Censorship,” 43 (slightly altered); the Hebrew text edited by Joseph Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen Age* (Collection de la Revue des Etudes juives 15; Paris: E. Peeters, 1994), here at p. 45.

<sup>541</sup> Translation in Friedman, Connell Hoff, and Chazan, *The Trial of the Talmud*, 102–121. For a critical edition and a fully updated study of this document, see Piero Capelli, “De articulis litterarum Papae: A Critical Edition” in *The Talmud in Dispute During the High Middle Ages* (ed. Alexander Fidora and Görg K Hasselhoff; Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Servei de Publicacions, 2019), 29–57.

<sup>542</sup> The only qualification to this statement is that readers of Alphonsi’s *Dialogue* and Peter the Venerable’s *Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews* did in fact have access to Latin excerpts from the Talmud, but here the point was not so much their blasphemous nature as their irrationality. See, e.g., above, pp. 116–117.

hand, the highest ecclesiastical and secular Christian leadership, especially in France, and, on the other hand, their Jews.

Let me briefly recall here, once more, the main elements of Augustine's doctrine of the useful role of the Jews in a Christian society. First, they were unwilling witnesses to the pre-Christian age of the prophecies that Jesus and the Church fulfilled; second, by their subjugated state in the dominant Christian society they were unwilling witnesses to God's displeasure with their rejection of Jesus and the New Covenant. Their greatest sin was to reject Jesus and insist on remaining within the Old Covenant. But they should not be extinguished, they should be allowed to practice their Law. Judaism was understood as an unbroken continuation of the religion of the Old Testament.

It was here that the new knowledge about the Talmud revolutionized Christian understanding of Judaism in the period after Jesus. To think of Judaism as obeying the first and oldest part of the Christian bible, only ignoring the last and decisive part of it, the New Testament (Augustine's view of Judaism), was simply wrong. The Jews had their own 'New Testament', the Oral Law, that modified and supplemented the Old Covenant as radically as the Christian New Covenant – only in another direction. While the Christian New Covenant abrogated the ritual commandments of the Old Covenant (in part by spiritualizing them), the Jewish Oral Law did the opposite. It focused especially on the ritual commandments, refining and detailing them endlessly, while on the other hand the ethical commandments were suspended or given provisos that in practice nullified them. It was also not true that the Oral Law simply ignored Jesus and took no notice of him. The Talmud told an alternative story about Jesus which was offensive and blasphemous to an extreme degree. The Talmud even told stories about God himself that were not only silly, but outright blasphemous as well.

In short, the 35 *Articles* contained excerpts from the Jews' Oral Law that provided the Church and the Christian kingdoms with entirely new arguments for a policy *vis-à-vis* the Jews that was the radical opposite of the traditional Augustinian one. The Judaism after Jesus was now discovered to be based on a document, the Talmud, which could only be characterized as heresy. What should be done now? It had come to light that Judaism had fostered a heretic in its midst, a heretic that was not a person but a book. The Church knew how to deal with heretics. If they were convicted, after due process, to be guilty of heresy, they were burnt at the stake. Accordingly, the Talmud should be tried before a competent tribunal, and if found guilty of heresy, be burnt.

It was the lot of Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) to deal with this question, and he was not slow in taking appropriate action. On 9 June 1239 he sent Nicholas Donin with a covering

letter to the bishop of Paris, telling him to forward the other letters that Donin was carrying with him to “our reverend brother archbishops and to our dearest sons, the illustrious kings of France, England, Aragon, Navarre, Castile and Leon, and Portugal.” The content of these letters was in substance the same as in the one sent to the archbishops of France:

If what is said about the Jews of France and of the other lands is true, no punishment would be sufficiently great or sufficiently worthy of their crime. For they, as we have heard, are not content with the Old Law which God gave Moses in writing; they even ignore it completely and affirm that God gave another Law which is called “Talmud,” that is “Teaching,” handed down to Moses orally. Falsely they allege that it was implanted within their minds and, unwritten, was preserved until certain men came, whom they call “Sages” and “Scribes” who, fearing that this Law may be lost from the minds of men through forgetfulness, reduced it to writing, and the volume of this [book] by far exceeds the text of the Bible. In this is contained matter so abusive and so unspeakable that it arouses shame in those who mention it and horror in those who hear it.

Wherefore, since this is said to be the chief cause that holds the Jews obstinate in their perfidy, we thought that Your Fraternity [the archbishop of France] should be warned and urged, and we herewith order you by Apostolic Letters, that on the first Saturday of the Lent to come, in the morning, while the Jews are gathered in the synagogue, you shall, by your order, seize all the books of the Jews who live in your districts, and have these books carefully guarded in the possession of the Dominican and Franciscan friars. For this purpose, you may invoke, if need be, the help of the secular arm; and you may also promulgate the sentence of excommunication against all those subject to your jurisdiction, whether clergy or laity, who refuse to give up Hebrew books which they have in their possession despite your warning given generally in the churches, or individually.<sup>543</sup>

In other words, the first step in an inquisition of suspected heresy should now be taken, viz. by taking the heretic in custody and examine him if he really taught the heresy he had been accused of. The next step would be the examination of the heretic, the Talmud, – did it really contain the alleged heretical texts? The Talmud not being able to defend itself, the defense had to fall on the rabbis who were the experts on this book. By the Christian side, the rabbis’

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<sup>543</sup> Latin text and English translation (used here) in Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews*, 140–41.

role was meant to consist in affirming or denying that the offensive passages quoted in the 35 *Articles* were in fact to be found in this book. On the other hand, this left the Jews with the option of avoiding simple “yes” or “no” answers by explaining that the talmudic passages were indeed correctly quoted, but erroneously interpreted or applied by the accusers.

In this way, the format of an inquisitorial trial was the formal framework of the Paris trial of the Talmud in 1240. But on several occasions, the Jewish defendants were able to break through the implicit limitations of this format and turn the verbal exchanges into a real disputation.

#### A. The Trial of the Talmud in Paris, 1240

Since this volume is devoted to the Spanish scene, I will not submit the Paris Trial of the Talmud to an extensive report and analysis.<sup>544</sup> I will concentrate on those aspects which throw light on the later events taking place in Spain and elsewhere (Barcelona 1263; Paris 1269ff), when the Dominicans spearheaded a new missionary approach based on texts from the Talmud *supporting* the Christian case – apparently in complete contradiction of the strategy *vis-à-vis* the Talmud that was followed in the Paris Trial. I will argue that the contradiction is more apparent than real.

Three documents concerning the trial have come down to us. (1) The first is Donin’s 35 articles, being considered the accusations against the Talmud.<sup>545</sup> (2) A Latin (hence Christian) report on how the Jewish side responded.<sup>546</sup> (3) A Hebrew (hence Jewish) report on the whole event, quoting verbal exchanges between Donin and rabbi Yehiel of Paris.<sup>547</sup> There

<sup>544</sup> Let me again refer the reader to the excellent collection of sources in translation and a masterly analysis by Robert Chazan in John Friedman, Jean Connell Hoff, and Robert Chazan, *The Trial of the Talmud: Paris, 1240* (Mediaeval Sources in Translation 53; Toronto, Ont.: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012).

<sup>545</sup> See the presentation of this document, critical edition as well as English translation, above, note 541.

<sup>546</sup> This text, entitled “Latin Confessions,” is rendered in English in *The Trial of the Talmud*, 122–125. The classic edition of the Latin text is Isidore Loeb, “La controverse de 1240 sur le Talmud.” *Revue des études juives* 3 (1882): 55–57.

<sup>547</sup> Three versions of the Hebrew report have come down to us: (1) the briefest, and the most like the Latin “Confessions” in literary format, is an unedited fragment of 10 lines found in the Vatican Library (Ms. Vat. Ebr. 324), and rendered in English by Judah Galinsky, “The Different Hebrew Versions of the “Talmud Trial” of 1240 in Paris,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations: In Honor of David Berger* (The Brill Reference Library of Judaism 33; ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 109–140, here at 132–33. (2) The only edited text, Samuel Grünbaum, *Sefer Vikkuah Rabbenu Yehi’el mi-Paris* (Thorn: C. Dembrowski, 1873, not seen by me) is based on Hebr. Ms. 712, Bibliothèque National, Paris. (3) An unedited manuscript Günzburg 1390 in the National Library of Russia, Moscow, first seen and mentioned by Joseph Shatzmiller in his *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen Age* (Collection de la Revue des Etudes juives 15; Paris: E. Peeters, 1994), 9. Galinsky has studied this text in manuscript, and quotes parts of it in English translation in his article. The text overlaps with the Paris manuscript for most of its text, but there are significant differences at the beginning and end. Galinsky studied all three Hebrew versions to evaluate their historical value as reports on what really happened at the Paris trial,

is considerable overlap concerning which offensive statements of the Talmud were discussed during the hearings, but differences in the sequence of topics.

According to the Latin “Confessions,” the first rabbi to take the stand in the defendant’s box was rabbi Yehiel of Paris (alias Master Vivo). He answered some twenty plus accusations. He was then replaced by rabbi Judah ben David of Melun (alias Master Judah) who answered six additional points. After the answers of the rabbis, the verdict of the jury is sometimes given as well: “He lied.” The ecclesiastical jury was made up of the following prelates: “the archbishop of Sens, the bishop of Senlis, the chancellor of Paris (now the bishop of Tusculum and the legate of the Apostolic See in the Holy Land).”<sup>548</sup> In this text, there is no hint of a public “disputation” taking place, the whole proceeding is staged as an inquisitorial process. The role of the Jewish spokesmen was supposed to be limited to affirming that the Latin excerpts from the Talmud, presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal, were in fact to be found in the Talmud and were correctly translated into Latin. The Jewish spokesmen, however, were allowed to comment, sometimes at some length, on why these passages were not defamatory regarding Christians, and – especially – that none of the passages about “Jesus the Nazarene” and his mother “Miriam” spoke about “our Jesus” [and his mother]. Instead, other persons were referred to. In these and similar ways, the rabbis did their best to blunt the offensiveness of the quoted sayings. A puzzling feature of the Latin document is that Donin is not mentioned as the Christian questioner, one rather gets the impression that the accusing questions were put by the three-member tribunal. Can this have something to do with the fact that Donin fell out of ecclesiastical favor soon after the trial?

In the Jewish Hebrew report, we get a much richer picture of the entire event, and here the inquisitorial trial is stylized much more like a public debate. The Christian debater is here clearly named: Donin, alias Latin *Vivo*.

This re-formatting of the inquisitorial trial into a public debate may have to do with the fact that this document – certainly in the Paris and Moscow versions of it – was written

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concluding that the Vatican fragment seems closest to the historical reality: an inquisitorial examination by an appointed (unnamed) accuser and short answers by an unnamed Jewish rabbi. In the Moscow manuscript the whole event is stylized differently: A public debate, King Louis being involved in discussions about its procedure, “the Queen” taking part in the debate itself. The Paris manuscript’s version is the last one of the three, making the whole event even more like a public disputation (like the one in Barcelona 23 years later). Galinsky’s new start with the different manuscripts was followed up by two other scholars: (1) Harvey J. Hames, “Reconstructing Thirteenth-Century Jewish–Christian Polemic: From Paris 1240 to Barcelona 1263 and Back Again,” in Ryan Szpiech, ed., *Medieval Exegesis and Religious Difference: Commentary, Conflict, and Community in the Premodern Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 115–127. (2) Ursula Ragacs, “Paris 1240: Further Pieces of the Puzzle,” in A. Fidora and G. K. Hasselhoff, eds., *The Talmud in Dispute During the High Middle Ages* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Servei de Publicacions, 2019), 9–27.

<sup>548</sup> Quoted from the introduction to the “Latin Confessions,” *The Trial of the Talmud*, 122.

several years after the event, highly likely even after the Barcelona Disputation in 1263. The similarities between rabbi Moses ben Nahman's report on the Barcelona disputation in 1263 and the Hebrew account of the Paris event in 1240 are so many that the latter seems inspired by the former.<sup>549</sup> The whole tenor of the Hebrew report is to say that "our man" in Paris, our rabbi Yehiel, defended our cause quite as well as rabbi Moses later did at Barcelona, but under more difficult circumstances. And exactly like rabbi Moses' account of the Barcelona disputation, which was not meant for the historical records, but rather written as a manual of successful counterarguments to be presented in future debates, in the same way the Hebrew report of the Paris trial made it look like a public debate in which the Jewish cause had been successfully defended, to serve as an argument arsenal in future disputations with Christians.

I will here only mention some of the salient points that will highlight the singularity of the Paris trial, as well as its similarities with the later disputations.

#### B. Is the Talmud Heretical simply by Existing?

The first nine of Donin's 35 articles quote talmudic sayings that seem to give the Oral Law greater authority than the Written Law (in the Bible). The rabbinic idea expressed in these sayings was that the Oral Law (*torah she-be-al-peh*, Torah in the Mouth) was given to Moses in his heart at Sinai, and only transmitted orally for centuries until – because of the weakness of men's minds – it was put into writing and called The Teaching, the *Talmud*.<sup>550</sup>

Donin, however, took the quoted passages at face value and claimed they were heretical by supplanting the Written Law of the old covenant by a New Law – the Talmud. In this sense, the Talmud was heretical by its very existence. This point is raised early on in both documents, the Latin Confessions and the Hebrew *Vikuah*, but the Hebrew has a much fuller account of rabbi Yehiel's answers.

The rabbi begins his exposition by claiming that the Talmud is some fifteen hundred years old, in other words, a *pre-Christian* document.<sup>551</sup> Since the Talmud is so old, one would expect that all the learned Christian authors, right from the beginning, would have denounced

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<sup>549</sup> This idea struck me before I was happy to see it well argued by Hames, "Reconstructing Thirteenth-Century Jewish-Christian Polemic."

<sup>550</sup> For a very stimulating study of the paradox of writing down a tradition which only should be transmitted orally, see Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE – 400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). He demonstrates that the paradox is more apparent than real because the written text of the Oral Torah is dead letters until it becomes alive and life-giving when heard and repeated and internalized by the student at the feet of a great Master.

<sup>551</sup> By saying this, he also anticipates another important point discussed later, viz. does the Talmud mention Jesus, the deity of Christians, at all. Yehiel argues it cannot because it is pre-Christian. See further below.



the Talmud as heretical in the same way as Donin. But none of them did so, not even the learned Jerome.

Behold, Jerome, the tonsured one, knew all of our talmudic law, as it is known to all of the clerics.<sup>552</sup> If there were anything damaging in it, it would not have been left undisturbed until now... There has been no utterance [against the Talmud] nor words [against it] ... during the preceding fifteen centuries.<sup>553</sup>

The basic flaw of Donin is to believe “only in that written in the Torah of Moses, *without any interpretation*. But you [Christians] know that every [biblical] statement requires explanation.” It is precisely this necessary explanation of biblical law and lore that is preserved in the Talmud. If you take away our Talmud, you destroy our religion, because then our Bible remains a closed book.

It was an ingenious response. Eleven years had passed since the Pope decreed, at the council in Toulouse (1229), that laypeople should not have any part of the Bible available to them in the vernacular (see above, pp. 203–204). The tacit premise was of course that the Bible should only be understood the way it was interpreted by the Church, viz. in the official interpretation that accompanied the written text, the so-called Glossa. So, Rabbi Yehiel was right on target when he said that the Christian authorities knew very well that “everything requires interpretation.” He could have said: Our Talmud corresponds to your Glossa. As we have seen, he also insinuated that it would be embarrassing for the Church *now* to condemn a book that had been out there for several centuries.

Having said this, he affirmed unreservedly that the Talmud was of fundamental significance for Judaism as such. Without the Talmud Judaism could not exist. Implicitly, this meant that if the Church demanded the destruction of the Talmud, they forbade the Jews to practice their religion, in flagrant contradiction of all ecclesiastical law hitherto. They would abandon the traditional ecclesiastical (Augustinian) doctrine about the Jews at its core.

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<sup>552</sup> Rabbi Yehiel may be overstating Jerome’s knowledge of rabbinica here, but a strong trend in recent scholarship has been to rehabilitate Jerome’s knowledge as being more extensive and more first-hand than claimed earlier. See, e.g., note 125 in Skarsaune, “Evidence for Jewish Believers in Greek and Latin Patristic Literature,” in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 505–567; here at 546.

<sup>553</sup> Trans. Friedman, 130.

### C. The Blasphemies of the Talmud

The second dominant theme in Donin's articles and at the trial was the many allegedly derogatory statements about Jesus, his mother, and Christians/the Church in general.

There were also some traditional accusations about blasphemous or silly sayings about God himself, or about some of the Bible's main characters – in other words: inept and inappropriate haggadot. This latter point had been brought up earlier; we have treated some of them in Alfonsi's *Dialogue*.

Rabbi Yehiel's response to this latter charge is interesting because of its strong similarity with what Nahmanides had to say concerning the same point at Barcelona 23 years later.

Nahmanides: We Jews have three categories of books, the Bible, the Talmud (mainly halakah, i.e., interpretations of the 613 commandments), and the Midrash (the haggadah, the narrative material, mainly found in the Midrashim). We believe everything in the Bible with perfect faith. We also accept unconditionally the Talmud's interpretation of the biblical commandments. Concerning the haggadot, however, we regard them as illustrative narratives. "It is just as if the bishop would rise and deliver a sermon, and one of the listeners whom the sermon pleased recorded it. Regarding this [the haggadah] ... if one believes in it, well and good; if one does not believe in it, he will not be harmed. ... It is nothing more than matters which one person tells another."<sup>554</sup>

Yehiel: "I believe in all of the laws and statutes [in the Talmud] as explained to us through our teachings. This is the Talmud [ref. Deut 11:19]. And further, included [in the Talmud] are haggadic passages to arouse the emotions of a man to understand intricate rhetoric... I have no need to reply to you about passages [in the Talmud] of this kind. If you wish, believe them; if you do not wish, do not believe them. For there is no law [*halakah*] derived from them."<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Nahmanides, *Vikuah* passage 39, my paraphrase, the verbatim quotation from Charles B. Chavel, *Ramban (Nahmanides): The Disputation at Barcelona*, BN Publishing, 2012, 15.

<sup>555</sup> Rabbi Yehiel's *Vikuah* according to the Grünbaum text, trans. according to Friedman, *Trial of the Talmud*, 131, slightly modified.

These passages are perhaps the strongest argument advanced by Hames for his view that the Hebrew report on the Paris Trial was written after 1263 and, in part, motivated by the wish to show that the rabbi of Paris in 1240 had by no means performed more poorly than his more famous colleague had done at Barcelona.<sup>556</sup> By this argument about the nature of haggadot in general, rabbi Yehiel did undercut Christian arguments based on a literal understanding of them as effectively as Nahmanides later did at Barcelona!

Of more weight, though, was the undeniable existence of highly offensive sayings in the Talmud about “Jesus” and his mother “Miriam.” In his articles 26 and 27 Donin first quoted a passage found twice in the Babylonian Talmud, tractates *Sanhedrin* 67a and *Shabbat* 104b. The gist of this passage is that Jesus’ mother Miriam betrayed her husband (Stada or Stara) and got pregnant with Jesus by her lover Pandera.<sup>557</sup>

The second is a passage in *Gittin* 56b, the gist of which is that a potential proselyte to Judaism through necromancy communicated with three of Israel’s archenemies in the underworld, asking them whether joining Israel was a good idea. The three were Emperor Titus, who burned the Second Temple, the wizard Balaam, who wanted to curse Israel and seduced them to fornicate with the Moabite women (Num 31:16); and Jesus, who mocked the words of the sages. The first two were punished in a way appropriate to their crime. Because Titus had burned the Temple, his own punishment was to be burnt to ashes, then revived and burnt again, endlessly. Balaam had caused Israelite men to inseminate Moabite women; his punishment was to be placed in boiling semen. Jesus mocked the words of the Jewish sages [the Pharisees], his punishment in the underworld was to be boiled in excrement.<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> We find the same tendency in the somewhat later report on the Disputation in Paris 1269ff, referred to above: Compared with Donin (rabbi Yehiel’s adversary in Paris), Nahmanides’ adversary in Barcelona 1263, Paul Christian was by far the inferior. “Indeed, the little finger of the first heretic [Donin] was broader than the thigh of this one [Friar Paul]. He [Friar Paul] would not even be considered, in comparison with him [Donin], as the skin of a garlic bulb.” (For reference, see above).

<sup>557</sup> For a detailed analysis of this text, demonstrating that it does indeed speak about Jesus of Nazareth and his mother Mary, see Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 15–22. He sums up the lesson of the talmudic story like this (p. 22): “This powerful counternarrative shakes the foundations of the Christian message. It is not just a malicious distortion of the birth story [of the Gospels]; ... rather, it posits that the whole idea of Jesus’ Davidic descent, his claims to be the Messiah, and ultimately his claim to be the son of God, are based on fraud. His mother, his alleged father [Mary’s husband] (insofar as he helped covering up the truth), his real father [Pantera], and not least Jesus himself (the would-be magician) are all impostors that deceived the Jewish people and deserve to be unmasked, exposed to ridicule, and thereby neutralized.” [Square brackets mine].

<sup>558</sup> I have rendered the story somewhat more fully than Donin does in his *Article 27*. Again, I refer to Schäfer’s analysis of the full text of this talmudic text in *Jesus in the Talmud*, 82–94. He comments extensively on the nature of Jesus’ punishment, since the correspondence between crime and punishment is less obvious in this case. He suggests, however, that the specific sin in question is double: first, that Jesus rejected the pharisaic law concerning unclean food, declaring all food clean as it enters the body, and clean when it comes out as excrement (Mark 7:18–23 / Matt 15:17–20); then also his eucharistic words about eating his own flesh and blood (especially offensive in John 6:48–58), Schäfer, *ibid.*, 91–94. In some Talmud manuscripts and editions, Jesus is replaced by “sinners within Israel”, but Schäfer argues convincingly that this is due to scribal preemptive self-

It goes without saying that hearing passages like these being read in a language that a Christian audience could understand, would cause an outrage of sorts. And according to the Hebrew account, Donin “said all this [the two quoted talmudic passages] in the vernacular, in order to make us offensive.”<sup>559</sup>

Rabbi Yehiel must have found himself in a tight spot at this juncture. He could not deny that the passages were correctly quoted, nor that the names Jesus and Mary occurred in them. But he had, of course, acquainted himself with the contents of Donin’s accusations beforehand; he knew this was coming. Therefore, he had, at the very beginning, said something about the Talmud’s age as a book that would, if accepted, have pulled the carpet under all Donin’s very compromising quotations from it. He had said that the Talmud was 1500 years old, in other words, pre-Christian in its entirety. Consequently, the Jesus and the Mary spoken of in the Talmud had to be other persons than those of the Gospels. He now made this argument explicit: Yes, the quoted passages spoke of one Jesus and one Mary, his mother, but neither of them was the same persons as those of the Christian New Testament, written some 200 plus years later.

But Donin was not satisfied with letting Rabbi Yehiel get away that easily. He now brought in a passage from *b. Sanhedrin* 43b, saying that when Jesus *the Nazarene* was led out to be stoned, the event had been announced beforehand for forty days: “Jesus of Nazareth goes forth to be stoned because he practices magic, incites and leads astray.<sup>560</sup> Let any who have favorable knowledge come forth and testify favorably about him.” He had indeed been called a magician, and inciter and an insurgent.

Rabbi Yehiel now found it necessary to underpin his assertion that even the passages speaking of Jesus the Nazarene need not refer to the Jesus of the Christians. One of his remarks was that “Not every Louis who is born in France is king of France! Is it not possible that two men were born in a certain city with the same name and that both died the same death? There are many cases like this in the land.”<sup>561</sup>

But he was aware that such flippancy could not really turn the table, so he entered upon a detailed and very learned examination of the true identity and – as important – the true

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copyright, following the Paris Trial and later Christian censorship. For the whole question of text transmission and censorship/self-censorship of the Talmud, see Schäfer, op. cit., “Appendix: Bavli Manuscripts and Censorship,” 131–44.

<sup>559</sup> Friedman’s translation, p. 135.

<sup>560</sup> In his *Article* 26 Donin had already mentioned that a gloss in *b. Shabbat* 104b had identified the son of Stada with Jesus the Nazarene.

<sup>561</sup> In the Vatican fragment this comes out slightly differently: “All those born in Paris who are named Louis are called by the name of Paris. So too there were many Jesuses in the city of Nazareth, for it is the name of a city, [and] he is called Jesus the Nazarene, because of the city.” (Translation according to Galinsky, “The Different Hebrew Versions,” 133.)

*date* of the talmudic Jesus. In his view, the Jesus of the Talmud was a contemporary disciple of the rabbi Joshua son of Periah, and the date of the latter was clear: the days of the Hasmonean king Yannai (91–73 B.C.E.). According to Yehiel’s calculation, this meant the Jesus of the Talmud lived more than 200 years (!) before the Christian Jesus. Rabbi Yehiel thus concluded that nowhere in the Talmud are derogatory statements about Jesus or his mother to be found – indeed, no statements whatsoever concerning either of them.

According to the Hebrew *Vikuah*, an interesting incident took place at this point, concluding the discussion about Jesus Christ being punished by being put in boiling excrement.

Said the Queen [Blanche], “Why do you [Donin and the assembled clergy] make yourself odious? See, it is to your own honor that he said that it [the Talmud] does not mention your God [Jesus Christ] sentenced to excrement. They did not speak of him thus... But you seek to draw out your shame from his mouth. It is your shame that you draw out of his mouth.” The queen continued and said [to Rabbi Yehiel], “On your honor, are you telling the truth?” The rabbi answered, “Yes! As I live and will return to my home, we have never deemed that he [Jesus] was sentenced to boiling excrement nor spoken of him in such words.”<sup>562</sup>

One could speculate that the Queen was motivated for this intervention by an earlier episode in the trial: Rabbi Yehiel had said that the clerics and the Christian Royalty would not be able to protect the Jews against the violence that would result when the Christians in general were made aware of the blasphemies against Jesus and his mother allegedly contained in the Talmud. The Queen had asserted the contrary, and now found an opportunity to act accordingly.

For all the similarities between rabbi Yehiel’s *Vikuah* and that of Nahmanides, the former cannot be an entirely fictional tale patterned upon the latter. For Nahmanides, as will be shown later, the fundamental objection against Paul Christian’s whole project – building an argument for the Messiahship of Jesus upon sayings in the Talmud and other rabbinic works – was that the quoted texts were sayings of rabbis living *centuries after* Jesus. If one could

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<sup>562</sup> Trans. Friedman, 140. Earlier in the discussion, Donin had made rabbi Yehiel quote the offensive sayings in the vernacular, rather than reading them himself. He had “drawn them out” of Yehiel’s mouth.

prove from their sayings that Jesus was the Messiah, how come they themselves repudiated him and had not become his disciples, like Paul Christian?

In stark contrast, rabbi Yehiel's fundamental objection against Donin's project was the assertion that the Talmud in its entirety only contained *pre-Christian* sayings, and hence could not have said anything about Jesus and his mother, nor about his disciples nor anything Christian. From an historical point of view, rabbi Yehiel was no doubt wrong on this point, and he had no unanimous support from Jewish tradition. The rabbinic tradition was to identify Jesus of the New Testament with Jesus the disciple of Joshua ben Periah, resulting in a different Jewish chronology for Jesus than the Christian one. Nahmanides speaks explicitly about this.<sup>563</sup>

In his very insightful comments on the Paris Trial, Hyam Maccoby is somewhat apologetic on rabbi Yehiel's behalf concerning this point.<sup>564</sup> True, he says, a few of the talmudic sayings quoted by Donin did indeed have the Christian Jesus in mind, at least in the final redaction of the Talmud's text, and were also understood this way by great rabbinic authorities like Moses Maimonides, and later Nahmanides. He adds that "Yehiel's desperate argument [was] wrung from him by concern for the survival of the Talmud."<sup>565</sup>

As it turned out, rabbi Yehiel and his colleagues did not achieve their purpose at the Paris Trial. The Talmud copies in France had already been taken in custody before the trial, and according to the "Prologue" of Donin's *Articles*, "fourteen cartloads were burned in one day and six on another occasion." This happened in Paris 1241/42, and boded ill for the future, at least within the territories of the French kingdom. Procuring or producing new copies of the Talmud was an expensive affair, producing them was also time-consuming. And with the prospect of new bonfires of new Talmuds, producing them would hardly be worthwhile at all.

The tide would soon turn, however. Pope Gregory IX died in 1241; his death was followed by an interregnum until Innocent IV was installed in 1243, reigning until 1254. The year after his inauguration he sent a letter to King Louis IX commending him for his role in the Paris Trial and for executing its judgement: burning of the Talmud.

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<sup>563</sup> *Vikuah*, passage 22, see below.

<sup>564</sup> Hyam Maccoby, "The Paris Disputation, 1240," in his *Judaism on Trial: Jewish – Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993), 19–38; here at 26–30.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. I have commented above on the question of whether the talmudic passages traditionally taken to speak about Jesus really do so. I have let myself become convinced by Peter Schäfer's *Jesus in the Talmud* that they are, in fact, carefully constructed counternarratives gainsaying and invalidating important Gospel stories about Jesus, his family and his disciples. In a sense, Schäfer invalidates Yehiel's argument, but validates Nahmanides' argument that the rabbis in no way implicitly accepted Jesus' Messiahship, rather the exact opposite. I will return to the question of censorship of the text of the Talmud shortly.

The triumph of the Dominicans and Franciscans seemed complete, and they followed up by publishing in all three versions of Latin excerpts of the offensive sayings of the Talmud during the years 1245–48.<sup>566</sup> But ecclesiastical as well as Jewish opposition against this new Church policy was not slow in arising. From both sides it was argued, with good reason, that burning the Talmud was in flagrant contradiction of the old ecclesiastical law according to which the Jews had the right to practice their religion. This was simply impossible if the Talmud was taken away from them. Such lobbying finally made Pope Innocent change his mind. In a second letter to King Louis of 12 August 1247 he said the following:

[S]ince the masters of the Jews of your kingdom recently stated before us and our brethren that without that book that in Hebrew is called the Talmud they are unable to understand the Bible and the other statutes of their Law in accordance with their faith, we, who are bound according to divine commandment in that same Law to show tolerance to them have thought fit to answer them that, just as we are unwilling to deprive them of the Law itself, so in consequence we are unwilling to deprive them unjustly of their books. Therefore, we have sent a letter to our venerable brother, the bishop of Tusculum, legate of the Apostolic See, to the effect that he see to it that both [the Talmud] itself and other [books] are delivered up to him and inspected and, diligently inspecting the same, he tolerate them in those matters in which he sees that

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<sup>566</sup> In recent years, there has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in these documents, resulting in new critical editions of the texts and of collections of studies. The documents are the following (1) an anthology of offensive passages arranged according to the order in which they occur in the Talmud, edited by Ulisse Cecini and Óscar de la Cruz, *Extractiones de Talmud per ordinem sequentialem* (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 291; Turnhout: Brepols, 2018). (2) An anthology of much the same material, but thematically arranged: a new edition of these *Extractiones de Talmud* is said to be forthcoming in Dal Bo, Federico and Alexander Fidora. ““*INICIUM CREATIONIS IESU NAZAREN*”: Toledot Yeshu in the Thematic Version of the *Extractiones de Talmud*,” *Henoch* 40 (2018):206–222, here at note 8, p. 208. (3) A thematically arranged collection of texts based on the thematic extractiones and other sources, edited by Isaac Lampurlanés Farré, *Excerptum de Talmud: Study and Edition of a Thirteenth-Century Latin Translation* (Contact and Transmission 1; Turnhout: Brepols, 2020). Among the collected studies, the following volumes stand out: Ulisse Cecini and Eulàlia Vernet i Pons, eds. *Studies on the Latin Talmud* (Bellaterra: Servei de Publicacions de Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2017); Alexander Fidora and Gorge K. Hasselhoff, eds. *The Talmud in Dispute During the High Middle Ages* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Servei de Publicacions, 2019). In addition to these, Ulisse Cecini and Óscar de la Cruz Palma have edited an anthology of passages that follow the 35 Articles in the manuscripts, and which they assume are taken from a now lost talmudic Anthology that served as the source for the 35 Articles as well as the non-overlapping quotations in the sequel anthology. See their article “Beyond the Thirty-Five Articles: Nicholas Donin’s Latin Anthology of the Talmud (With a Critical Edition),” in *The Talmud in Dispute During the High Middle Ages* (eds. Alexander Fidora and Gorge K. Hasselhoff; Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Servei de Publicacions, 2019), 59–100.

they ought to be tolerated in the sight of God without damage to the Christian faith and restore them to the aforesaid [Jewish] masters.<sup>567</sup>

In this way, a new procedure for dealing with the Talmud was instituted by the Pope – instead of burning, *ensorship*. This way of dealing with the problem was destined to last longer than the pyre procedure, although the recipient of the letter mentioned in the Pope’s letter to Louis IX, the bishop of Tusculum and the Apostolic Legate of the Holy See [in other words, the Pope’s legate!], Odo of Chateauroux, was by no means willing to obey the Pope’s orders. In an angry return letter to Pope Innocent IV, he lectures the Pope how terribly wrong the ordered procedure will prove to be, and how completely it contradicts the many letters of the Pope’s predecessor Gregory IX.<sup>568</sup> “It would be no small scandal as well as an eternal reproach to the Apostolic See if the books, so solemnly and justly burned in the presence of all the scholars and the clergy and the people of Paris, were tolerated by apostolic mandate or even returned to the masters of the Jews, for this tolerance would be seen as a kind of approval,” said Odo.

Not satisfied with rebuking the Pope in such undiplomatic terms, he convoked an ecclesiastical assembly in May 1248 which, under his leadership, made a ruling reaffirming Gregory IX’s order of burning rather than censoring the Talmud and similar books. But the future lay with Innocent, not his Legate. “The importance of this shift in papal theory cannot be overstated.”<sup>569</sup>

From now on, enforced Christian censorship of the Talmud and some other rabbinic books took place not only in France but also in other places, like Spain. The Dominicans in particular were adamant in requiring the kings to use appropriate force in ordering the Jews to deliver their books for inspection and consequent censorship. The Jewish answer was often preemptive self-censorship of their copies of the Talmud. This has left its marks on some Talmud manuscripts, and even printed editions, after the 1240ies.<sup>570</sup> The prime example is, predictably, the most offensive saying of all, that Jesus was punished in the underworld by being put in boiling excrement. In many of the manuscripts the reading “Jesus” is kept, but in the earliest printed editions it is substituted by “sinners of Israel.” In the printed texts we

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<sup>567</sup> Latin text in Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, no. 119, pp. 274–80, with English translation pp. 275–81. A more recent translation has been used above, viz. Jean Connell Hoff’s in *The Talmud Trial*, 97–98.

<sup>568</sup> Latin text and English translation in Grayzel, 275–79; new English translation by Connell Hoff in *The Talmud Trial*, 98–100 (quoted here).

<sup>569</sup> Chazan, “Trial, Condemnation, and Censorship.”

<sup>570</sup> I refer again to Peter Schäfer’s “Appendix: Bavli Manuscripts and Censorship,” pp. 131–144 in his *Jesus in the Talmud*.



probably have to do with preemptive Jewish self-censorship, since these printed Talmuds would more often be read by competent Christian scholars than the handwritten ones.

What we get out from these events in France for our study of later events in Spain, is the following: (1) The Church had now and forever after become aware of the existence of the Babylonian Talmud and of its significance for the Jews of the Western world. Ignoring it was no longer an option. (2) The first way chosen for dealing with the Talmud was an all-out onslaught on it, bringing the Talmud, and by implication Judaism as such, to trial to be found guilty of heresy. Alexander Fidora suggests that one motive behind this was the Pope's wish to bring the jurisdiction over the Jews from the kings over to the Pope, since the ultimate judge in heresy cases was the Pope, not the kings.<sup>571</sup> (3) The suspicion of heresy being the heading under which the Talmud Trial of Paris was arranged, there could be no question of a free discussion between equal partners. The Jewish participants were, in principle, reduced to simple responders whose task was to affirm or deny the occurrence of offensive passages in the Talmud and the correctness of the Latin translations of them. But the Latin/Christian as well as the Hebrew/Jewish reports on the trial are unanimous in stating that the Jewish side was allowed to say more than that, viz. to explain that none of the offensive sayings about Jesus and his mother referred to the two persons in the New Testament with these names. They were further allowed to explain that other apparently offensive sayings were not offensive when interpreted correctly. This dichotomy between the role of defendant only, answering questions, and the role of real discussion partner, was to come back in a slightly different form at Barcelona in 1263. (4) The most long-lasting legacy of the Paris trial was the institution of Christian censorship of the Talmud. We will meet this legacy when we turn to the missionary campaign spearheaded by the Dominicans in Spain in the 1260ies. The missionary campaign as such might indicate a new and positive evaluation of the Talmud. But it seems the Dominicans had no problems in combining their new approach with the older censorship strategy. I shall have more to say on this below.

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<sup>571</sup> Alexander Fidora, "The Latin Talmud and the Extension of Papal Jurisdiction over Jews," *Medieval Worlds* 11 (2020):152–164.

*The Dominicans Launch a new Missionary Strategy*

The irrevocable result of the Paris events of the 1240ies was a *new insight* within the leadership of the Church: that Judaism would have to be understood, from now on, based on post-biblical rabbinic literature, not based on the Old Testament. How cope with this new challenge?

The answer was: let us use the classic strategy of beating the adversary with his own weapons. Nothing is more effective than proving that your own faith is supported by the scriptures which are reckoned authoritative by those of another faith. *Vis-à-vis* the Jews, the Christians had from the very beginning argued the messiahship of Jesus from the Jewish scriptures. Justin Martyr argued against Trypho that the messiahship of Jesus could be proved from the Jewish scriptures, *also in the “doctored” version* of these Hebrew Scriptures that the Sages had produced so as to eliminate clear Christological testimonies.<sup>572</sup> In Tertullian’s polemic against Marcion, he makes Marcion’s own “purified” New Testament text the basis of his argument. Centuries later, the Muslims found Muhammad predicted as the last messenger of God in the Paraclete sayings in John 14:16.26; 15:26; 16:7.

When Cristian theologians now had discovered that for the Jews of their own day, another Scripture had been superimposed on the old Scripture, the same strategy was recommended: prove the messiahship of Jesus from texts in the Talmud! The strategy as such was not new at all, and was, in a sense, obvious. The only novelty here was the discovery of the Talmud – not only as a blasphemous book – but also as a hitherto overlooked source of texts *supporting Christian claims*.

We do not know which person first launched this apologetic use of the Talmud by Christians, nor do we know exactly when it was first voiced. What we do know, is the circle of persons that had this idea and developed it and were the first to put it to the test in practice.

The towering figure in this circle was a renowned theologian, for a short period Master General of the Dominican order, *Ramon of Penyafort* (c. 1175 – 1275). He was a Catalan, born in Vilafranca.<sup>573</sup> After a brilliant career as an expert in ecclesiastical law, Ramon entered the Dominican order in 1222, and was elected Master-General of the order at Barcelona in

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<sup>572</sup> For a full treatment of this strategy, see Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr’s Proof-Text Tradition: Text-type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 56; Leiden: Brill, 1987).

<sup>573</sup> On him, see Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 104–108; Hyam Maccobi, *Judaism on Trial: Jewish-Christian Disputations in the Middle Ages* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993), 80–81.

1238. He retired from this position already two years later but remained a member of the Dominican Convent in Barcelona and functioned as the ecclesiastical adviser of King Jaime I (“The Conqueror”) of Aragon (king 1213 – 1276) for the rest of his life. It says something of his stature and influence that it was he who persuaded Thomas Aquinas to write his *Summa contra Gentiles*.

Under Ramon’s leadership and patronage, an ambitious program was launched for bringing heretics back to the Church, and of converting Muslims and Jews to the Catholic faith. Ramon of Penyafort persuaded King Jaime I to establish inquisitions in his domain and wrote an instruction for inquisitors in 1242. He was the initiator of schools teaching Arabic as part of the training of Dominican missionaries to the Muslims and saw the necessity of having Hebraist scholars available for the mission to the Jews.

Some of the latter were knowledgeable in rabbinica because of their Jewish background. First among these was the convert *Paul Christian*, whose Jewish birth-name was Saul (the change from Saul to Paul at his conversion needs no explanation).<sup>574</sup> He was born and raised in Montpellier in Provence, but from 1204 this city belonged to the Crown of Aragon, so, in a sense, Saul was a Spaniard. Saul had a wife and two sons. At his conversion to monastic life this caused some problems. We are told that he abandoned his wife but took his two sons with him into the Christian fold. Before his conversion, he had a good rabbinic education, in part under the tutorship of Jacob bar Elijah, probably a near relative, and in part by the well-known Rabbi Eliezer of Tarrascona. “All this suggests that we are not dealing here with a fringe member of the Jewish society but with a man who grew up in the center of a major European Jewish community...”<sup>575</sup> We do not have any detailed information concerning his conversion, but from the scanty sources about his life, it appears that “the conversion was related to internal stresses within the Jewish community. In some fashion or other, this internal strife influenced Saul’s decision to convert.”<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>574</sup> On him, see Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 80; Robert Chazan, “The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah to Friar Paul,” in Barry Walfish (ed.), *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*, Vol. II (Jewish History 6 [1992], Nos. 1–2; Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1992), 51–63; Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 24–27; Joseph Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen Age* (Collection de la Revue des Etudes juives 15; Paris: E. Peeters, 1994), 15–22; 29–32; Lena Roos, “Paul Christian – A Jewish Dominican Preaching for the Jews,” *Studia Theologica* 57 (2003): 49–60. There are so many documents preserved concerning Paul, that I think Shatzmiller is right to say: “En effet, il y a déjà lieu de consacrer une monographie à Paulus Christiani” (*La deuxième controverse*, 29).

<sup>575</sup> Chazan, *Barcelona and beyond*, 25; here also further details as to the sources of this information.

<sup>576</sup> Chazan, *Barcelona and beyond*, 26. One could speculate that this strife was the Maimonidean controversy which had its epicenter in the area around Montpellier. I will return to this below.

As a Dominican friar, Paul soon made his mark in the service of the papal inquisition. He had, as a Jewish convert, greater knowledge than most other Christians of the Talmud, and took part in the campaign of his order to ban the Talmud. His focus, however, was unlike that of Nicholas Donin. Paul shared his outrage concerning the blasphemous passages in the Talmud, and Alfonsi's contempt of the "irrational" material in it. But unlike these two, he was convinced that the Talmud *also* contained passages in which the truth of Jesus being the promised Messiah, and other Christian truths, were unwillingly confirmed. This made Paul a missionary to his own compatriots, preaching Christianity, underpinning its truth from their own Talmud.

He began his active proselytizing among the Jews of Provence. He had authorization from Louis IX of France to coercively convoke the Jews to attend his preaching.<sup>577</sup> Since this probably took place shortly before the Barcelona disputation, it is reasonable to assume that Paul was testing out his new missionary strategy during this campaign, and that he had a certain success with it, especially among the unlearned among the Jews. (The apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, wanting censorship on the Talmud, and on the other hand finding support for Christian dogmas in it, will concern us later.) It says much about Ramon of Penyafort's confidence in Paul's effectiveness as a debater with Jews that he was the man Ramon chose to make the case for the Christian faith in the spectacular event at Barcelona 1263.

The second prominent expert on rabbinic literature in Ramon's circle was *Ramon Martí*. He seems to have had no active part in the Barcelona disputation, at least no visible part. It is in the years after the disputation that he publishes books in which he wraps up the loose ends left by Paul, and in so doing, he displays a learning in rabbinica that overshadows Paul's. We return to him below.

After having conducted his conversionist campaign in Provence, Paul turned to Aragon proper. In Gerona he had the courage or audacity to debate the greatest Rabbi at that time, not only in Spain, but in the Western world, Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (called Nahmanides in

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<sup>577</sup> The source in question is a Hebrew letter from a certain Jacob bar Elijah (probably Rabbi Jacob bar Elijah of Lattes) addressed to Friar Paul, a relative of his, prior to the disputation at Barcelona, exhorting him to not continuing harming his Jewish brethren. See Robert Chazan, "The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah to Friar Paul," in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume II (Jewish History 6; Nos. 1–2; ed. Barry Walfish; Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1992)*, 51–63. Requesting the kings to use coercion to let Paul have a Jewish audience for his missionary preaching seems to be a constant throughout his entire career.

Latin).<sup>578</sup> According to Paul's report on this encounter to his superior, Ramon of Penyafort, he had wrung from the great rabbi important admissions of the correctness of the friar's contentions on crucial points of doctrine. Perhaps in the minds of both men, Paul's and Ramon's, the idea was born that the most effective way of carrying out the new strategy would be spectacular public events, sponsored by the king, in which Paul would debate leading rabbis and defeat them by their own weapon, the Talmud. Such events could have great potential of creating mass conversions of common Jews. We are in for a new type of public spectacles, a new type of missionary strategy for bringing the Jews into the Christian fold: the official disputations.

### *The Official Disputations of the Learned*

Ramon of Penyafort was highly likely the mastermind behind the grandiose public event that took place in the Catalan capital of Barcelona in 1263. Here Paul's alleged success in Gerona, his victory in debate with Spain's leading rabbi, Nahmanides, was to be repeated in front of all the Jews of Barcelona. If the greatest authority among the Jewish rabbis could be shown not able to hold his ground against the new "proofs" of Christianity found in his own Talmud, one could count on many common Jews losing their confidence in their religious leaders and be moved to conversion.

In this way the rightly famous Disputation at Barcelona in 1263 came about. The stakes were indeed high, seen from both sides. The Dominicans had succeeded in making the king summon the leading rabbi of Spain to attend the presentation of a new – and in their view: invincible – argument for the truth of the Christian faith. How would the rabbi of Gerona respond to this entirely new approach from the Christian side?

In my presentation of the disputation, I will proceed in the following way: After a few introductory remarks about the two primary sources, I will present one of them, Nahmanides' own Hebrew account, the so-called *Vikuah (Controversy)*, by way of paraphrase and occasionally in *verbatim* translation.

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<sup>578</sup> The bibliography for Nahmanides is immense; for a recent and comprehensive monograph, see Nina Caputo, *Nahmanides in Medieval Catalonia: History, Community, and Messianism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007); for an updated bibliography, see Caputo and Liz Clarke, *Debating Truth: The Barcelona Disputation of 1263* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 225–28.

## 1. The Barcelona Disputation 1263<sup>579</sup>

We have two sources for the debate itself. The first to be published at the time was a Latin Protocol written by one or more of the Dominicans and certified by the king. It does not follow the debate day by day but is organized mainly by themes. It is rather short and concise, comprising a little more than three pages in Maccoby's translation.<sup>580</sup>

The second report was written by the Jewish antagonist Nahmanides himself, first published in Latin or, more probably, Catalan, at the request of the Bishop of Gerona,<sup>581</sup> then, possibly after some time, published in a Hebrew version. Of these two versions, only the Hebrew is preserved; it was very likely composed by Nahmanides himself,<sup>582</sup> but may have been published a few years after the disputation. Unlike the Latin protocol, this work is organized as a chronological narrative of how the debate unfolded. In Maccoby's translation, the text (without notes) covers some 27 pages.

I will proceed by first presenting the narrative account of the debate as presented in Nahmanides' *Controversy* (Hebrew *Vikuah*).<sup>583</sup> Minor comments and references are given in

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<sup>579</sup> For extensive bibliographies, see the monographs of Chazan and Caputo & Clarke referenced below. I have found the following entries particularly helpful for understanding the Barcelona Disputation: Cecil Roth, "The Disputation of Barcelona (1263)," *HTR* 43 (1950): 117–144; Martin A. Cohen, "Reflections on the Text and Context of the Disputation of Barcelona," *HUCA* 35 (1964): 157–192; Hans-Georg von Mutius, *Die christlich-jüdische Zwangsdisputation zu Barcelona: Nach dem hebräischen Protokoll des Moses Nachmanides* (Judentum und Umwelt 5; Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1982 [this very careful and detailed German study has been unduly neglected by English, American and other non-German scholars]; Marvin Fox, "Nahmanides on the Status of Aggadot: Perspectives on the Disputation at Barcelona, 1263," *JJS* 40 (1989): 95–109; Robert Chazan, "In the Wake of the Barcelona Disputation," *HUCA* 61 (1990): 185–201; idem, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), cf. David Berger's important review of this book, "The Barcelona Disputation: Review Essay," in Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 199–208; Patricia Bizzell, "Rationality as Rhetorical Strategy at the Barcelona Disputation, 1263: A Cautionary Tale," *College Composition and Communication* 58 (2006): 12–29; Harvey J. Hames, "'Fear God, my Son, and King': Relations between Nahmanides and King Jaime I at the Barcelona Disputation," in *Between Edom and Kedar: Studies in Memory of Yom Tov Assis*. (Hispania Judaica Bulletin 10, Part 1; eds. Aldina Quintana, Raquel Ibáñez-Sperber and Ram Ben-Shalom; Jerusalem: The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2014), 5–19. Nina Caputo and Liz Clarke, *Debating Truth: The Barcelona Disputation of 1263, a Graphic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). Other relevant entries are added in the footnotes.

<sup>580</sup> The standard edition of this text is found on pages 185–87 in Yitzhak Baer, "On the Disputations of R. Yehiel of Paris and R. Moses ben Nahman" [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 2 (1930–31): 172–87. For English translations, see Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 147–50 and Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 114–16.

<sup>581</sup> This is documented in a letter from Jaime I of 12 April 1265; edited by Heinrich Denifle, "Quellen zur Disputation Pablos Christiani mit Mose Nachmani zu Barcelona 1263," *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 8 (1887): 225–44, here at 239–40. The references to the version written and given to the bishop of Gerona (Nahmanides' hometown), occur on page 239, lines 13–14 and 25–27. English translation in Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 120–21; summary and comment in Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 93; and, more extensive, in von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 303–307.

<sup>582</sup> See the very convincing arguments for this in Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 100.

<sup>583</sup> For the Hebrew text, I have had access to a good photocopy of Moritz Steinschneider, *Nachmanidis disputatio publica pro fide Judaica (a. 1263)* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1860). For English translations, I have

the footnotes; more substantial comments are interspersed in separate sections marked “Comment.” After each passage or passages of Nahmanides’ report, I begin my Comment by rendering the substance of the corresponding passage in the Latin Protocol.

The character and circumstances of both documents will be discussed as we go along through Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*.

#### A. The Barcelona Disputation according to Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*

##### *Nahmanides’ Preface*

(1) In the manuscripts, Nahmanides’ book has a kind of preface, consisting of a quotation from the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sanhedrin* 43a-b, in which a story is told about five disciples of Jesus being brought to court before judges under threat of a death sentence. Each in turn quoted a biblical saying to prove he was not guilty as charged. Against this, the Jewish accusers at the court quoted other passages proving the opposite.<sup>584</sup>

Nahmanides comments on this story, first by quoting a comment on the story by the famous Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (acronym Rashi, 1040–1105). Rashi explained it by saying that because the disciples of Jesus had good links with the Roman rulers, the Jewish sages had no other choice than answering openly the blasphemous arguments of the disciples of Jesus. In a similar way, says Nahmanides, he answered in public and before the king and his counselors the mocking sayings of friar Paul, who publicly disgraced his Jewish education.

*Comment:* Hyam Maccoby in his translation omits this first paragraph, arguing that it is not original, but added by a later scribe.<sup>585</sup> His main arguments are that (1) the inclusion of this – for Christians – very offensive story would be unthinkable in a text originally destined to be read by the bishop of Gerona, and which later, in its Hebrew version, would be read and understood without difficulty by the Dominican experts. Nahmanides had enough problems concerning the rest of his account as far as accusations of blasphemy were concerned and had no need of exacerbating his case by this addition. (2) In 1263-64 the Dominicans was conducting a search for blasphemous passages in the Talmud to have them expurgated. It is unthinkable that Nahmanides would serve them such a passage on a platter. (3) Not even Christians had blamed the Jews as the guilty ones concerning the execution of Jesus’ first disciples – so why should Nahmanides quote this story incriminating the Jews as the guilty ones for those killings also, not only that of Jesus?

To the best of my knowledge no other scholar has joined Maccoby in this view, and I believe for good reasons. The last one to argue for its authenticity – not to say indispensability – is Harvey J. Hames, “Fear God, my Son, and King’: Relations between Nahmanides and King Jaime I at the Barcelona Disputation,” in *Between Edom and Kedar: Studies in Memory of Yom Tov Assis* (Hispania Judaica Bulletin 10, Part 1; eds. Aldina Quintana, Raquel Ibáñez-Sperber and Ram Ben-Shalom; Jerusalem: The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The

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used Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 102–146 and Charles B. Chavel, *Ramban (Nachmanides): The Disputation at Barcelona, Translated and Annotated* (BN Publishing, 2012). The passage numbers in parenthesis are taken from Chavel’s translation and used here for ease of reference. The passages as such are clearly marked typographically in Steinschneider’s edition, without being numbered.

<sup>584</sup> See the very instructive interpretation of this story in Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 75–81.

<sup>585</sup> Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 98–101.

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2014), 5–19. He argues, to my mind convincingly, that Nahmanides rendered the story as an apology for his own unwilling participation in the disputation. In passages 80–82 (the beginning of the fourth and last day of the disputation) Nahmanides reports that he asked the king for the disputation to be discontinued. He said the Jews of Barcelona were afraid that his defense of Judaism and his open criticism of Christianity could incite the Dominicans to severely punishing the whole Jewish community. Christians also had warned of severe consequences for the Jews if Nahmanides persisted the way he had done so far. Nahmanides had countered that he did not take part of his own choice, but by an explicit order from the King. What he says in his Preface, can therefore best be understood as an apology for not only continuing the disputation until it was ended by the king, but also his behavior after it ended: He had first attended the missionary preaching of the king himself and the General of the Dominicans, Ramon of Penyafort, in the synagogue of Barcelona on the Sunday a week after the disputation, and had criticized both sermons openly, and now he topped it all by publishing his book, in which some points of criticism were stated even more explicit than in the oral disputation! Nahmanides justifies his behavior by pointing to a close parallel to his own situation that induced some rabbis of the Talmud to appear before a Roman court and defending Judaism despite the Christians being on good footing with the Romans. Hames substantiates his interpretation by showing that it fits nicely into Nahmanides' concept of his role as Jewish leader in the squeeze between the demands of the king, his own duties as a leader of his people, and the aggressive Dominicans. The relationship between Nahmanides and King Jaime I is a fascinating subject that one can follow during the whole duration of the disputation, and during the years following. I will return to this in due course.

### *Setting the rules*

(2) Nahmanides begins his report by saying that his Lord the King had commanded him to hold a disputation with Friar Paul in the king's palace in the presence of the king and his counselors. Nahmanides agreed to this, provided he was granted freedom of speech.

(3) Ramon of Penyafort granted this, provided Nahmanides said nothing disrespectful.

(4) Nahmanides said that he knew how to speak in an appropriate way concerning the matters under dispute, and that what he said, should therefore be left to his own judgement. This was agreed.

(5) Nahmanides then required that only topics fundamental to the argument between Jews and Christians should be discussed.

(6) This was also agreed, and the following topics were listed as the debate's agenda:

- Whether the Messiah has already come, as Christians believe, or is yet to come, as Jews believe.
- Whether the Messiah is to be truly divine or merely human.
- Whether the Jews still possess the true law, or whether the Christians practice it.

*Comment:* In the Latin Protocol the story is slightly different: The Jew Nahmanides, called Master, was summoned from Gerona to the royal palace in Barcelona by the king at the instance of the Dominican Friars. Brother Paul, in accordance with an agreement with the king and the Dominican and Franciscan friars, proposed to Nahmanides that he, Paul, would prove from writings accepted as authoritative among the Jews the following points:

- (1) that the Messiah whom the Jews expect, has undoubtedly come;
- (2) that the Messiah himself, as had been prophesied, must be both God and man;
- (3) that he truly suffered and died for the salvation of the human race;
- (4) that legal or ceremonial matters [in the Law] ceased and had to cease after the coming of the said Messiah.



Before presenting these themes, the Latin Protocol states the following important proviso: these themes should be discussed “not in order that the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which because of its certitude should not be put into dispute, should be drawn into the arena with the Jews as if it were a matter of doubt, but that the truth of that faith should become manifest in order to destroy the errors of the Jews and remove the confident faith of many Jews” who were unable to defend their faith themselves, but trusted their rabbi could do it. The Protocol says explicitly that this proviso was agreed upon *prior* to the debate by the king, Paul, and the other friars.

The implication of this was that it was Paul’s part to state the Christian proofs from the Jewish books, and Nahmanides’ part to “answer” them, if he could. (Nahmanides confirms throughout his own report that this was in fact agreed upon, but he does not mention it at this point).

The differences between the two accounts are interesting and significant. The Latin Protocol clearly and succinctly sets out the essence of the new Dominican missionary strategy: to prove from the authoritative scriptures recognized by the Jews (the Hebrew Bible and the “Talmud”) that Jesus is the Messiah promised in their Bible, confirmed by sayings of the talmudic sages. It clearly states that this agenda for the debate was agreed by the Christian side beforehand and presented to Nahmanides for his acceptance, which he granted. The basic premise was that the truth of Christian faith in Jesus as the Messiah should not be a subject in the debate, only the new proofs for it now found in the sayings of the Jewish sages in their own books. It was only to this latter point Nahmanides was invited to respond.

In Nahmanides’ account, this comes out differently.

(a) He assigns himself an active participation in setting the agreed agenda.

(b) Not questioning the truth of Christian claims about Jesus (so the Latin Protocol) comes out as “not saying anything disrespectful,” which would leave Nahmanides a lot more room for discussion than intended by the Dominicans. As it turned out, Nahmanides in “answering” Paul’s expositions, always took the opportunity of confronting Paul with the Jewish understanding of the Biblical as well as the talmudic texts that Paul had quoted, thus in fact undermining the truth of Paul’s Christian interpretation – and the very truth of Christianity itself. One could say that he exploited to the full the rather elastic meaning of the term “answer.” In the debate itself, the king granted Nahmanides this freedom, he only reprimanded him when he put questions back to Paul.

A further note should be added here concerning the structure of the “proof” that Paul planned to put forth. None of the four points in the Latin Protocol says explicitly that the object of proof is the Messiahship of *Jesus*. The logic of the proof is quite sophisticated: First, it will be proved that some sayings of the Jewish sages state that the Messiah has already come. Second, it will be proved that not only the Hebrew Bible, but also the Jewish sages say that the Messiah will be divine as well as human. Third, it will be proved that the Messiah will die, atoning for all human sins. When these three points have been established, the conclusion can be drawn: No other Messiah candidate having come already satisfy these points other than Jesus. This argumentative strategy absolved Paul from proving that each and every of the talmudic texts had Jesus in mind.

Some modern commentators object to what they call the “abstractness” of this argument – proving the Messiahship of Jesus from texts none of which in isolation could prove it. Martin A. Cohen, instead of branding this approach as abstract, calls it by another, medieval, name: “It was the method of *scholastic* writing, teaching and discussion, and the Dominicans excelled in all.”<sup>586</sup> In fact, the first “commentator” to point out the very formal, abstract, and un-historical character of the entire Dominican argument was none other than Nahmanides himself during the disputation.

(c) The Protocol says that the Messiah should be divine *as well as* human – the Christian position. Nahmanides turns this into divine *or* human, thus contrasting the Christian and the Jewish Messiah, and bringing both Messiahs into the discussion.

(d) According to the Protocol, the third theme should be that the Messiah should suffer and die “for the salvation of the human race.” Nahmanides does not mention this in his list of themes, and this topic was not raised as such, according to Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*. It only came up accidentally, when Nahmanides put a question to the king and Paul concerning the significance of the death of the Messiah (passages 43–45). Whether the Latin Protocol is correct to include this point in the theme-list proposed by the Dominicans or not, is of little significance, since both reports, the *Vikuah* and the Protocol, agree that this theme was not discussed in its own right.

Nahmanides says in his account that he required that *only topics fundamental to the argument* between Jews and Christians should be discussed. For him, the one fundamental question was the first one in both lists: Whether the Messiah had come or not. Throughout the discussion, Nahmanides tried his best to brush off any of the other themes by claiming that this first question had to be settled before one could proceed to the others. As long as Paul had not convinced him that the Messiah had in fact come, there was no need to raise other questions. In a sense, he turned the four-step argumentative strategy of the Dominicans against them: If the first step failed, there was no reason to discuss any further steps. The only other point in the agenda that Paul was

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<sup>586</sup> Cohen, “Reflections,” 166, emphasis mine.

able to force into the debate towards the end of the fourth and last day, was the divinity of the Messiah (passages 84–101). But Nahmanides succeeded once more to finish on the theme of the Messiah's coming.

### ***1. The first day of the disputation, Friday July 20***

Scene of the debate: the royal palace. Audience: The king and his counselors, primarily his men of law and the heads of the Dominicans and Franciscans.

(7) The debate proper began by Friar Paul saying that he would prove from the Talmud that the Messiah whom the prophets had announced, had already come.

(8) Nahmanides: Before we argue further, just tell me how this is possible. (He had been told that Paul had been saying much the same thing while travelling around and preaching in Provence.) Nahmanides then put a question [!] to Paul intending to undermine the entire Dominican strategy:

Does he [Paul] wish to say that the Sages of the Talmud were believers in Jesus' Messiahship, and that they believed that he was not merely human, but truly divine, as Christians think? Is it not a well-known thing in truth that the affair of Jesus took place in the time of the Second Temple, and that he was born and killed before the destruction of the Temple, while the Sages of the Talmud, such as Rabbi Akiva and his associates, lived after the destruction? [And so did those who composed the Mishnah and the Talmud.] And if these Sages believed in the Messiahship of Jesus and that he and his faith and religion were true, and if they wrote the things from which Friar Paul says he will prove this, if so, how did they remain in the original religion and practice of Judaism? ... Why did they not become converted to Christianity, as Friar Paul did when he understood from their sayings that Christianity is the true faith, and he went and became converted according to their words?... [I]f they believed in Jesus and his religion, why did they not do as Friar Paul has done, who understands their words better than they did themselves?<sup>587</sup>

(9) Friar Paul clearly understood that his argumentative strategy would collapse if this question were allowed to be the first theme of discussion. Accordingly, he brushed it aside as an evasion and pointed out that Nahmanides was supposed to answer questions, not put them.

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<sup>587</sup> Translation Maccoby, 104–105, slightly adapted.

(10) Nahmanides took this as proof that Friar Paul's subsequent argument would be without substance, but conceded that according to the King's wish, he should answer Paul's words.

*A. Gen 49:10: When the reign of Judah ends, the Messiah has come*

(11) Paul: "Scripture says, 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh come' [Gen 49:10]. Shiloh is the Messiah, and the prophet says that Judah [the Jewish people] will always have power [self-rule] until the coming of the Messiah who goes forth from him. If so, today when you [Jews] have not a single scepter or a single ruler, the Messiah who is of the seed of Judah and has the right of rulership, must have come."<sup>588</sup>

*Comment:* The Latin Protocol avoids any mention of Nahmanides' opening argument (passage 8 above), and simply states that at one point Genesis 49:10 was brought forward (by Paul), and that it was argued that since it is certain that there is now neither scepter nor leader in Judah, it is certain that the Messiah promised to come had in fact done so.<sup>589</sup>

Genesis 49:10 had been a classic in Christian anti-Jewish argument ever since Justin Martyr in the 150ies C.E. In his so-called *First Apology*, Justin simply makes the prophecy speak of Jewish self-rule in one form or another until the Roman conquest of the land of Israel.<sup>590</sup> In his *Dialogue with Trypho, the Jew*, Justin has a more sophisticated approach.

You [Trypho] will not have the nerve to assert, nor could you prove it if you did, that your race did not always have a prophet or king from the beginning until the time when Jesus Christ was born and suffered. Although you claim that Herod, after whose reign Christ suffered, was from Ascalon, you still must admit that you then had a high priest of your own race, so that even then you had one who offered sacrifices and observed the other legal ceremonies of the Mosaic Law. And you also had a continuous succession of prophets down to John [the Baptist]. This was the case even when your people were led captive into Babylon, and your land ravaged by war, and your sacred vessels carried away. There never ceased to be a prophet in your midst who was lord and leader and ruler over your people. Indeed, even your kings were appointed and anointed by the spirit in these prophets. But, since the coming and death of our Jesus Christ in your midst, you have not had a prophet, nor do you possess one now. Furthermore, you no longer live under your own king, and, in addition, 'your land has been laid waste, and abandoned as a lodge in a garden' [Isa 1:8]" (*Dial.* 52.3–4).<sup>591</sup>

Here, the presence of a High Priest and – even more significant – the presence of prophets having the authority to anoint kings, are seen as providing that continuity of kingship that Jacob's oracle predicted. The line of prophets ending with John is clearly inspired from Jesus' saying in Luke 16:16 and Matt 11:12–15 (woven together as one harmonized saying) quoted in *Dial.* 51.3 ("The Law and the Prophets were until John the Baptist...") and summarized in advance in *Dial.* 51.1: "... John came as a forerunner, exhorting men to repent, and then Christ came and brought to a close John's prophesying..."<sup>592</sup>

It is quite evident that Justin already knew a Jewish counterargument against his own interpretation of Genesis 49:10 in *I. Apology*, viz. that kings from Judah were lacking during the Babylonian exile and during the time from Zerubbabel until Jesus and beyond. Accordingly, the cessation of Judean kingship had nothing to do with the coming of Jesus – basically Nahmanides' argument in the following passages.

<sup>588</sup> Maccoby, 105.

<sup>589</sup> Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 149.

<sup>590</sup> *I. Apol.* 32.1–3. For Greek text and English translation, see Denis Minns and Paul Parvis (eds. and trans.), *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168–69.

<sup>591</sup> Trans. Halton, 77–79.

<sup>592</sup> Translation Halton, 77. For synopsis and analysis of Justin's harmonizing quotation, see Arthur J. Bellinzoni, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (NovTSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 123–25.

Justin's main concern is thus to understand the prophecy in such a way that it speaks about something that continued uninterrupted from David to Jesus, and then ceased. For Justin, the gift of prophecy is the ideal candidate for this role, since David himself, and after him other kings, were anointed by prophets. The prophets had the authorization of being king makers. As I have argued elsewhere, Justin knew a Christian tradition that took John as being the end-time Elijah anointing Jesus with the Spirit.<sup>593</sup>

Posnanski's all-encompassing review of the rich material concerning Christian interpretations of Genesis 49:10 from Justin to Friar Paul makes clear that they all tried to follow Justin's basic idea: Kingship, or at least some form of self-rule, for 'Judah' (taken to be *the Jewish people*) ended with Augustus or Herod, under whose rule Jesus was born.<sup>594</sup> The details vary a great deal, but the structure of the argument is the same. In Spain, Isidore of Seville, and the four Jewish converts Julian of Toledo, Paulus Alvarus, Petrus Alfonsi and the Toledan Anonymus had used it prior to Paul Christian.<sup>595</sup> The simplest statement of the argument occurs in Alfonsi: "Indeed we know that after Christ came there was no king or ruler of Judah anymore."<sup>596</sup>

One might wonder why Paul chose to begin the disputation with a traditional argument from a prophecy in Scripture rather than a talmudic saying. But one point in his interpretation looks like an anticipation of what he expects Nahmanides to argue. He says that the Jews have no ruler's staff *today* (not since Jesus), accordingly the Messiah must have come. The talmudic view was that the Jewish Exilarchs in Babylon continued the office of the "scepter," and the Ethnarchs in the Land of Israel, descending from Hillel, son of David, continued the royal office of the "ruler's staff" (see below passage 13). In this way, the offices mentioned in Genesis 49:10 were continued long after Jesus. Therefore, Paul tried to circumvent this argument by claiming no more than that even these offices no longer existed "today," accordingly the Messiah must have come.

(12) Nahmanides answered that this prophecy did not promise an *uninterrupted* reign of a descendant from Judah. Because of sin, this rule could be and had been interrupted. The prophecy meant that rulership would not cease definitively from the *tribe* of Judah (and be transferred to another of the tribes), and that whenever it returned, it would always return to Judah. Proof: Judah's rule was interrupted prior to Jesus, for seventy years under the Babylonian exile, and then for the whole period of 380 years between Zerubbabel and his sons and the Destruction [of the Temple in 70 C.E.]. The situation now is that the people of Israel are scattered in exile, and therefore they are not a "nation" that could have a king.<sup>597</sup>

*Comment:* In the Latin Protocol, Nahmanides retorted that the scepter of Judah had not been taken away, but had now only been discontinued, as it also had been at the time of the Babylonian captivity.

In general, all Christian interpreters took "Judah" to refer to the Jewish people, whereas Nahmanides insisted that the oracle was addressed to Judah in person, and concerned his offspring, the tribe of Judah, exclusively. In this, Nahmanides had the entire Jewish tradition behind him. David was a descendant of Judah,

<sup>593</sup> See Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 195–199 and 273–277.

<sup>594</sup> Adolf Posnanski, *Schiloh: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Messiaslehre. Erster Teil: Die Auslegung von Genesis 49,10 im Altertume bis zu Ende des Mittelalters*. Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1904, 49–98, 288–335, 347–57.

<sup>595</sup> Isidore: "The saying 'A king from Judah will not fail nor a ruler from his loins until those things arrive which are set aside for him [*donec veniant, quae reposita sunt ei*] and for him the Gentiles are waiting' (Gen 49:10) is obviously a reference to Judah. For there was among the Jews a succession of rulers from Judah's descendants until Christ was born from the Virgin in order to redeem the world. The history of the Jewish people proves this, for their first alien king was the foreigner Herod, and Christ was born under him" (*Questiones in Vetus Testamentum*, PL 83:280, my translation). For Julian of Toledo, see above, p. 43 with note 114; Paulus Alvarus, above, pp. 64–65; Petrus Alfonsi, p. 146; Toledan Anonymus, p. 186.

<sup>596</sup> *Dialogue*, Titulus 9, translation according to Irven M. Resnick, *Petrus Alfonsi: Dialogue Against the Jews* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 196.

<sup>597</sup> Nahmanides implies that when the true Messiah comes, he will end Israel's exile. Jesus did not. See von Mutius, 46.

and sayings about kingdom for Judah were ever since understood as referring to descendants of David.<sup>598</sup> Nahmanides' point is not that rulership returned to Judah after the destruction of the Temple, only that Judean kingship ended with the Babylonian exile, never to be restored fully – not by Zerubbabel or his sons, not by the Hasmoneans who were priests from the tribe of Levi, not by Herod and his sons, who were likewise not of Judah. Regarding the kingdom of Judah, nothing at all changed with the coming of Jesus. This “historicizing” interpretation of the Genesis 49:10 prophecy was *not* the traditional rabbinic one, as Paul was not slow in pointing out. In the following passage he brings forward the traditional rabbinic interpretation, which for him was the main point, not Jacob's prophecy as such: Even the rabbinic interpretation of the prophecy implied, unintentionally, the cessation of Judah's rule for several centuries. Very likely, Paul was taken by surprise when he heard Nahmanides neglecting the rabbinic tradition of interpretation, and instead launching his own very “historicizing” interpretation. It made it all the more urgent for Paul to confront Nahmanides with a nearly unanimous rabbinic tradition. We here see the first example of Nahmanides' freedom in applying that kind of exegetical method that served his purposes best. In this case, it was the *peshat*, the “plain, literal” meaning of the text. On the difference between *peshat* and *derash* (midrashic) exegesis, see the comment to passage 14 below.

(13) Paul tried to invalidate this argument by referring to the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 5a) in which it is explained that the “the scepter” refers to the rabbinic Exilarchs of Babylonia and “the ruler's staff” to the descendants of Hillel who teach the Torah in public [the Patriarchs or Ethnarchs of the Land of Israel]. Accordingly, Paul argued, the rule of Judah remained unbroken until Jesus. But today, even this rulership (by “royal” rabbis, ordained by Hillel's descendants) has ceased, no ordination of rabbis taking place anymore.<sup>599</sup> Therefore Nahmanides should not call himself ‘Maestre’ since this equals ‘Rabbi’.<sup>600</sup>

*Comment:* In the Latin Protocol, this point is rendered like this: “And it was proved to him that in Babylon they had the heads of the captivity with jurisdiction, but after the death of Christ they had neither leader or prince nor the heads of captivity such as those attested by the prophet Daniel, nor prophet nor any kind of rule, as is manifestly plain today. By this, it is certain, that the Messiah has come to them.”

Paul immediately perceived that Nahmanides' interpretation of Genesis 49:10 was not in accordance with the traditional rabbinic interpretation, which he quoted from *Sanhedrin* 5a.<sup>601</sup> Very likely as a counterattack on Christian interpretations like Justin's and all those who followed him, the rabbinic sages of the talmudic period claimed that royal rule by Judah's (David's) offspring *had in fact been continuous*, but far *beyond* the time of Jesus. This was based upon not taking the second term of rulership in Genesis 49:10, *meḥoqeq* (NRSV: ruler's staff) as a synonym parallel to *shevet*, scepter, in the first phrase, but instead connecting it with the word *hoq*, law, statute (both words are derivatives of the verb *ḥqq*, inscribe [as a law], decree). In *Targum Onqelos*, the *meḥoqeq* is translated *saḥra*, meaning “lawgiver” or “instructor in the law.” Since this “instructor” is said to come “from between his [Judah's] loins,” *Sanhedrin* 5a paraphrases the targumic interpretation like this: “the *meḥoqeq* from between his feet,” this alludes to the descendants of Hillel, who teach the Torah in public.” Hillel was considered a descendant of David. The later Jewish Patriarchs of the Land of Israel, reputedly Hillel's descendants, could therefore claim royal status.<sup>602</sup> And the rabbinic concept of the Messiah echoed this: the Messiah was “rabbinized”; he, too, became an expounder of the Torah.<sup>603</sup>

<sup>598</sup> Again, the most extensive and all-encompassing review of the rabbinic interpretations of Gen 49:10 (before Nahmanides) is that of Posnanski in *Schiloh*, 32–47, 99–157.

<sup>599</sup> The early tradition of ordination of rabbis died out during the fourth or fifth centuries C.E.

<sup>600</sup> *Maestre* is the Catalan version of Italian and Castilian *maestro*, see Pere Casanellas, “Noms propis i altres mots catalans en el relate en hebreu de la disputa de Barcelona de 1263 entre fra Pol Cristià i rabí Mossé ben Nahman,” in *Tamid: Revista Catalana Annual d'Estudis Hebraics* 10 (2014): 125–45; here 139.

<sup>601</sup> One of the earliest attestations of this interpretation occurs in Aquila's Greek translation (ca. 130 C.E.): “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the teacher of the law (Greek: *akribazomenos*) from between his feet [from his offspring]” (Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 26).

<sup>602</sup> For this interpretation of the *meḥoqeq* and further Jewish parallels, see Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 26–30, 32–47.

<sup>603</sup> On this, see Martin Jacobs, *Die Institution des jüdischen Patriarchen: Eine quellen- und traditionskritischen Studie zur Geschichte der Juden in der Spätantike* (TSAJ 52; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 212–24; and,

This interpretation which, like the Christian one, strongly asserted an unbroken continuity in the royal rulership of Judah, is most easily understood as a deliberate strategy to counter the Christian argument as stated, e.g., by Justin. The first Christian writer referring to this Jewish interpretation was Origen. There are some, he says, “who in their perplexity as to the words spoken in Genesis by Jacob to Judah, assert that the Ethnarch, being of the race of Judah, is the ruler of the people, and that there will not fail some of his seed, until the advent of that Anointed One whom they figure to their imagination.”<sup>604</sup> The great advantage of this interpretation, seen from the perspective of the rabbis, was not only that the rulership of Judah was continued unabated after Jesus, but also that *they themselves* were those who exercised it! Every rabbi ‘ordained’ by the Patriarch (or Ethnarch) in the Land of Israel was a *meḥoqeq*, a legitimate ‘expounder of the law’ according to Gen 49:10! Friar Paul’s emphasis on denying Nahmanides the title *maestre*, Catalan for rabbi, therefore has more to it than appears immediately. He seems to have anticipated that Nahmanides would claim his own title as Rabbi as proof that *he himself* represented the present continuation of Judah’s rule. Against this, Paul now argued that legitimate ordination had not taken place for many centuries.<sup>605</sup> In other words, even if one accepted the rabbinic exegesis of Jacob’s oracle, Judah’s reign has nevertheless come to an end. – Let me add that we have here seen an example of rabbinic *derash* exegesis, probing beneath the plain (*peshat*) meaning of the text, unlocking its deeper meanings (the verb *darash* means seek, investigate, inquire). For further comment on this, see the next Comment.

The Latin Protocol seems not to have noticed this connection between the question of Nahmanides’ title and the right interpretation of Genesis 49:10, because it treats the question of Nahmanides calling himself Maestre as a theme in its own right, treated first of all, and separated from the discussion of Genesis 49:10 by several other themes: “And when it was proved to him that he ought not be called ‘Master’, because no Jew ought be called by this name since the time of Christ, he conceded this at least, that it was true for the last 800 years.”<sup>606</sup>

(14) Nahmanides responded that this last point, his own title, was irrelevant for the discussion, but in any case, “Maestre” corresponded to non-ordained “Rab,” not to ordained “Rabbi.” As for the real question at stake, the talmudic Sages did not take Genesis 49:10 to speak of any other form of power than that of a true king.<sup>607</sup> Paul had no expertise in legal matters; he only knew a few haggadic stories. When the Sages (in *b Sanh.* 5a) mentioned the Exilarchs and the Patriarchs (of Davidic descent) as exercising very limited royal power, this power was granted them by Gentile princes and kings and did in no way make them into such kings as were meant in Genesis 49:10.<sup>608</sup> In any case, no one could deny that during the Babylonian exile Israel had no king at all, and later, “in the time of the Second Temple, when the royal power was exercised by the priests [the Hasmoneans, of the tribe of Levi, not Judah] and their

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more generally, Philip S. Alexander, “The Rabbis and Messianism,” in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 227–44.

<sup>604</sup> Origen, *De principiis*, IV.I.3, Translation according to *ANF* 4: 351. Later, Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 348) also attests this interpretation in *Catechesis* XII.17.

<sup>605</sup> The rabbinic “ordination” rite originated with the establishment of the Jewish Patriarchate (Hebrew: the office of *Nasi*) late first/early second century and was only practiced in the Land of Israel. Only ordained sages could be called ‘Rabbi’; outside the land, the Sages were called ‘Rab’. The early tradition of ordination of Rabbis died out during the fourth or fifth centuries C.E. As Nahmanides soon will explain, Catalan ‘maestre’ renders Rab rather than Rabbi.

<sup>606</sup> The early tradition of ordination of rabbis died out during the fourth or fifth centuries C.E.

<sup>607</sup> As shown in my different comments, this is simply not correct.

<sup>608</sup> Nahmanides is here probably interpreting the *Sanhedrin* 5a passage against its intended meaning. The Talmud at this point was probably arguing that Judah’s (and David’s) royal rule was *continued* until Jesus and *beyond* through the offices of the Exilarchs and Patriarchs. Nahmanides wanted to circumvent this entire debate by denying that the prophecy excluded interruptions to Judah’s kingdom because of sin.

servants [the Herodians], the tribe of Judah had no power whatever, not even that of an Exilarch or a Nasi.”<sup>609</sup>

*Comment:* As more than one commentator has observed, Nahmanides’ strategy of allowing for long suspensions of Judah’s rule over the other tribes ran counter to the mainline strategy among Jewish interpreters before him. They had countered the Christian claim of a continuous Davidic reign until Jesus by extending this continuity *beyond* Jesus. Nahmanides, in contrast, rejected the claim that Genesis 49:10 spoke of an *unbroken continuity* altogether.

But Nahmanides’ strategy required that he argued *against* the traditional Jewish interpretation embodied in the *Sanhedrin* passage quoted by Paul. He did this by saying that the rabbis in this text were only making a limited legal point in talking about the Ethnarch and the Exilarch as authorized to make juridical decisions. In reality, as history shows, the full realization of the tribe of Judah’s rulership over the other tribes was only fully realized under David and Solomon! After them, the only one to exercise it in full, would be the coming Messiah.

When Nahmanides to such an extent broke with a longstanding and nearly unanimous Jewish interpretative tradition, the question arises whether he had any predecessors. In fact, he had a few, but none of them interpreting the text exactly like him. What united them was a turning away from the partly allegorical way of interpreting texts that had long been in vogue among the Jewish sages, the so-called *derash* interpretation typical of the *Midrashim*. In the late tenth and the eleventh century in Spain, a movement towards a more sober literal and historical interpretation of the Hebrew Bible began, and it soon spread to France, Germany and even further.<sup>610</sup> This mode of interpretation had from old been called finding the *peshat*, the plain or straightforward meaning of the text. This was not foreign to the earlier Rabbis, but the main emphasis was put on the *derash*, which revealed the deeper theological truths embodied in the text. But now the *peshat* took the front seat, especially in polemical settings, like the debate with Christian exegetes. The rabbis may have found that the best way to resist Christian interpretations was to insist on the plain historical meaning of the biblical text, especially the prophecies.<sup>611</sup>

But an inner-Jewish cause for the rise of *peshat* exegesis may also have played a decisive role. In a very enlightening article, Eran Vietzel has traced the origin of the renewal of the *peshat* type of Jewish exegesis to an inner-Jewish conflict in ninth century Babylonia.<sup>612</sup> Jewish Qaraites rejected the entire rabbinic tradition of interpreting the Torah, and supplanted it by a more literal, context-attentive exegesis. This, in turn, made the rabbis answer in kind: We can also defend our traditional exegesis by founding it on the *peshat* reading of the biblical text. In part, this new type of exegesis spread westward until it reached Spain, in part it reached Italy via the Byzantine Empire, and in part it originated independently of the Babylonian impulse because Qaraites were to be found in nearly all Jewish communities all over Europe. The apogee of this development is often seen in the group of interpreters called “The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France,” comprising luminaries like Rabbi Solomon Yishaqi (acronym Rashi, 1040–1105), Joseph Kara (1050–1125), and Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam, 1080–1160).<sup>613</sup>

Closing in on Spain and Southern France, we find a similar school there, comprising exegetes like Abraham ben Meir ibn Ezra from Tudela, Navarre (1089–1164),<sup>614</sup> Joseph Kimhi from al-Andalus, living in Narbonne (1105–70), and his two sons, Moses (d. ca. 1190), and David (Radak, ca. 1160–1253).<sup>615</sup> After the Kimhis, Nahmanides is mentioned as belonging to the same school.<sup>616</sup>

<sup>609</sup> Translation Maccoby, 108.

<sup>610</sup> See the excellent reviews in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, Vol. I/2: The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), chapters 31–33, pp. 281–466.

<sup>611</sup> On this, see Avraham Grossmann, “The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France,” in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament I:2*, 321–71; here at 326–31.

<sup>612</sup> Eran Vietzel, “The Rise and Fall of Jewish Philological Exegesis on the Bible in the Middle Ages: Causes and Effects,” *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 20 (2017): 48–88.

<sup>613</sup> See Grossmann, “The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis,” 332–71.

<sup>614</sup> See Uriel Simon, “Abraham ibn Ezra,” in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament I:2*: 377–87.

<sup>615</sup> On these three, see Mordechai Cohen, “The Qimhi Family,” in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament I:2*: 388–415.

<sup>616</sup> See Yaakov Elman, “Moses ben Nahman / Nahmanides (Ramban),” in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament I:2*: 416–32.

Zooming in on Nahmanides, we find at least two predecessors concerning Gen 49:10. The first is Joseph Kimhi.<sup>617</sup> In his polemical work *Book of the Covenant* (1169) he quotes a (Christian) heretic who says that *Shiloh*, who was to come at the end of Judah's reign, was Jesus. Against this Joseph argues that Jacob's oracle came true when David entered his throne. From Moses until then Judah had indeed been the leading tribe; after David his descendants until Zedekiah reigned as kings, but then the scepter departed from Judah. Neither the Levite Hasmoneans nor the Herodian dynasty was of Judah. Accordingly, Judah's royal rule ended long before Jesus, so how could his coming have anything to do with Jacob's prophecy?<sup>618</sup>

The second is Jacob ben Reuben from Huesca, who between 1170 and 1190 answered Petrus Alfonsi concerning the same prophecy (see above, p. 146). Jacob's words in the prophecy should rightly be translated: "None of the sons of Judah will come near the royal scepter until [God's] dwelling in Shiloh has come to an end." This happened when David was anointed by Samuel. Compare Psalm 78:60.67.68.70. Having said this, however, Jacob ben Reuben harks back to the traditional exegesis: Since David, "princes and teachers of law" have never departed from Judah until today. Jesus was neither.<sup>619</sup>

Neither of these men anticipated the whole package of Nahmanides' interpretation, but they shared with him the conviction that the way to invalidate the Christian interpretation is to place Jacob's prophecy, in its literal sense, squarely within Israel's history prior to the Babylonian exile. Nahmanides thus continued the trend towards legitimate individual freedom for Jewish exegetes when it came to *peshat* exegesis.

This 'historicizing' exegesis was not entirely new; it was to a certain extent anticipated by some rabbis of the third century and later. When debating the two Isaiah prophecies 9:1–6 and 11:1–10, a certain Rabbi Hillel (possibly the brother of the Patriarch Judah II, in office ca. 230–270 C.E.)<sup>620</sup> said: "There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah."<sup>621</sup> The tendency here is similar to that of the much later authorities discussed above: Let us defuse heretical (Christian) or revolutionary Messianism by placing the prophecies squarely within their own time.

I should add that Nahmanides was in no way a detractor of the search for deeper meanings in the biblical texts. But, being a kabbalist of rank, he preferred to speak of these deeper meanings as *sod* (secret), mysterious and esoteric.<sup>622</sup>

(15) Surprisingly, a Franciscan friar, Pere of Genova, now intervened and apparently supported Nahmanides! "This is true, for Scripture only says that the 'scepter' will not cease

<sup>617</sup> On him, see Mordechai Cohen, "Joseph Qimhi," in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament I/2*, 390–95.

Translation of *The Book of Covenant*: Frank Ephraim Talmage, *The Book of the Covenant of Joseph Kimhi Translated* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972); and for his exegesis of Gen 49:10, see Robert Chazan, "Genesis 49:10 in Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing," in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations* (The Brill Reference Library of Judaism 33; ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 93–108; here at 95–97.

<sup>618</sup> For a verbatim translation into German of the long passage on Gen 49:10, see Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 139–40. An English version of the most important statements in Chazan, "Genesis 49:10," 97.

<sup>619</sup> Verbatim German translation in Posnanski, *Schiloh*, 141–43. In Northern France, such historicizing exegesis was pioneered by Rashbam (R. Shmuel ben Meir, ca. 1080–ca. 1160) and Bekhor Shor (R. Joseph ben Isaac third quarter of the twelfth century). Rashbam took Gen 49:10 to say that the royal sceptre over the twelve tribes should not be taken away from David's offspring until one of his descendants, Solomon's son Rehoboam, came to the village Shilo (near Shechem), there to be rejected by the ten tribes. Bekhor Shor launched another *peshat* interpretation: David would not become king until Shiloh, where the ark of the covenant dwelled, came to an end, cf. Psalm 78:60–68. This could be the source of Jacob ben Reuben's interpretation. What we see here is to what extent the liberation from traditional *derash* exegesis opened for *individual* creativity in the art of *peshat* exegesis. For details in the treatment of Gen 49:10 in these two rabbis, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Does Rashi's Torah Commentary Respond to Christianity? A Comparison of Rashi with Rashbam and Bekhor Shor," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 449–72; here at 454–458.

<sup>620</sup> So according to H. Freedman, the Soncino edition translator.

<sup>621</sup> *b. Sanhedrin* 99a; transl. by J. Schachter and H. Freedman in I. Epstein (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin Vol. 3: Sanhedrin* (London: Soncino, 1935), 669. On the whole issue, see Skarsaune, "Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue – from Matthew to the Rabbis," in *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 77 (2012): 25–45, especially 30–34.

<sup>622</sup> See especially Aaron W. Hughes, "Concepts of Scripture in Nahmanides," in Benjamin D. Sommer (ed.), *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 139–56.



altogether, but it leaves open the possibility of an interregnum, *vagar* in the common language [Catalan].”<sup>623</sup>

(16) Nahmanides interrupted immediately, addressing the king: “See, Friar Pere has given his decision in accordance with my words.”<sup>624</sup>

(17) Friar Pere hastened to say no, he had not. The seventy years of the Babylonian Exile was only a short period, and only an interruption (*vagar*). But now the Jews have been powerless for more than a thousand years, which means the scepter has *passed from* them.

(18) Nahmanides responded by blaming Pere for retracting on what he had said, and argued that the prophecy did not distinguish between short and long periods.<sup>625</sup> In actual fact, the kingdom over Judah’s brothers, all Israel, promised him by Jacob, was partially suspended already after Solomon’s death, when only Judah [including Benjamin] remained loyal to the Davidic kings, and even Judah’s limited kingship over his own tribe came to an end with the Babylonian exile.<sup>626</sup> At that time, it was not only the scepter of Judah that passed away, but the people of Israel ceased to exist as a people. Where there is no people there cannot be any scepter. “The prophet did not promise Judah that Israel would never go into exile, so that he might be king over them without interruption.”<sup>627</sup>

*Comment:* With this last exchange, the discussion about Genesis 49:10 came to a preliminary end. Some commentators understand this exchange in the light of the rivalry between Franciscans and Dominicans at this time. Friar Pere first said something that represented a possible rebuttal of one of the arguments in the new Dominican missionary strategy, but hastily withdrew when he realized that he could be the object of the king’s and the other theologians’ disapproval if he was found to be the Jewish disputant’s ally. Von Mutius argues, to my mind convincingly, against this interpretation: What Pere of Genova said after Nahmanides’ intervention, was something he had intended to say anyway. His point was that even if one conceded Nahmanides’ point concerning interruptions (*vagar*), only short interruptions could be described with this term, not more than thousand years. As von Mutius observes, in spite of the rivalry between Franciscans and Dominicans, it is unthinkable that the Franciscans in a dispute arranged by the king himself should have even thought of backing the Jewish antagonist. If anything, their rivalry with the Dominicans would, on an occasion like this, better be displayed if a Franciscan could meet Nahmanides with a better rebuttal than the Dominican protagonist.<sup>628</sup> It is arguable that Pere’s argument was in fact superior to Paul’s, since it circumvented all the rabbinic intricacies involved in the latter’s and went straight to the core of Nahmanides’ exposition.

<sup>623</sup> For “Pere” being the correct reading of Nachmanides’ Hebrew transcription of the name, see Casanellas, “Noms propis,” 131–32. For *vagar* as a Catalan word, see the same article, 141–42.

<sup>624</sup> Translation Maccoby, 108–9, slightly altered.

<sup>625</sup> Which is true, since the question of temporary suspensions in Judah’s kingdom over his brothers is not raised at all in Jacob’s oracle.

<sup>626</sup> Nahmanides’ point here is that the full realization of Jacob’s prophecy was already suspended after Solomon and could not be realized unless a Davidic king again ruled over the twelve tribes. In Gen 49:8 Jacob says: “Judah, your brothers shall praise you [...], your father’s sons shall bow down before you.” After Solomon, this had never been the case, but will be the case again under the Messiah. Nahmanides is practicing a very strict *peshat* exegesis here, at variance with the dominant midrashic exegesis practiced by the classic rabbis.

<sup>627</sup> Translation Maccoby, 109–10.

<sup>628</sup> Von Mutius, *Die christlich-jüdische Zwangsdisputation*, 64–66.

*B. The haggadah about the cow that lowed twice*

(19) It was time for Paul to bring in the next haggadah in his dossier, one that to his mind clearly said the Messiah had already come. He read from the *Lamentations Rabba* (I.16 § 51):

A certain man was ploughing, and his cow lowed. An Arab passed by and said to him, “Jew, Jew, untie your cow, untie your plough, untie your coulter, for the Temple has been destroyed.” He untied his cow, he untied his plough, he untied his coulter. The cow lowed a second time. The Arab said to him, “Tie up your cow, tie up your plough, tie up your coulter, for your Messiah has been born.”

In other words: The Messiah had been born on the day the second temple had been destroyed.

*Comment:* In Josephus’ *Jewish War* there is one passage<sup>629</sup> indicating that some of the zealots beginning the war against Rome were inspired by Ezekiel’s prophecy of the New Temple (chs. 40–48) and from Daniel’s Son of Man visions, especially Daniel 7:13–14. Presumably, Daniel’s prophecy about the Temple’s anointing, but also its destruction, in Daniel 9:24–27 would also be of great relevance for understanding what happened when the Romans demolished the Temple in 70 C.E. This text’s chronology is not entirely clear, but it would seem that the consecration of a new Holy of Holies as well as the destruction of the (old?) sanctuary are placed at or towards the end of 70 year-weeks (490 years), counted from the beginning of the Babylonian exile. A reasonable interpretation of the Daniel prophecy would then be that at 70 C.E., 490 years after the beginning of the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the first Temple, the second Temple would also be destroyed (by the Romans), and the Third Temple built (sanctification of the Holy of Holies), and/or a Holy One, the Messiah, be anointed. This understanding of Daniel’s prophecy seems attested in the *Talmud Yerushalmi, Ta’anit* 1:1 (63d): here we find a discussion between rabbi Eliezer (ca. 90 C.E.) and rabbi Yehoshua concerning the non-appearance of the Messiah after the fall of the Temple.<sup>630</sup> A late echo of this understanding of the prophecy could underlie the haggadah of the cow that lowed twice: The Messiah was *born* on the same day the Temple was destroyed, cf. Daniel 9:24.27.<sup>631</sup>

(20) Nahmanides replied that he did not believe in this haggadah, but in any case, it supported his cause.

(21) Paul seemed shocked by this flat rejection of a rabbinic haggadah by a Jewish rabbi. It would entirely undermine his entire argumentative strategy if Nahmanides could brush aside rabbinic haggadot in this way. He cried out: “See how he denies the writings of the Jews!”<sup>632</sup>

<sup>629</sup> Josephus, *Jewish War* VI.5.4: Some of the instigators of the Jewish revolt demolished the Antonia fortress, making the Temple Plaza more like the square plaza described in the New Temple prophecy of Ezekiel 40; and some fought under the banner of Daniel 7:13–14: A Jewish Messiah, the Son of Man, should win universal kingship.

<sup>630</sup> Quoted, with rabbinic parallels, by Billerbeck in Str-B I:162–64 and in IV.2:992–93.

<sup>631</sup> For a full review of the seventy-weeks end-time scheme, see Paul Billerbeck, “Vorzeichen und Berechnung der Tage des Messias,” in Str-B 4.2: 977–1015; here at 996–1011.

<sup>632</sup> Several Jewish commentators have also taken offense at Nahmanides’ saying, thinking that for tactical purposes he said something that was not his real meaning. See, for example, Baer, *History I*, 153: What

(22) Nahmanides answered by affirming that he did not believe as a historical fact that the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple. If taken literally, the haggadah was simply untrue. But haggadot often had some deeper truth, “another meaning, [which lies] among the secrets of the Sages.”<sup>633</sup> Nahmanides, however, for the sake of argument, would allow the literal interpretation of this haggadah. In this case, the haggadah could not speak of the birth of Jesus, because he was born 73 years prior to the destruction of the Temple according to the Christian reckoning, 200 years prior according to the Jewish.<sup>634</sup>

(23) Friar Paul now kept his silence, but the king’s judiciary Guillem<sup>635</sup> pointed out that the topic of discussion was now not Jesus, but whether the Messiah had come or not. The quoted haggadah said he had come!<sup>636</sup>

(24) Nahmanides: You answer me with legal sophistry. Even so, I will answer you: The haggadah did not say he had *come*, only that he had been *born*. Moses did not at once act as a savior of Israel on the day he was born, only when he *came* to Pharaoh and said, “Let my people go!” Likewise, the Messiah does not enter his task as savior on the day of his birth, but only when he *comes* to the Pope and says, “Let my people go!” Indeed, the Messiah (the *Anointed One*) is not even a Messiah until he is anointed, like David by Samuel. The Messiah will be anointed by Elijah, only then will he be *the Messiah*. And when he comes to the Pope, as explained, only then will he have *come*.<sup>637</sup>

(25) Guillem answered by quoting Isaiah 52:13–53:12 and arguing that (1) this passage speaks about the Messiah, and (2) that it says that he shall die, be humiliated, and be set among evil men, all of which happened to Jesus. “Do you believe that that passage speaks of the Messiah?”<sup>638</sup>

(26) Nahmanides said that according to the plain meaning of the text, it speaks about the people of Israel, as in Isaiah 41:8 and 44:1.

Nahmanides said about the haggadah was “against his own convictions.” A similar critique in Cohen, “Reflections,” 168–69. I will comment further on this below, *ad* passage 39.

<sup>633</sup> I will comment further on this idea, an important one for Nahmanides, below apropos passage 39.

<sup>634</sup> According to *b Sotah* 47a Jesus was a pupil of Rabbi Joshua ben Perehia, who lived ca. 100 B.C.E. Nahmanides again employs his strategy of confronting a rabbinic haggada about the Messiah directly with Jesus to see if he could be the Messiah spoken of.

<sup>635</sup> Nahmanides seems to transcribe in Hebrew this Catalan version of the French name Guillaume. See Casanellas, “Noms propis,” 130–31.

<sup>636</sup> Typically, a *man of law* called Nahmanides back to the set agenda: The topic at this point was not the Messiahship of Jesus, but the *coming* of the Messiah as such. Nahmanides follows suit by immediately addressing this issue. The whole topic came back for further discussion on the second day of the Disputation, see passages 39–42 below.

<sup>637</sup> This theme was resumed on the second day, and I reserve my comments till passage 39 below.

<sup>638</sup> Translation Maccoby.

(27) Paul: But I will show from your own sages that they believed it speaks about the Messiah.<sup>639</sup>

(28) Nahmanides: This is true, but they never said that the Messiah would be slain by the hand of his enemies.<sup>640</sup> In all of the literature of the people of Israel you will not find the Messiah son of David being slain, betrayed, or buried among the wicked (even your Jesus was not buried together with the wicked men with whom he was crucified). Nahmanides offered to explain the Isaiah passage in detail, but they were not interested.<sup>641</sup>

*Comment:* The Latin Protocol has a rather interesting parallel here that I quote in full: “When the said Moses said that Jesus Christ ought not to be called Messiah, because the Messiah, as he said, should not die, as it is said in the Psalm, ‘he asked for life from you and you granted it to him’ [Psalm 21:5a], but he ought to live forever, both he and those whom he will liberate, he was asked whether the chapter of Isaiah, 53, ‘Lord, who would have believed...’ (which according to the Hebrews, begins at the end of chapter 52, where it says, ‘Behold my servant will understand...’) speaks about the Messiah. He firmly asserted that it does not speak of the Messiah at all, but it was proved to him by many authorities from the Talmud, which speak of the passion of Christ and his death, which they prove from the said chapter, that the said chapter of Isaiah is understood of the Christ, and in it the death of the Christ and his passion and burial and resurrection are plainly contained. He, however, compelled at length by the authorities, admitted that it is understood and explained in reference to the Christ. From this it was plain that the Messiah had to suffer and die.”<sup>642</sup>

Since the Latin Protocol is unconcerned about the chronological sequence in which the different themes were treated, it here combines the first and second round concerning the Messiah’s coming (passages 19–34 and 39–42 respectively) and places the discussion about the Messiah’s dying or living eternally (end of passage 39 in the *Vikuah*) before the discussion of Isaiah 53 (passages 25–28 above). Von Mutius rightly observed that the Latin Protocol has a better logical sequence than Nahmanides’ report, and therefore gave preference to the Latin account.<sup>643</sup> I think, however, that Nahmanides’ account looks more authentic precisely because it is not as tidy as the Latin Protocol. In Nahmanides’ account, the second round the second day on *the same themes* that were discussed on the first day, has every sign of authenticity.

It should be noted that Guillem introduced Isaiah 53 *not* in order to prove the saving effect of Jesus’ death, only to prove that the Messiah’s death had been predicted as an important event in his *coming*. It is this latter theme which is still being discussed.

### C. The haggadah about the Messiah among the sick at the gate of Rome

(29) Paul brings to the table the next haggadah from his dossier, from the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Sanhedrin* 98a:

<sup>639</sup> For midrash passages which do, see Maccoby, 112 note, who points to *Yalqut Isaiah*, 476 and *Tanhuma Toledot*, 14. See also Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 236–71, focusing on the suffering Messiah (ben) Ephraim in *Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati*.

<sup>640</sup> He may be referring specifically to the Targums, which remove all suffering and degradation from the Messiah of Isaiah 53 and transfer all such sayings to the Messiah’s enemies.

<sup>641</sup> In Steinschneider’s edition of the *Vikuah* he adds as an appendix Nahmanides’ “Exposition of Isaiah 53,” or, as the Hebrew *incipit* has it: “Elucidation of the Passage “See, my servant shall prosper” [Isaiah 52:13–53:12]. The gist of this exposition is to take the sayings about the Messiah’s suffering as meaning that his deep empathy with his suffering people Israel makes him suffer with them. See A. Neubauer and S. R. Driver, *The 53<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters* (Oxford, 1876), 78.

<sup>642</sup> Translation Maccoby, 149.

<sup>643</sup> Von Mutius, *Zwangsdissputation*, 112–113.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi asked [the prophet] Elijah, “When will the Messiah come?” To which he replied, “Ask the Messiah himself.” Said he, “Where is he?” Said Elijah, “At the gate of Rome among the sick people.” He went there and found him and asked him etc...

Paul concludes: According to this haggadah, the Messiah has undoubtedly come already, and was in Rome, and has to be Jesus, who now rules there.

*Comment:* The haggadah continues: “...asked him when he [the Messiah] will come. The Messiah replied, “*Today.*” When the day passed and he did not come, the rabbi [Joshua ben Levi, third century] complained to Elijah. Elijah answered that the Messiah was referring to the verse, “*Today, if you would but listen to His voice*” (Psalm 95:7).”

This haggadah takes a stand in an ongoing debate between rabbis of the third century C.E. This discussion involved another world-age scheme than the 70 year-weeks in Daniel. In the *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 97a-b, it is told that in the school of Elijah, it was said that the world would exist for 6000 years, first 2000 years of *tohu* (void, without Torah, Gen 1:2), then 2000 years of *Torah*, then 2000 years of the Messiah. According to the rabbinic calendar, the 2000 years of the Messiah would begin in 240 C.E., accordingly, this year would also be the year of the Messiah’s *coming*. In the Sanhedrin passage, the text continues: But the days [of the Messiah’s coming] having passed [without his coming] have done so *because of our great sins*.<sup>644</sup>

The problem involved here is bound to be raised every time a set term for the end-time – the Messiah’s coming, or some other event – passes without anything happening. The “solution” is very often the idea that the realization of the event is in fact conditioned by the behavior of those profiting from it. This clearly happened after the Messiah’s non-appearance in 240 C.E. The haggadah quoted by Paul is among those that relativize set terms and instead emphasize the obedience or penance of Israel as necessary preconditions.

Some of those sharing this view banned calculations of end-time events altogether. And some of them launched the idea that the Messiah would come when the sufferings and calamities of Israel had reached an all-time low, thus defining a necessary precondition rather than a fixed term.<sup>645</sup>

At this point, Paul is not focusing on this aspect of the rabbinic haggadah; instead, he uses it to bolster his point about the Messiah having actually *come*, not only having been born, as Nahmanides would have it. Perhaps he would also like to quote this haggadah because there is a veiled reference to Isaiah 53 in it. Behind the saying “among the sick people,” there is a veiled reference to Isaiah 53:4. In the current text of the *Sanhedrin* tractate, the saying is literally that the Messiah’s name is “the leper (*chiwra*)” as it is said ‘he carried our sicknesses’ (*cholajenu*)” (Isa 53:4). There is a mismatch here between the name and the scriptural reference, which makes Peter Schäfer prefer a variant reading in *Sanhedrin* 98a, viz. “his name is *chulja*, the sick one.”<sup>646</sup> In any case, the reference to Isaiah 53:4 is clearly present in the talmudic text paraphrased by Paul. In this one verse, two points may have converged for Paul: Isaiah 53 speaks about a *suffering* Messiah, and the talmudic haggadah, referring to this verse, implies that he *had already come* at the time of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi.

(30) Nahmanides: Even so, this haggadah does not prove your point, for the question asked two times was “when *will* the Messiah/you *come*?” which means his *coming* was still in the future. Even if one takes both haggadot literally, which I don’t, they both testify to his birth having taken place, but not *his coming*, as I explained.<sup>647</sup>

<sup>644</sup> See the sampling of relevant rabbinic passages mostly from the third century in Billerbeck, “Vorzeichen,” 989–94.

<sup>645</sup> The reference in the former note is valid here as well.

<sup>646</sup> This reading is found in Ramon Martí’s *Pugio Fidei*. For further details and argument, see Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 252–53.

<sup>647</sup> Nahmanides is here addressing head-on Paul’s very point in quoting the haggadah.

(31) Now, somewhat surprisingly, the king himself enters the debate: If the Messiah was born more than thousand years ago, how can he still be alive in order to ‘come’?

(32) Nahmanides: It was agreed that you would not intervene in the debate. But anyway, Adam and Methuselah lived nearly thousand years, and Elijah and Enoch even longer – the length of human life is in the hands of God.

(33) The king: And where is the Messiah now?

(34) Nahmanides, ironically: This is irrelevant to the discussion, but perhaps you will find him at the gates of Toledo, if you send a runner to look!

(35) With this last exchange, the first day of the debate was adjourned.

*General comment on the first day:* As we have seen, one question was discussed the whole day: Has the Messiah come? The Dominicans, represented by the convert Paul, were convinced that by sheer logic, this could be proved not only from Genesis 49:10, but also from several rabbinic haggadot that portrayed the Messiah as already born or present when the second Temple was destroyed, or somewhat later. There was a certain abstractness to the whole argumentative strategy, for in order to make this work, the question of who the Jewish Messiah was, had to be kept out of the argument, and only raised at the end of it.

Nahmanides boycotted this argumentative strategy by two counterarguments. First: How could rabbinic texts be affirmative of the Messiahship of Jesus, when all the quoted authorities had remained Jewish and not believed in Jesus? Paul had brushed the question aside as an evasion. It *was* an evasion of Paul’s argumentative strategy, but otherwise a very fundamental and good question. Second, Nahmanides undermined Paul’s project by flatly stating he did not believe in the quoted haggadot, if they be understood literally. It seems Paul was genuinely surprised by this, and that he realized immediately that this admission would undermine his whole project. The latter was based on a literal understanding of the haggadot he quoted.

Nahmanides had some pertinent remarks to this, too. If the rabbinic haggadot were taken literally, they did not speak about Jesus, because the dates they gave for the birth of the Messiah did not match the birth of Jesus. Paul could not have it both ways: If literally understood, as Paul insisted they should, they did certainly not speak of Jesus.

But when Nahmanides, for the sake of argument, said that even literally understood, these haggadot supported him and not Paul, the Christian audience must have found that he had maneuvered himself into a corner. They were used to think of the human lifespan of their Messiah Jesus as little more than 30 years and were sincerely surprised and disbelieving when Nahmanides said that between the birth and the ‘coming’ of the Messiah more than a thousand years could elapse, and that the Messiah could live (on this earth) forever. Guillem tried to counter Nahmanides’ statement by quoting Isaiah 53, according to which the Messiah would in fact die. He was seconded by Paul who said he could quote rabbis who applied Isaiah 53 to the Messiah. Nahmanides conceded this latter point.

The king’s question may have surprised everybody: If the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple, where is he now? In this case it was Nahmanides who tried to brush the question aside, and I believe von Mutius is right in stating that Nahmanides’ jesting answer about the Messiah being at the gates of Toledo was not the superb irony Nahmanides will have his readers believe. He thinks Nahmanides was taken off guard by the king’s question, and that he was not really satisfied with his own words.<sup>648</sup> How the second day began, gives credence to this interpretation.

## **2. The second day, Monday July 23**

Scene of the debate: (36) A cloister in the city of Barcelona. Audience: “All the people of the city... Gentiles and Jews... the bishop and all the priests, and the scholars of the Minorites [Franciscans] and of the Preaching Friars [Dominicans].”

<sup>648</sup> Von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 120.

(37–38) Nahmanides required to be the first speaker. Against the king’s objection that this was not according to the agreed rules, Nahmanides nevertheless held an extensive speech concerning the questions debated on the first day.

*A. How to understand the haggadic midrashim (apropos the lowing cow)*

(39) First, he explained why he had declared his rejection of the literal truth of the haggadot that Paul had quoted.

Know that we Jews have three kinds of books; the first is the Bible, and we all believe in this with perfect faith; the second is called the Talmud, and it is an explication of the commandments of the Torah, for there are 613 commandments in the Torah, and every single one of them is explicated in the Talmud, and we believe in this explication...<sup>649</sup> We have also a third book which is called Midrash, which means ‘Sermons.’<sup>650</sup> This is just as if the bishop were to stand up and make a sermon, and one of his listeners liked it so much that he wrote it down. And as for... this ... Midrash, if anyone wants to believe in it, well and good, but if someone does not believe in it, there is no harm (trans. Maccoby, 115).

In fact, some of the sages have stated that the Messiah will be *born* near the end-time, and then he will come and gather his people from their exile.<sup>651</sup> For that reason, I do not believe in the haggadah which says he was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple. We call this literature of *midrash* “Haggadah,” which means “narrative” (*recontament*).<sup>652</sup> It is as when a man tells his fellow a story. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, I will accept

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<sup>649</sup> By ‘Talmud’ Nahmanides here primarily refers to the halakic parts of it. The Talmud also contains much haggadah.

<sup>650</sup> Again, Nahmanides simplifies somewhat for his audience; the ‘Midrash’ is not one book but several, they contain, however, more haggadah than the Talmud.

<sup>651</sup> Maccoby suggests that Nahmanides may refer to *Pesiqta Rabbati* 36.1: The soul of the Messiah is located under God’s throne, together with the souls of ‘the children of his generation,’ *waiting* to be born’, Maccoby, 115, note.

<sup>652</sup> In Steinschneider’s text, the Hebrew transcription reads *rasionamento*, Italian for narrative. Steinschneider, however, emends the reading of the manuscripts here, and Casanellas has argued, convincingly to my mind, that the end of the word, as it occurs in the two oldest manuscripts, corresponds perfectly to Catalan *-ament*, and then the beginning of the word can, with minimal emendation, be read as *recont-*. The best argument for this reading is that it means Nahmanides translated a Hebrew/Aramaic word with a Catalan word, the language of the whole oral disputation. In any case, since the Italian word *razionamento* means the same, the question is of minor importance as far as meaning is concerned. See Casanellas, “Noms propis,” 140–41.

Paul's literal reading of the haggadah in question, because Jesus was not born on the day of the destruction of the Temple, and his whole career was finished long before that day.<sup>653</sup>

*Comment:* As I said earlier, some Jewish scholars have taken offense at Nahmanides' saying that he did not believe in the literal truth of the haggadah about the Messiah's birth on the same day that the Temple was destroyed.<sup>654</sup> Marvin Fox, however, argues convincingly that Nahmanides meant exactly what he said, and that many sages had displayed the same free attitude with regard to haggadah (versus halakah, which was binding).<sup>655</sup> As Fox demonstrates, several Jewish interpreters of Scripture – before Nahmanides – openly rejected some of the old rabbinic midrashic interpretations – some of which were contradicting each other at that – and chose freely only those which they found tenable.

Nahmanides, however, was able to combine a rather rationalistic interpretation of Scripture with a *kabbalistic* “deep-reading” of selected texts in the Torah and their midrashic interpretations. He probably refers to this practice when he says in passage 22 above that haggadot often have some deeper truth, an “interpretation derived from the secrets of the sages.” In his commentary on the Torah, Nahmanides hints at kabbalistic interpretations, deeper than the literal meaning. But he does only hint, because these interpretations were not rationally deducible from the written text, they were orally transmitted to Moses, and from him through an unbroken chain of sages and rabbis. Oral tradition from an initiated rabbi was the only legitimate source for such wisdom. Therefore, those in the know would understand Nahmanides' hints, all the others would not. Nahmanides was a great kabbalist, and as such he sometimes displays great self-consciousness as being among the (few) initiated *hakamim*.<sup>656</sup> This explains his apparent arrogance and condescending attitude *vis-à-vis* Friar Paul, whom he certainly did not recognize as having part in this tradition. Von Mutius, pp. 74–77, argues that the kabbalistic “secret” Nahmanides hinted at, was the secret doctrine of the migration of souls – the Messiah's soul having been born on the day of the Temple's fall. Perhaps a confirmation of this can be seen 150 years later, under the Tortosa Disputation (1413–14). The rabbi of Tortosa, Solomon Maimon, had the following to say about this haggadah: “The verse [on which it is based]<sup>657</sup> comes to comfort them [the Jews] for the destruction of the Temple, and to say to them that they will yet return to their original state. ... It means that on the day of the destruction of the Temple, the creation of the Messiah arose in the thought of God...”<sup>658</sup> Perhaps Nahmanides' interpretation would have been similar. In any case, the rabbinic texts speaking of the birth pangs of the days of the Messiah – that Israel's redemption is close at hand, or that its first seeds are sown, when its misery is at a maximum, – are legion.<sup>659</sup>

The Latin Protocol reports: Since Nahmanides was unwilling to admit the truth unless compelled by the authoritative books of the Jews, and when he was unable to explain away the plain sense of these books, he publicly said he did not believe in the authoritative books quoted against him. He said they were sermons in which their teachers, in order to exhort the people, often lied. For this reason, Nahmanides dismissed the Jewish teachers as well as their books. – The Dominican frustration caused by Nahmanides' hermeneutical approach to rabbinic haggadot, an approach effectively undermining the very essence of the Dominican strategy, is clearly seen here.

(39 continued) Nahmanides now flatters the king by stating that His Majesty had posed the best question on the first day (viz. “If the Messiah was born more than thousand years ago,

<sup>653</sup> A brief recapitulation of what Nahmanides said on the first day, passage 22 above.

<sup>654</sup> Cp. p. 239, passage 22, above.

<sup>655</sup> See Fox, “Nahmanides on the Status of Aggadot: Perspectives on the Disputation at Barcelona, 1263,” in *JJS* 40 (1989): 95–109. See also Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 44–49.

<sup>656</sup> For a lucid analysis of Nahmanides' view on the kabbalistic interpretation of the Torah, see Moshe Halbertal, “Tradition, Closed Knowledge, and the Esoteric: Secrecy and Hinting in Nahmanides' Kabbalah,” Chapter 11 in his *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications* (trans. J. Feldman; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 83–92.

<sup>657</sup> In the *Talmud Yerushalmi* version, Isa 10:34 and 11:1 (consecutive verses) are taken together as one saying: “Lebanon [the Temple] will fall by a powerful one, and a shoot shall come forth from the stump of Jesse.” In the same haggadah, the Messiah's name is given as Menahem, the Comforter. This caused the same haggadah to be quoted in a parallel version in *Midrash Lamentations* ad Lamentations 1:16: “For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for Menahem is far from me, one to revive my courage; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed (NRSV).”

<sup>658</sup> Quoted here after Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 90.

<sup>659</sup> Conveniently sampled in Billerbeck, “Vorzeichen,” 1004–1008.



how can he still be alive in order to ‘come’?). Nahmanides’ answer: Even if someone takes the claim that the Messiah was born on the day of the Temple’s destruction literally (which Nahmanides himself does not), there is still no difficulty with an extremely long-lived Messiah. Consider the following: Adam lived 930 years, then he died because of his sin. Had he not sinned, he would have lived much longer, perhaps forever. All sin will be abolished in the days of the Messiah. More than anyone, he will not sin, so it is quite fitting that he should live for 1000, 2000 years or forever.

(40) The King had further asked: Where is he now? Nahmanides: Adam was punished for his sin by being expelled from the Garden of Eden, so we must assume that the sinless Messiah lives there, and so the sages say in the book of haggadah.

*Comment:* Maccoby assumed that Nahmanides here had *Derek Eretz Zutta*, ch. 1 in mind.<sup>660</sup> But there is another possibility. The haggadah about the cow which lowed twice was more extensive than the part which Nahmanides makes Paul quote in passage 22 above.<sup>661</sup> It continues with a story about the Jewish peasant leaving his farm and going searching for the newborn Messiah. He finds the Messiah’s mother, only to hear her say that she no longer has her son with her. When someone threatened his life, a whirlwind swept him away – the unsaid implication is very likely that he was now in safekeeping by God, in heaven or in Paradise, ready to finally *come* on earth as Israel’s savior. In a very stimulating interpretation of the entire haggadah, Peter Schäfer reads it in its entirety as a very carefully constructed response, as well as a parody, on the birth-story of Jesus in Matthew as well as in Revelation 12:1–6. “[E]ven the disappearance of the baby Messiah in our story could be an ironic appropriation of the Christian distinction between the first and second coming of the Messiah.”<sup>662</sup>

When reading this, it struck me that if Nahmanides had the whole haggadah in his mind, he could feel quite justified in stating that it already contained the idea that the Messiah, being born on the day of the destruction of the temple, was now in safekeeping in Paradise, ready to return to earth at the set time – the proviso, of course, being that one took the haggadah in its literal sense, which Nahmanides did not. But he could well have said something similar about the Messiah’s soul, cp. above.

### *B. The Messiah outside the gates of Rome*

(41) The King: But did you not say that according to the haggadah he was in Rome?

(42) Nahmanides: He was in Rome on that particular day, but he did not stay there for long. Nahmanides tells the reader that he stopped there, not elaborating further on this because in the context the haggadah said that the Messiah would stay in Rome only until he had brought it down – a saying that would be offensive to the Christian part of the audience. Afterwards, in private, he communicated these offensive sayings to the king, – and he now makes them public by quoting them in his *Vikuah*, at the end of this very passage.<sup>663</sup>

<sup>660</sup> Cf. Maccoby’s notes on pp. 116 and 129 of his translation.

<sup>661</sup> Peter Schäfer treats the whole story in *The Jewish Jesus*, chapter 8: “The Birth of the Messiah, or Why Did Baby Messiah Disappear?” 214–35; English translation of the version found in *Talmud Yerushalmi, Berakhot 2:4* on pages 215–17.

<sup>662</sup> *The Jewish Jesus*, 235.

<sup>663</sup> This, I believe, is an important but unduly overlooked remark. It indicates that Nahmanides and the king had a private dialogue going in parallel with the public disputation, and that the rabbi could be franker with the king in private than he could in public before a Christian audience and the learned clerics. Maccoby finds the passage difficult to explain, and suggests it was added only in the Hebrew version of Nahmanides’ report, by himself or

In the haggadah it was said that the Messiah will remain in Rome until he has destroyed it. For a similar purpose Moses had concealed his identity for Pharaoh until he destroyed him and his army in the sea. In Ezekiel 28:18 and Isaiah 27:10 there are similar examples of enemies being destroyed from within. In *Pirke Hehaloth* (VI:2) Rome's destruction will be so complete that someone trying to sell the whole city for the smallest coin, will find no buyers (detailed references to rabbinic sources in von Mutius, 135–36 with notes).

*C. Follow-up on the long life of those who do not sin*

(43) Nahmanides now asked whether the Christian side agreed with him that the sin of Adam would be nullified in the time of the Messiah.<sup>664</sup>

(44) The king and Paul confirmed this, “but not in the way you think.” They then presented the Early Church doctrine of the pious men of the Bible being held in the Kingdom of Death, for the occasion called Gehenna, and that Jesus came and led them forth from there.

(45) Nahmanides: We have a folkish proverb that says, “He who wishes to tell lies should cite evidence that is too far away to be checked.” What you just said about Gehenna, is uncheckable, whereas the physical punishments for Adam are not: It is from him that we have inherited our mortality. The Christian doctrine of inherited sin from Adam on the other hand, is false.<sup>665</sup>

(46) Paul tried to bring in another haggadah proving the coming of the Messiah, but in vain.

*D. Back to the real question:*

*1. What are the differences between the Christian and the Jewish Messiahs?*

(47) Nahmanides ignored Paul and simply continued his speech, addressing the king in person. The Messiah, he said, is not central to Judaism. You, King, and our awaited Messiah,

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another editor (Maccoby, 117, note). Well, Nahmanides says as much himself: This was something he could not say in public, but openly to the king in private. More on this below.

<sup>664</sup> See the last part of passage 39 above.

<sup>665</sup> This statement is the first of five examples that Chazan thinks could not have been so provocatively stated during the oral debate; he therefore assumes that this was added only in the Hebrew account, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 95. But compare David Berger's very apposite rejoinder: “We must keep in mind that a remark can look much sharper on paper than in an oral exchange, where its impact can be mitigated by a disarming smile, a shrug, a softness in tone, particularly if the parties have a cordial relationship, for which there is some external evidence in the case of Nahmanides and the king” (“The Barcelona Disputation: Review Essay,” 202). Compare also note 663 above: If Nahmanides had private conversations with the king parallel with his public debate, he could have cleared with the king how far he could go in public.

are human kings of flesh and blood, but I consider you of more worth to me than the Messiah. Under your rule, we Jews are in exile, in affliction and servitude and reproach. When I, in spite of all this adversity, nevertheless live according to Judaism, I accumulate much more reward in the life to come than if I had lived under the Messiah. Under him, I would have no other choice than remaining in Judaism, and my reward would be less.

The real difference between Jews and Christians is to be found in what you Christians say in your doctrine about the deity. This doctrine is distasteful indeed.

You, our lord King, are a Christian and the son of a Christian, and you have listened all your life to priests who have filled your brain and the marrow of your bones with this doctrine, and it has settled with you, because of that accustomed habit. But the doctrine in which you believe, and which is the foundation of your faith, cannot be accepted by the reason, and nature affords no ground for it, nor have the prophets ever expressed it. Nor can even the miraculous stretch as far as this as I shall explain with full proofs in the right time and place...<sup>666</sup>

[The main problem with the Christian doctrine of the Deity is the claim] that the Creator of Heaven and earth resorted to the womb of a certain Jewess and grew there for nine months and was born as an infant, and afterwards grew up and was betrayed into the hands of his enemies who sentenced him to death and executed him, and that afterwards, as you say, he came to life and returned to his original place. The mind of a Jew, or any other person, cannot tolerate this, and you speak your words entirely in vain, for this is the root of our controversy.<sup>667</sup>

*Comment:* Before the whole discussion began, Nahmanides had required that only topics *fundamental* to the argument between Jews and Christians should be discussed. This granted, he consented that the first of these fundamental questions should be whether the Messiah has already come, as Christians believe, or is yet to come, as Jews believe. It was also agreed, according to the Latin protocol, that the truth of the Christian faith in Jesus as the promised Messiah should in no way be questioned during the debate. “[B]ecause of its certitude [it] should not be put into dispute... [and not] be drawn into the arena with the Jews as if it were a matter of doubt...”<sup>668</sup> We have already seen Nahmanides breaking this restriction at the very beginning of the debate. At the point that we now are, he breaks it again, and in a most provocative manner. Clearly, he characterizes Paul’s entire argument from Genesis 49:10 and two rabbinic haggadot that the Messiah must have come as completely irrelevant, because the Messiah that Christians believe has come, is no other than Jesus, and none of the quoted haggadot suites him, nor does Genesis 49:10. The debate has therefore not touched the basic question at all: It is the messiahship of *Jesus*, and the doctrine that he is God incarnate (the second theme on the agreed agenda for the disputation), that is the real issue. In order to discuss this openly and honestly, Nahmanides of course cannot

<sup>666</sup> Translation Maccoby, 119–120. Perhaps another hint at a private dialogue between Nahmanides and the king apart from the public debate.

<sup>667</sup> Translation Maccoby, 120. This is the second of Chazan’s five examples of statements that cannot have been uttered in public during the oral disputation, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 95.

<sup>668</sup> Translation Maccoby, 147.

avoid putting the question of the Incarnation on the table and stating his disbelief in it. What he really says to Paul and the king is: Let us not beat around the bush any longer, let us all get real and discuss the fundamental questions!

It may then seem strange that Nahmanides' first point is the assertion that the doctrine of the Messiah is *not* essential in Judaism. To understand this correctly, a few words on the difference between the Messiah's role in Judaism and Christianity are in place. In Christianity, the Messiah, who of course is Jesus, has the role of solving the universal problem of human guilt. All human beings are sinners and therefore disqualified for eternal life in the world to come. Jesus the Messiah solved this problem by his vicarious suffering and death on the cross (cf. passages 43–45 above). The Jewish Messiah is no savior of individual souls, the "problem" of deserving life in the world to come is up to each individual; the Messiah plays no role here. The Messiah's role is another one: He redeems the Jewish people from their exile and their servitude under Gentile rulers; he gathers them to their land and restores the Temple and the Davidic kingdom. And all of this is to happen in *this* world, in the "Days of the Messiah." The Messiah redeems the people of Israel in this world, not from their sins, but from their subjection under Gentile peoples and kings. Nahmanides could have said that the Jewish Messiah has a quite *different* role in Judaism compared with the role of the Christian Messiah. But since his Christian audience were wont to think that the individual salvation of human souls in the world to come was the *one* crucial question in theology, Nahmanides told the truth by saying that in this regard, the Jewish Messiah was not important at all. He elaborated this by saying that as far as individual redemption was concerned, it was more advantageous for him to live under the non-Jewish king Jaime I than under the Jewish Messiah, because under the Gentile king he had more obstacles to overcome regarding living according to the Torah, and therefore also greater merit in nevertheless doing it.

The second point commented upon by Nahmanides – the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation – was a natural one after the first, because he clearly saw that the enormous significance of the Christian Messiah Jesus in Christian theology followed from the belief that he was in fact God incarnate.<sup>669</sup>

## 2. What are the undisputable signs of the Messiah's coming?

(48) After Nahmanides' long statement, Paul simply asked: Will you believe, then, that he has come?

(49) Skillfully, Nahmanides took this question as his cue to a new extensive lecture on why the Jews could not recognize Jesus as the Messiah:

No, I do not believe the Messiah has come. He was not Jesus, and he was not any other of those who have claimed to be the Messiah.<sup>670</sup> Why? Because none of them made the prophecies come true that clearly spoke about him: "His rule shall be from sea to sea. And from the River until the ends of the earth" [Psalm 72:8]. Jesus did not rule in this way, on the

<sup>669</sup> See Maccoby's very enlightening comments in *Judaism on Trial*, 49–55.

<sup>670</sup> I have accepted here the emended text of Maccoby, 120, see his extensive argument in the note ad loc., p.120–21. Steinschneider's Hebrew text reads: "Besides Jesus, there has never been a person in the world who himself said or of whom it was said that he is the Messiah" (Chavel's translation, 20). Most commentators find it difficult to imagine Nahmanides making such an obviously false statement, especially since the messianic status of Bar Kokhba was expressly affirmed by no less an authority than Rabbi Akiva in the Talmud itself (*y. Ta'an.* 4:8, 63d). If the Hebrew text is original, one could follow von Mutius in supposing that Nahmanides on purpose made this absurd statement, expecting no protest from Paul, only to demonstrate the utter ignorance of the latter (von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 161–62). The Latin Protocol may be relevant here, apparently supporting Steinschneider's text: "In the palace of the lord King the said Jew was asked whether the Messiah who is called Christ had come; and when he answered with the assertion 'No,' and added that the Messiah and Christ are the same, and if it could be proved to him that the Messiah had come, then this ought to be believed about no other than him, to wit Jesus Christ, in whom Christians believe, since *no other had come who dared to usurp this name, or had been believed to be the Christ*" (trans. Maccoby, 148). If one accepts the *Vikuah*'s text as it stands, there is perhaps another possible interpretation: All other Messiah candidates than Jesus had failed miserably in getting a lasting following; they were soon exposed as false Messiahs. In the thirteenth century, Jesus was the only serious Messiah candidate to challenge the Jewish Messiah.

contrary, he had to flee from his enemies and hide from them. In the end he was apprehended and killed. How could he, who could not save himself, save Israel? Friar Paul had said that he now rules from Rome. But Rome ruled before they believed in Jesus, and after they believed in him, their rule has diminished, and has now been superseded by that of the worshippers of Muhammad.

In the days of the Messiah, the prophet says that “They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me” [Jer 31:34]; also, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” [Isa 11:9]; also, “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares ... nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” [Isa 2:4].

Yet from the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering, and the Christians are greater spillers of blood than all the rest of the peoples, and they are also practisers of adultery and incest. And how hard it would be for you, my lord King, and for your knights, if they were not to learn war anymore!<sup>671</sup>

The prophet also says, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth” (Isaiah 11:4), and this is vividly described in the book of Haggadah that Friar Paul has in his hand [*Midrash of Psalms*, 2]: When a province rebels against the Messiah, he only gives a word of command to an army of locusts or wild beasts, and they consume it. This did not happen with Jesus. And I can bring you further proofs from the prophets.

*Comment:* Passage 49 is a natural corollary to what Nahmanides said in passage 47. Precisely because the role of the Messiah is something he does in *this* world, not in the world to come, the question if he has come or not is easily answered: He has not come, because the state of affairs in this world is the very opposite of what it will be like in the Days of the Messiah. Nothing can be more evident than that.

(50) Paul interrupted with an outcry, “This is always his way, to make long-winded speeches. But I have a question to ask.”

(51) The king said to Nahmanides, “Be silent, for he is the questioner.” Nahmanides obeyed.

*General comment:* With this, the discussion of the set theme ‘Has the Messiah come?’ was apparently finished. Nahmanides, by employing his tactics of answering Paul’s repeated restatements of this question with lectures on why the Jews did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, succeeded in setting his own terms for the discussion. This last lecture was a classic statement of the basic Jewish objection against the Messiahship of Jesus since

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<sup>671</sup> Translation Maccoby, 121. This is Chazan’s third example of statements too provocative to have been uttered in the oral debate itself, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 95.

Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Having quoted Daniel 7:9–28 as proof of the royal glory of Jesus at his (second) coming, Justin continues:

When I finished, Trypho objected, “Sir, your quotations from Scripture prove that we must look forward to that glorious and great Messiah who, as the Son of Man, receives the everlasting kingdom from the Ancient of days. But the one whom you call Christ was without glory and honor to such an extent that he incurred the ultimate curse of God’s law [Deut 21:23], namely, he was crucified.”<sup>672</sup>

Briefly put: When the Messiah comes, one can *know* that, because the Days of the Messiah, as described in many prophecies, have visibly come. They did not come with Jesus.

*E. Is the Messiah only human, or human and divine?*

(52) Friar Paul now realized that time had come to change the topic, and raised the second of the set questions of the debate: Is the Messiah human as well as divine?<sup>673</sup>

*1. Messiah, the man, being exalted above the angels*

He quoted from *Yalkut Isaiah* 476: “My servant shall be exalted and lifted up and be very high (Isa 52:13), this means exalted above Abraham, lifted up above Moses, and higher than the ministering angels.”<sup>674</sup> This, Paul said, can only be true about Jesus, who was both Messiah and God Himself.<sup>675</sup>

(53) Nahmanides: But our sages say things like this all the time about righteous people: “Greater are the righteous [e.g., Abraham] than the ministering angels” (*b. Sanhedrin* 93a); Moses said to the angel: “Where I sit, you are not even allowed to stand” (*Sifre Nitzavim* 305); our sages said about all Israel: They are more beloved than the ministering angels (*b. Hullin* 91b). The meaning of these and suchlike haggadot is that though Abraham and Moses preached the God of Israel to the Gentiles, and though Moses said to Pharaoh, Let my people go, and though the Angel Michael fought on behalf of Israel; – the Messiah will do even more than these: He will come and command the Pope and all the kings of the earth: “Let my people go, that they may serve me” [Ex 8:16], and he will smite them with many signs and

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<sup>672</sup> *Dialogue* 32.1, transl. Halton, 48–49, modified.

<sup>673</sup> This was the Christian version of the question; in Nahmanides’ account the question is human *or* divine. For Paul, the *double* nature of the Messiah was the very point at stake, and his argument is constructed accordingly. First, in passage 52, he proves that the Messiah is divine, then, in passage 54, that he is also human, taking upon himself suffering on behalf of the entire humankind. In passage 56 he demonstrates that the Messiah is human as well as divine.

<sup>674</sup> For parallels in *Tanhuma Toledot* 14 and 20, see von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 170 and 173.

<sup>675</sup> If Nahmanides is correct in his rendering of Paul here, the latter made himself guilty of a great mistake, as far as the Dominican strategy was concerned. Martin Cohen (“Reflections,” 168) as well as Hans-Georg von Mutius (*Zwangsdisputation*, 170) feel certain that Paul’s mentioning of Jesus here is something Nahmanides wrongly puts into his mouth, and that Paul only spoke about the Messiah in general terms. Von Mutius adds the observation that in his response, Nahmanides presupposes that Paul had only spoken about the Messiah, accordingly Nahmanides does not, in this case, employ the strategy of demonstrating that the haggadah could not possibly speak about Jesus.

wonders, and will remain in their city of Rome until he has destroyed it. If you want, I can explain the whole passage.<sup>676</sup> (54) But Paul didn't want that.

### 2. *The Messiah suffering vicariously for the whole of mankind*

Instead, he quoted a second haggadah, taken from *Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati*, 36.1:

[The Messiah said to God:] I accept the sufferings on the condition that the resurrection of the dead shall take place in my days; and not only for those who die in my era, but also for all those who were thrown into the sea and drowned, or who were eaten by wolves and other wild animals.<sup>677</sup>

According to Paul, this passage meant that the Messiah prayed to God “for Israel that God may pardon them for their sins and accepted on himself their sufferings.” This is what happened to Jesus, and which he willingly accepted.<sup>678</sup>

(55) Nahmanides said Paul had no shame in claiming this, because Jesus did none of the things the haggadah prophesied that the Messiah would do. The haggadah also portrays the Messiah as human only: he has to pray God resurrect the dead. His sufferings are caused by his observing the miseries of his own people and observing that those who worship a false Messiah as if he were God, are more honored than Israel.<sup>679</sup>

### 3. *The Messiah: human and divine*

(56) Paul now quoted Daniel 9:24, “Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to forgive iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal vision and prophet, and to *anoint [li-m<sup>e</sup>shoah] the most holy.*” Paul explained that the “weeks” were seven years, the seventy weeks being

<sup>676</sup> Viz. Isaiah 52:13, quoted by Paul as part of the haggadah in the former passage. This is Chazan's fourth example of passages unutterable in front of the Christian king and the friars, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 95–96.

<sup>677</sup> Translation by Maccoby (p. 123) of Nahmanides' rendering of the passage.

<sup>678</sup> Von Mutius argues that Paul would violate his own argumentative strategy by mentioning the name Jesus here; accordingly, he suspects that Nahmanides is willfully putting the name Jesus into Paul's mouth at this point. See von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 170, and the same opinion in Cohen, “Reflections,” 168.

<sup>679</sup> Peter Schäfer takes chapter 36 of the *Pesiqta Rabbati* as being one great commentary on Isaiah 53: The Jewish Messiah is asked by God if he is willing to take upon himself the suffering due for his people Israel, thereby redeeming them, and he consents. See *The Jewish Jesus*, 242–71. Schäfer thinks this is not an accidental Jewish parallel to a Christian idea, it is a carefully worked out *response*, redirecting the benefits of the Messiah's redemptive suffering to Israel, not the Gentiles.

the sum of the ten weeks (70 years) of the Babylonian exile and the sixty weeks (420 years) of the Second Temple.<sup>680</sup> The “Holy of Holies” to be *anointed* (be made *Mashiah*) was Jesus.<sup>681</sup>

*Comment.* Paul’s purpose in quoting the Daniel passage was probably to argue that calling the anointed (hence human) Messiah “the Holy of Holies” (*qodesh qodashim*) was the same as calling him divine as well. Traditionally, however, the whole passage of Daniel 9:24–27 had been a favorite Christian testimony concerning the *time* of the Messiah’s coming, and Paul may have intended to kill two birds with one stone. In any case, Nahmanides preferred to pick him up on the time-question only (passage 57 below).

The first Christian author to exploit Daniel 9:24–27 as a detailed timetable for the coming of the Christ and the end-time events associated with it was Tertullian in *Against the Jews*, chapter 8. Tertullian’s argument is extremely technical, containing calculations of years in great detail. Even the early copyists, it seems, had problems in understanding Tertullian’s text, and this has left the extant manuscripts full of possible text corruptions. There is no doubt, however, about Tertullian’s main point: This prophecy predicted, in great detail, what would happen to Jesus and the Temple, and also *when* it would happen (the Temple’s fall 70 C.E. signified that the Messiah must have come before that date). Unlike Genesis 49:10, Daniel 9:25–27 gave a specific date for the Messiah’s coming: a 70 year-weeks (490 years) countdown from a defined beginning point during the Babylonian exile. After Tertullian, Julius Africanus simplified his chronological argument and let the 490 years terminate on the day Jesus was crucified. Jerome adopted his argument, and through him it became the normative one in the Latin Church.<sup>682</sup>

Robert Chazan interestingly points out that Paul at Barcelona did not follow this standard Christian interpretation, but rather the common rabbinic one, as far as subdividing the 70 yearweeks is concerned. He interprets this change of strategy as following from Paul’s over-all strategy: beating the Jews from their own writings and interpretations.<sup>683</sup>

In the Greek Church, Athanasius in his *On the Incarnation of the Word*, chapter 40, interestingly combines Daniel 9:24 with Genesis 49:10: When, according to Daniel 9:24, “vision and prophet” were to cease, this also heralded the coming of “the Holy of Holies”, that is, Christ himself. When he came, “vision and prophet” were no longer necessary because all visions and prophecies had become reality, and the Jewish kingdom in Jerusalem came to an end. Jacob also, in Genesis 49:10, prophesied exactly the same things.

This joint reading of Genesis 49:10 and Daniel 9:24(–27) was also adopted in the Latin Church. Interestingly, it is found in Spain in three Jewish converts to Christianity, Julian of Toledo, Petrus Alvarus and Petrus Alfonsi.<sup>684</sup> Friar Paul therefore was not the first to join the Daniel 9 prophecy as a second testimony to Genesis 49:10.<sup>685</sup>

(57) Nahmanides again employed his strategy of comparing Paul’s interpretation of the prophecy with known historical facts, concluding that they did not support Jesus being the

<sup>680</sup> This corresponds to the standard rabbinic interpretation: The 490 years of the 70 ‘weeks’ were the era between the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians and the second Temple by the Romans. See *Seder Olam Rabba*, 28: Rabbi Jose says, “The seventy weeks are counted from the destruction of the first till the destruction of the second Temple. Its ruin lasted 70 years and its standing rebuilt lasted 420 years” (quoted after von Mutius, 186, note 4). That this period in fact was ca. 160 years longer than 490 years, did not bother the Jewish interpreters, nor did it bother Paul.

<sup>681</sup> Again, von Mutius argues that Paul would violate his own strategy by mentioning the name Jesus here; accordingly, he suspects Nahmanides of reporting tendentiously at this point, consciously preparing his own response. See von Mutius, 184. Supposing Paul said “Messiah”, his argument would be: When the second Temple fell, the Messiah would certainly have come, since his anointing would take place within the period of this Temple.

<sup>682</sup> For details, see Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naissance d’une Exégèse: Daniel dans l’Église ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 28; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1986).

<sup>683</sup> See Robert Chazan, “Daniel 9:24–27: Exegesis and Polemics,” in *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 10; ed. O. Limor, and G. G. Stroumsa; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 143–59; here at 152–53.

<sup>684</sup> See above, on Petrus Alvarus pp. 64–65; on Alfonsi, pp. 146–47.

<sup>685</sup> For Julian, see Posnanski’s long excerpt in *Schiloh*, 303–312; for Alfonsi, see *Dialogue, titulus 9*, Resnick’s translation, pp. 196–197, and pp. 146–47 above.



Messiah. Jesus was not born at the end of the 70 ‘weeks’, when the destruction of the second Temple took place, but rather 30 weeks (210 years) before this event according to the Jewish dating of Jesus’ life, and ten ‘weeks’ (70 years) before according to the Christian calendar.<sup>686</sup>

(58) Paul: That may be so, but in Daniel 9:25 it says, “Know therefore and discern that from the going forth of the words to restore and build Jerusalem unto *one anointed prince...*” who was Jesus.<sup>687</sup>

(59) Nahmanides: An obvious mistake! The prophecy divides the seventy ‘weeks’ in three parts: 7 + 62 + 1. The “anointed prince” clearly came after the first seven weeks, [that is, after the end of the Babylonian exile,] and was Zerubbabel.<sup>688</sup> After your reckoning, the Messiah came after more than sixty ‘weeks’, but you cannot in any way interpret the text to say this.

(60) Paul: In that case, how could Zerubbabel be called “Messiah” [The Anointed One]?

(61) Nahmanides: Even Cyrus was called “Messiah,” [Isa 45:1] and so were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob [Ps 105:15 and 1 Chr 16:22]. Notice, Zerubbabel is not called king, but only prince, for his kingdom was not exalted, but only a limited one. Even the leaders of the Gentiles are called “princes” in Scripture [Ps 47:10]. I can explain the whole Daniel 9 passage if you want to listen with an attentive heart. In any case, that passage contains *no set date* for the coming of the Messiah. Proof: Even after that passage, Daniel continues to pray that he be given knowledge of the time of the end. This prayer was only answered in Daniel 12:11, “From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there shall be 1290 days” (NRSV). I shall now explain before all the meaning of this, even though what I say may be hard to bear for the Jews present:<sup>689</sup>

<sup>686</sup> On Nahmanides’ dating of Jesus, see above, p. 239 with note 634.

<sup>687</sup> Again, Paul may have said “Messiah.” The quoted verse continues: “... until an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, but in troubled time.” One way of harmonizing verse 24 with verse 25 would be to take the 7+62 ‘weeks’ of verse 25 together as giving the term of the Messiah’s anointing, which would then take place one ‘week’ before the termination of the 70 ‘weeks’ of verse 24. Since Paul obviously has identified the “Holy of Holies” in verse 24 with the “anointed prince” in verse 25, this could pass as reasonable exegesis, and be in line with the Christian tradition of interpretation concerning this point.

<sup>688</sup> For a detailed analysis of Nahmanides’ interpretation of the Daniel prophecy, see Chazan, “Daniel 9:24–27: Exegesis and Polemics,” 152–59. Chazan’s main point is that just as Paul left the traditional Christian interpretation and followed the Jewish instead, so Nahmanides broke with the normative Jewish tradition (from Saadia) that eliminated the Messiah completely from Daniel 9:24–27 (thus pulling the carpet under any Christian interpretation), and instead followed Paul in finding a Messiah in this prophecy. But he was Zerubbabel, not Jesus (Chazan, 154–55).

<sup>689</sup> For Nahmanides’ endtime calculations in general, see Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* [Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978; orig. ed. 1927], 83–85. Commentators differ on what Nahmanides meant by saying his exposition could be felt as difficult for the Jews present. Maccoby thinks Nahmanides’ calculation of the end-time liberation of Israel being still 95 years ahead – so that no-one present at the debate would live to see it – was a disappointing message to the Jews present (Maccoby, 126). Concerning Nahmanides’ calculation, see note 694 below. Von Mutius, however, (p. 197) posits another reason: Nahmanides knew that some of the Jews were already afraid that his outspokenness at the debate could hurt their standing in the Christian community and with the king. If Nahmanides succeeded in

From the time that the daily burnt-offering was removed until God removes the abomination which removed it – the people of Rome – 1290 years will pass, for the ‘days’ here mean years (as in Lev 25:29; Ex 13:10; Gen 24:55 etc.).<sup>690</sup> In the next verse Daniel continues: “Happy are those who persevere and attain the 1335 days” (NRSV), adding 45 days (= years). At the first date the Messiah will come.<sup>691</sup> He will destroy “the abomination,” those who worship that which is not God. After that he will gather the dispersed of Israel to the “Wilderness of the peoples” (Ezek 20:35) and he will bring them to their land, as did Moses our teacher and our first Redeemer.<sup>692</sup> This will take 45 years. After that, Israel will rest in their land, rejoice in God and in David, their king.<sup>693</sup> The present year is 1195 years from the destruction.<sup>694</sup> So, 95 years are still lacking before Daniel’s number of years is full.<sup>695</sup> “This interpretation is firm, fitting and easy to believe.”<sup>696</sup>

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offending the Christians and the king more than he had done already, they had every reason to fear the consequences. The advantage of this interpretation is that it was hinted at by Nahmanides himself on the fourth day of the discussion, see below. If this is right, one may well agree with Chazan, who rather takes Nahmanides’ end-time calculation to be meant as an encouragement for the Jews. Nahmanides’ real purpose was to assure his Jewish compatriots that although the Messiah (of Joseph) would not come during their lifetime, his coming was certain. Chazan compares Nahmanides’ brief exposition of Dan 12:11–12 in his *Vikuah* with the much fuller presented in Nahmanides’ *Sefer ha-Ge’ulah* (*Book of Redemption*) that he wrote after the *Vikuah*. Nahmanides here buttresses his exegesis of Dan 12:11–12 by finding the same chronology for the coming of the two Messiahs in chapters 2, 7, and 8 in Daniel, and here the whole point of Nahmanides is positive: Be not in any doubt, the Messiahs will appear at the biblically appointed term. See Chazan, “The Messianic Calculations of Nahmanides,” in *Rashi 1040–1990: Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach* (Patrimoine: Judaïsme; ed. Gabrielle Sed-Ranja; Paris: Du Cerf, 1993), 631–37. Many years before Chazan, Abba Hillel Silver extracted the same point from *Sefer ha-Ge’ulah*: “[T]he Rabbinic injunction against calculating the end is no longer binding because we are so near the end now, and the injunction was made at a time when the end was far off, in order to save the people from heart-breaking disappointments” (*A History of Messianic Speculation*, 83).

<sup>690</sup> As Maccoby remarks, none of these references are probative since none of them equate “day” in singular with “year” in singular, or days in plural with years in plural. What they prove is that days in plural can refer to a single year. This weakness of Nahmanides’ argument would soon be pointed out by Paul. See Maccoby, note p. 126.

<sup>691</sup> In rabbinic lore, set forth in Nahmanides’ *Sefer ha-Ge’ulah*, this is the Messiah of Ephraim (or of Joseph) who dies in a great battle with Gog and Magog after serving 40 years as Messiah. In his *Vikuah* Nahmanides chose not to complicate his argument by distinguishing between the two Messiahs, and also in order not to provide Paul an opportunity to exploit the idea of a dying Messiah in his own argument. See Maccoby’s note ad loc., p. 127.

<sup>692</sup> This concept of the “desert of the peoples” was a kind of eschatological counterpart to the desert between Egypt and the Promised Land in the first exodus.

<sup>693</sup> This is the final, triumphant Messiah, son of David.

<sup>694</sup> In Jewish tradition, the second Temple was destroyed in the year 68 of the Christian calendar. The debate took place in 1263, 1263–68=1195 years after the destruction of the Temple.

<sup>695</sup> To reach the number 1290 another 95 years must be added to the 1195 years reached in 1263: 1263 + 95 = 1358. This meant that none present at the disputation in 1263 would live to see the liberation accomplished by the Messiah (of Ephraim). The Messiah of David would appear 1358 + 45 = 1403. This is what Maccoby thinks Nahmanides meant when he said that his interpretation of the Daniel prophecy in 12:11.12 would be hard news for the Jews present (Maccoby, 126). But see note 689 above.

<sup>696</sup> Nahmanides, in focusing on the question of the end-time, instead of the double nature of the Messiah (which was Paul’s very purpose of bringing Daniel 9:24–25 to the table), has now succeeded in turning the disputation once more to the *coming* of the Messiah – here the *term* of his coming, or rather, *their* coming, since here and here only the two Jewish Messiahs, the Messiah of Ephraim and the Messiah of David, are juxtaposed.

(62) Friar Paul: The sages said, however, in a haggadah [*Yalqut Hosea*, 518], “What are those additional [45] days? These are the forty-five days in which the Redeemer will be concealed.” Just as the first redeemer, Moses, first revealed himself and then concealed himself, so the second Redeemer will do also. In this haggadah, the sages used “days” in the ordinary sense of the word: days, not years.

(63) Nahmanides: That is no valid inference, since the haggadah took over the word “days” from Daniel 12. The real issue is the meaning of days in the prophecy.

(64) Friar Paul to the king: There is no Jew alive who would say that “day” does not mean an ordinary day. My opponent, however, changes the meaning of words as he wishes.

(65) They now asked the first Jew they found: What is the meaning of the Hebrew word *yom*? He answered: “day.”

(66) Nahmanides: My Lord King, this Jew is certainly a better judge in this matter than Friar Paul but not a better judge than me. He then repeated his earlier argument that “days” in some texts could mean “years,” without really adding new evidence of this claim. The only new argument brought forth by him was that Daniel repeatedly was told by the angel to “shut up the words and conceal the book,” that is, to use enigmatic language. But, Nahmanides said, it was no use to teach deep words of wisdom to a man as completely void of knowledge as Paul.

(67) A new participant in the discussion now intervened, Friar Arnal Segarra,<sup>697</sup> saying that Jerome interpreted “days” in the Daniel passage as “days” in the language of ordinary people.<sup>698</sup>

(68) Nahmanides tried to take advantage of this as supporting his cause: Jerome’s interpretation indicated that he did not take “days” literally. “Days of the people” should be taken to mean “years”, as in the popular saying, “It has been many days since a certain thing happened”, here “days” mean “years.”

*Comment:* This was not Nahmanides’ greatest moment in the debate. In fact, he misunderstood the Jerome reference completely, and made a rather lame case for “days” meaning “years” in Daniel 12.<sup>699</sup> Nahmanides’ comment clearly shows that he had not read Jerome’s Daniel commentary, and therefore took Arnal to say the exact opposite of what he actually said and meant. I also believe von Mutius is probably right in positing that the Christian side corrected this mistake by reading out loud from Jerome’s commentary.<sup>700</sup> Nahmanides could have

<sup>697</sup> For Arnal Segarra being the Catalan version of his name, transcribed in Hebrew by Nahmanides, see Casanellas, “Noms propis,” 129–130. Arnal was one of the leading Dominicans in Barcelona.

<sup>698</sup> Arnal was correct on this point. Jerome says in his commentary on Daniel that the days of Dan 12:11–12 are ordinary days, plain and simple.

<sup>699</sup> See in particular von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 208. Maccoby (p. 128, note) tries to save Nahmanides by saying that Arnal’s remark probably referred to another text about days than the one in Daniel, a text that would support Nahmanides on days meaning years, and that Nahmanides’ mistake was only to misunderstand the reference. This seems unlikely.

<sup>700</sup> Von Mutius, 208–209

good reasons to leave this out of his report. The next sentences in his report, to which we now turn, look very abrupt and certainly not as a natural follow-up or sequel to the last of the preceding sayings.

*4. The Messiah: Made to suffer by his people, but brought by God to the Garden of Eden*

(69) Paul took his point of departure in a new haggadah. This one concerned the Messiah's entering of the Garden of Eden: "Why the Messiah? Because he saw that his ancestors were idolaters, and he separated himself from their way, and worshipped the Holy One, blessed be he, who hid him in the Garden of Eden."

(70) Nahmanides laughed at him and said that this haggadah definitely spoke about a purely human Messiah. His ancestors were idolaters, and God considered his repudiation of idolatry a great merit – how could any of this be said about him if he were God? Nahmanides then took the book of haggadah and read out the context of the passage quoted by Paul. The haggadah spoke about 14 people who entered the Garden of Eden alive, including Serah the daughter of Asher, and Bathyah the daughter of Pharaoh.<sup>701</sup> Had the Messiah been Jesus, being God himself, as you think, he would not be in the Garden of Eden with these women; he would sit on God's throne in heaven with the earth as his footstool [Isa 66:1] – may God forbid even the thought! But in reality, the Messiah is in the Garden of Eden, as I said before, like Adam was before he sinned. This is the opinion of the sages in their books of haggadah.<sup>702</sup>

After this, the King stood up and all adjourned.

*Comment:* It is not entirely clear why and to what purpose Paul introduced the haggadah on the 14 persons entering Paradise, nor is it clear exactly which haggadic source is referred to. To my knowledge, the best attempt at unravelling these enigmas is the commentary of von Mutius: No single haggadah corresponds exactly to the one given by Nahmanides, but by combining the extra-talmudic tractate *Derek Erez Suta* ch. 1 end (9 people entering Eden) with the parallel in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* (13 people entering Eden) and a third parallel (*Jalkut Shimoni* to Ezekiel, §367), the number 14 in Nahmanides' version and the four named persons additional to the Messiah are more than accounted for. Paul's intended point in referring to this haggadah could have been this: In the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, it is told that the Messiah was living in a generation of idolaters. Tired and sick of their way of living, he devoted himself exclusively to worshipping God. In so doing, he also made intercession on behalf of his fellow human beings, and suffered for them as predicted in Isaiah 53:5. Therefore God took him in safe-keeping [in the Garden of Eden?] and will let him return to earth to save Israel, bring them back from exile and resurrect their dead.<sup>703</sup> Paul may have chosen this haggadah because it described a "career" of the Jewish Messiah strikingly like the one of Jesus – without explicitly driving that point home at this stage.

Nahmanides, in his response, pointed out once again that what was said about the Messiah in this haggadah, was also said about 13 other human beings, in other words: no divine Messiah here. And the Garden of Eden spoken of was the same *earthly* garden that Adam lived in before his expulsion. According to Paul, the Messiah's present reign was a *heavenly* reign from a heavenly throne.

<sup>701</sup> Serah led the Israelites so that they found the coffin containing Joseph's bones at the exodus (*b. Sotah* 13a); Bathyah found and saved baby Moses.

<sup>702</sup> This last remark is significant: The view Nahmanides reports here, is not his own, but the view of those sages who told haggadot like the one about the cow that lowed twice.

<sup>703</sup> See von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 213–14 and 216 note 12.

*General comment on the second day.* The first half of this day was mainly used by Nahmanides to make a clean-up operation concerning the questions about the coming of the Messiah that had been left unresolved from the first day. Paul, realizing that he could get no further admissions from Nahmanides on this point, tried to switch the debate over to the second agreed theme: Is the Messiah not only human, but also divine? His basic strategy was to quote haggadot which seemed to ascribe divine actions or qualities to the Messiah. Nahmanides' counterstrategy was consistently to demonstrate that all these haggadic sayings were, in the very same haggadot, applied to other human beings also, not only the Messiah. At the same time Nahmanides at every possible turn reverted to the debate concerning whether the Messiah had already come or not. When Paul responded, he was also forced to return to this theme. The effect was that Paul appeared inconsequential and not following a clear line of argument.

Let me anticipate: On the *fourth* and last day of the debate, Friar Paul tried to make the second agreed question (the fully human and fully divine Messiah) the main theme of the debate – finally! But Nahmanides responded by stating openly his own understanding of the debate: It had been agreed that the first question to be settled was whether the Messiah had come or not. Paul had not been able to prove the Messiah's coming, Nahmanides had disproved it. Paul had therefore lost the debate on the first question, and there was, accordingly, no need to discuss the second. If Paul disagreed that Nahmanides had proved that the Messiah was still to come, he was willing to bring further proofs. "The learned judges present said my point was correct," says Nahmanides.

This, I believe, was Nahmanides' strategy from day one. He intended to keep the question of the Messiah's coming on the table until he had vindicated the Jewish view and demonstrated the futility of the whole Dominican strategy. Therefore, he would keep Friar Paul on the hook regarding the first question as long as he was allowed to do so, and whenever Friar Paul moved on to raise the second question about the divinity of the Messiah, Nahmanides "answered" in ways that brought the first question back. In Nahmanides' report one can easily sense Friar Paul's growing frustration caused by this clever boycott of his own set agenda.

### **3. The third day, Thursday July 26**

Scene of the debate: A room near the entrance of the King's palace, the disputation to be held "in private."

#### *F. Wrapping up the discussion of the coming of the Messiah*

(72) Nahmanides says that Friar Paul began with "meaningless words of no interest," accordingly he sees no need to report them. What he makes Paul say after these "meaningless" words, obviously presupposes a context we are not given:

Paul says that he shall present proof from the great sage "Moses of Egypt" [Maimonides], the greatest sage for the last 400 years, that according to the Jewish view, the Messiah will die, and his son and grandson will reign after him. Nahmanides had therefore been wrong when he said that the Messiah would not die in the usual way of men (i.e., he had not expressed the normative Jewish view expounded by Maimonides). Paul then asked that Maimonides' book *Judges* be brought to him.<sup>704</sup>

(73) Nahmanides, in the meantime, said that what Paul had quoted from Maimonides was not in his book *Judges*; on the other hand, some of the Jewish sages held the view that Paul

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<sup>704</sup> *Shoftim*, *Judges*, is the name of the fourteenth and last book of Maimonides' great work *Mishneh Tora*.

attributed to Maimonides.<sup>705</sup> Two views concerning the Messiah were represented among the sages. According to some books of haggadah the Messiah was born on the day of the destruction of the Temple and will live forever. Others held a view more close to the plain sense of the biblical texts: The Messiah will be born close to the end-time; he will live a long but finite life, and die in honor and leave his crown to his son.<sup>706</sup> This was Nahmanides' own view, supported by a talmudic saying: "There is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except deliverance from bondage to the kingdoms" (*b Shabbat* 151b).<sup>707</sup>

(74) Paul had now gotten Maimonides' *Book of Judges* and sought the passage he had quoted from memory but could not find it. Nahmanides took the book from him and quoted a passage saying that "The King Messiah will arise in the future for Israel and will build the Temple and gather the dispersed of Israel."<sup>708</sup>

(75) Friar Arnal Segarra said: He [Maimonides] is a liar!

(76) Nahmanides: Until now he was a great sage, but now a liar?

(77) The king to Arnal: It is not appropriate to dishonor sages!

(78) Nahmanides: He [Maimonides] is not a liar, I can prove that from the Torah and the Prophets: It is the task of the Messiah to gather the dispersed of Israel and the scattered ones of Judah (Isa 11:12), the twelve tribes. But your Messiah, Jesus, did gather no one, nor did he live in the time of the (second) exile. The Messiah shall also build the [third] Temple (Ezek 40–44), whereas Jesus did nothing regarding the Temple, neither its building nor its destruction. The Messiah shall rule over the Gentiles, Jesus ruled over no one, not even over himself.<sup>709</sup> Nahmanides then read out loud Deuteronomy 30:1–7, ending with the words "the LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you," explaining that "your enemies" meant the Christians and "the adversaries" the Ishmaelites [Moslems], "the two peoples who have persecuted us."<sup>710</sup>

<sup>705</sup> In fact, Maimonides himself held this view, but in another book. Nahmanides conceals this fact in order to magnify Paul's ignorance.

<sup>706</sup> This view was "more literal" not with regard to how the haggadah was interpreted, but with regard to the interpretation of the biblical prophecies about the Messiah.

<sup>707</sup> Maimonides also referred to this talmudic passage, but Nahmanides in fact *did* reckon with significant changes in the world of nature, as well as in human nature, at the coming of the Messiah, see passage 45 above and the instructive comments of von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 145–50 and 218–21. This is one of the examples pointed out by von Mutius which proves that Nahmanides could on occasion hide aspects of his own views for the sake of more effective polemic.

<sup>708</sup> A precise paraphrase of Maimonides' *Shofetim* 11.1.

<sup>709</sup> I. e., Jesus had no power with which he could save others, since he could not even save himself. Perhaps an ironic hint here at Matt 27:41–43 par. Luke 23:35–37.

<sup>710</sup> This is Chazan's fifth and last example of statements too provocative to have been uttered openly at the disputation itself, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 96. For a general discussion of the problem with Nahmanides' most provocative statements in the *Vikuah* – were they really uttered during the disputation or were they added by him

## Paul kept his silence, and they adjourned.

*General comment on the third day:* Nahmanides makes the reader alert to the fact that his report on the debate on the third day is incomplete. He sees no reason to report the meaningless words with which Paul opened the discussion that day. This presents the curious reader with an almost irresistible temptation: Is it possible, based on the end of the discussion on the second day, and Paul's first reported words on the third day, to tentatively build a bridge over the gap in Nahmanides' report? My own best shot is the following: The last haggadah quoted by Paul before the second day ended, was the story about the Messiah (along with several other persons, but Paul omitted that) entering Paradise because he had suffered injustice from his own people. As I argued, following von Mutius, the purpose of Paul's quoting this haggadah could have been to point out the Jesus-like career of the Messiah portrayed in it. The suffering of the Messiah had earlier been interpreted by Paul, with reference to Isaiah 53, to imply his death and burial, vicariously for all men. Only after this, was he to be taken up to the heavenly Paradise, being there now, and expected to return to earth in a second coming.

Nahmanides had countered that (1) regarding the question of the Messiah's divinity (the main theme on the last part of day two) the haggadah was clearly against it, and (2) the idea that the Messiah would die before entering the Garden of Eden was utterly foreign to the haggadist. According to the haggadic tradition, the Messiah did not die, but was taken directly to Paradise in order to escape his persecutors. Since Paul, according to Nahmanides' report, was not given the opportunity to respond to this on the second day, it seems reasonable that he took the opportunity of answering Nahmanides' last argument on day two at the very beginning of day three. Against Nahmanides, he may have felt the need to point out that the normative view among Jewish sages was that the Messiah should live a normal human life, ending in death – not that he should be taken up to heaven and enter eternal life immediately, a kind of divine rescue operation that exempted him from doing anything more on earth.

If this was what Paul wanted to say on day three, he would also have felt the need to emphasize that the human death of the Messiah was the *only* relevant point for him in this discussion, not anything else in Maimonides' or other sages' words about him, like his having heirs to the throne etc. This proviso would have seemed quite meaningless to Nahmanides. And with that, we have arrived at Paul's first reported thrust on day three.

Some other aspects of the third day also deserve some comment. First: Why was it held "in private," without an audience of the common people? Possibly because neither Nahmanides nor the Dominicans were quite satisfied with their performances before a large and mixed audience on the second day. They therefore wanted a more private setting to settle remaining matters left open-ended after the first two days. Also, the "private" nature of the debate the third day may have been caused by all parties' interest in finishing a discussion that may have seemed to both parties overly subtle and of little interest to a larger audience. They also had to take account of the sensitive fact that the king himself had taken part in the handling of this question. Better keep it from the public ear.

Second, there is an apparent contradiction in the discussion on the third day, compared with day one and two. First, Paul accused Nahmanides of being in conflict with the normative Jewish view propounded by Maimonides, viz. that the Messiah would live a long life and then die, handing over the kingdom to his son and grandson. Nahmanides had earlier set forth the opposite view, viz. that the Messiah "would not die in the usual way of men" (cf. passage 39 on the second day). In his answer the third day, Nahmanides distances himself from this view, and aligns himself with Maimonides. This, however, was not a change of his own position, because on the former occasions he had clearly presented the Messiah's living forever as a solution for those who took the haggadah literally, which he had explained he did not. Von Mutius is right, however, in pointing out a real contradiction between Nahmanides' assertion in passage 72 that the only changes in the days of the Messiah will be Israel's liberation from Gentile oppression, and his assertion in passage 45 that changes in nature, also in the nature of human beings, will occur when the Messiah comes.

Third, I would like to call attention to the sharply anti-Maimonidean outburst of Arnol Segarra: Maimonides is a liar! Perhaps there was more to this than an impulsive reaction. As I explained earlier (see p. 95 above), the Dominicans in particular had on occasion become involved in the internal Jewish controversy concerning Maimonides' ideas. While this primarily took place in Southern France, one should not forget that Paul's background was in that area; and he began his missionary campaigns there. Maimonides was accused of being overly rationalistic, explaining away the anthropomorphic and supernatural aspects of the biblical texts. That is hardly what Arnol had in mind here, but a hostile attitude regarding Maimonides would make him prone to react very intensely to what he heard Nahmanides quote from Maimonides' book *Shofetim*.

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in his written report – see the Concluding Comment below. For this particular saying, one has to keep in mind that the setting on the third day was less public than on the other days.

Finally, Nahmanides finished his last statement on a very anti-Christian (and anti-Muslim) note, clearly characterizing Jesus as a false Messiah and the Christians as the enemies of the Jewish People, condemned to being cursed by God when Israel will be assembled and redeemed at the end of days according to Deuteronomy 30:7. Chazan as well as Maccoby thinks that these last paragraphs cannot have been uttered orally during the disputation, but must have been added by Nahmanides or another editor of the published text of the *Vikuah*.<sup>711</sup> Against this, one could argue that Nahmanides' opening words on day four, which immediately follow below, are testimony that many Jewish-friendly Christians and many Jews regarded Nahmanides' outspokenness to be very risky business with regard to the possibility, not to say probability, of Christian reprisals, from the king and the Dominicans as well as the common Christians.

#### ***4. The fourth day, Friday July 27***

(79) Scene: In the royal palace. Audience: The King on his throne, the bishop [of Barcelona] with many lords including Guillem of Cervello and Pere of Berga,<sup>712</sup> and many knights, many townsfolk and the poorest of the people.

##### *A. Interlude: Nahmanides wants the disputation ended*

(80) Nahmanides to the king: I do not wish to continue the discussion. (81) The king: Why?

(82) Nahmanides: There is a great Jewish community here; they have entreated me and begged me to desist. They are very afraid of the Dominicans who cast fear on all the world. Also, the most prominent of the priesthood have asked me not to continue. Even many knights from the royal household have said I did wrong in speaking so bluntly against their faith. Friar Pere of Genova, the Franciscan, said the same.

Even townspeople of different quarters had said to their Jewish neighbors that they should make Nahmanides stop. When, however, Nahmanides had shown them the king's order, they all hesitated and said he should continue after all.

An extended discussion followed, but in the end, Nahmanides agreed to continue, on one condition: Fairness required that on this fourth day, he should be the questioner and Friar Paul the answerer.

(83) The King did not allow this; Nahmanides would still be the one who answered when asked. Nahmanides yielded.

*Comment:* In the Latin Protocol it is said that because Nahmanides could not reply and had been defeated many times in public, and since Jews and Christians were treating him with scorn, he said obstinately in front of everyone that he would no longer answer any question at all. The Jews had told him so; and also, some Christians, viz. Brother P[ere] of Genova and some respectable citizens had advised him not to reply any longer. This lie was publicly refuted, however, by the said Brother P. as well as the respectable citizens. From this it is plain that Nahmanides tried to escape from the disputation by lying.

<sup>711</sup> Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 96; Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 132–33.

<sup>712</sup> Again, I follow Casanellas, "Noms propis," in rendering personal and geographical names according to their Catalan versions (pp. 130–32).



This passage basically confirms the *Vikuah*'s story, and both versions are of great interest because of the light they shed on the very difficult situation in which Nahmanides found himself during the entire disputation. On the one hand, the king had expressly summoned him to take part in the debate, and he would be guilty of a great *lèse-majesté* by refusing to comply (cf. passage 2 in the *Vikuah*). On the other hand, he would be unable to stand his ground and defend his Jewish faith if he could not openly point out where and how the Christian interpretation of biblical and haggadic texts was wrong. By doing so, he would unavoidably "put the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ into dispute, . . . as if it were a matter of doubt;" something that according to the Latin Protocol was forbidden in the agreed ground rules for the debate. According to Nahmanides, however, he was granted freedom of speech, and it was left to his own discretion to speak appropriately and not disrespectfully (sections 3–4). There can hardly be any doubt that the exact interpretation of these ground rules was quite different among the Dominicans on the one hand and Nahmanides on the other. Many groups and individuals on the Christian side now felt that Nahmanides had overstepped this ground rule many times, and that he should not "continue speaking so bluntly against their faith." Among the townspeople, an interesting thing happened: Christians warned their Jewish neighbors: make Nahmanides discontinue the debate! It seems the Christians foresaw negative consequences for Nahmanides himself as well as for their Jewish neighbors if he were to continue. This put Nahmanides in a situation where he had to defend his very participation in the debate, and he did so by showing them the king's order. How much greater offence to disobey the king's order than obeying it, especially since Nahmanides had succeeded in obtaining from the king and the leader of the Dominicans a guarantee of full freedom of speech. The king, being the moderator of the whole disputation, in fact allowed Nahmanides considerable slack in what was to be considered "answering" Paul. The only point where the king reined in Nahmanides' freedom of speech was that Paul should be the questioner, not Nahmanides. Every time Paul complained about Nahmanides' "long-winding words," there was an implied criticism of the king as moderator: Why did he not silence the rabbi when he overstepped the Dominican ground rule of not putting the Christian truth into doubt, or even outright denial?

### *B. The Messiah: Truly human, truly divine*

(84) Paul: Do you believe that the Messiah heralded by the prophets will be entirely human as well as truly divine?

(85) Nahmanides: At the beginning of this debate, we agreed that we should first discuss whether the Messiah has come, and only after that should we discuss if he were divine. But you have not proved the first point, for I have refuted all your vain arguments for it. I have therefore won my case, for the burden of proving that he has come is on you, since this is your assertion. If you do not agree that I have proved my cause, I will bring further proofs, if you will listen. After it has been shown that your Jesus is not the Messiah, there will be no point in discussing whether the Messiah who is still to come, will be entirely human or what he will be.

(86) The learned judges present said Nahmanides was correct on this point.<sup>713</sup>

(87) The king, however, instructed him to keep answering Paul's questions.

(88) Nahmanides then addressed Paul's question (in passage 84 above) and said: The coming Messiah will be completely human, born from his parents' intercourse like all other human beings. He will be of the stock and seed of David, "A shoot shall come out from the stump of

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<sup>713</sup> This may seem surprising, but recall the intervention of one of these lawyers, Guillem, in passage 23 above. He clearly stated that the first subject of the debate was whether the Messiah had come or not, not whether the Messiah was Jesus.

Jesse” (Isa 11:1 NRSV), and also, “Until Shiloh shall come” (Gen 49:10); *shiloh* here means “his [Judah’s] son” since it is related to the word *shilyah* meaning afterbirth, for he will be born with an afterbirth like the rest of us. If he were the Spirit of God, as you say, he would not be “of the stump of Jesse,” and even if he lodged in the womb of a woman who was of David’s seed, he would not inherit the kingdom, for by the law of the Torah a female descendant does not inherit when there is male offspring, and in David’s case, there always was.<sup>714</sup>

*1. A biblical testimony: Psalm 110:1*

(89) Paul now brought in a classical biblical testimony on the divinity of the Messiah: The Psalm says: “A Psalm of David: The LORD [*JHVH*] said to my Lord [*la-adoni*], ‘Sit at my right hand’ (Ps 110:1). Whom, other than God himself, would David call “my Lord,” and if one posits that the Psalm is speaking of a human being, how can a man sit at the right hand of God?

(90) The king seconded Paul: A good question, for if the Messiah were an ordinary son of David, David would not address him as “my Lord.” Nor would I address my son (or grandson) as “my Lord,” even in the case that he was destined to rule the whole world. I would rather want him to call *me* My Lord, and to kiss my hand.

*Comment:* Psalm 110:1 may rightly be called a classic in Christian argument for the divinity of Christ. According to the New Testament Gospels, it originated with Jesus himself, Mark 15:62; Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69, and also Mark 12:35–37; Matt 22:42–44; Luke 20:41–44. It is echoed widely in the other New Testament writings: Acts 2:32–35; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25–27; Eph 1:20–23; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3.13; 8:1; 10:12–13; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22. The role of this verse in early and later Patristic literature is too great to be summarized here; I am content to point out that Christ’s session on the heavenly throne at the Father’s right hand was included in The Old Roman Creed and all its Western daughter-creeds, including the Apostles’ Creed, and was also included – perhaps inspired from the Old Roman – in the “Nicene” creed of the Council of Constantinople 381; certainly the most widely used creed in all of Christendom. It is symptomatic that an early father like Justin Martyr, mid.-second century, extended his Christological interpretation of Ps 110:1 to verses 2 and 3 in the same Psalm: “He shall send forth your rod of power from Sion” (v. 2) meant that Christ shall send forth the Apostles with his message from Jerusalem (cf. Isa 2:3), *I. Apol.* 45.5. “From the womb before the daystar I begot you” (v.3 LXX) indicated Christ’s birth from the Father before the world was created, and then his second birth by a virgin’s womb, *Dial.* 63.3; 45.4; 76.7; 83.4. When one adds to this the centrality in Hebrews of the saying about the king becoming a priest like Melchizedek in Ps 110:4, it is easy to understand that Psalm 110 became, in the Christian interpretative tradition, a veritable goldmine of Christological motifs.

It should be added that in the Christian interpretation of Psalm 110:1, this verse was often read closely together with Daniel 7:13–14: Jesus was not only David’s Lord (Ps 110:1), but he was also the divine Son of Man enthroned at God’s side on the heavenly throne (Dan 7:13–14). The rabbinic interpreters conceded that the

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<sup>714</sup> Nahmanides kills two birds with one stone here: (1) Since Jesus had no human father, his birth by Mary, of David’s seed, does not qualify him as a “son of David” coming from the “stump of Jesse” according to Isa 11:1. (2) Paul’s most important biblical testimony for proving that the Messiah has come already, Genesis 49:10, also requires (male) Davidic descent of the Messiah, this being implied in the word *Shiloh*.

Danielic text really spoke of such a figure, and they were in considerable trouble to give it an acceptable interpretation.<sup>715</sup>

(91) Nahmanides politely avoided to answer the king directly, and instead turned to Paul: Are you the Jewish scholar who all by yourself discovered this “proof” and was so moved by it that you became a convert? Are you the one who makes the king gather us Jewish scholars around you so that you can dispute with us about these new discoveries of yours? Have we not heard this argument before? Indeed, there is hardly any priest or any Christian child who does not put this question to the Jews. The question is outdated.

(92) The king: Even so, you should answer it.

(93) Nahmanides explained that David did indeed write the Psalms inspired by the Spirit of God. But not for his own use, he wrote them to be sung before the altar of God. He could not do this himself, this function was denied him by the Torah. Instead, he gave the Psalms to the Levites for them to sing. This is clearly stated in Chronicles. Accordingly, David wrote them so that they were suitable in the mouth of a Levite. Had David written “the Eternal said to me...,” this would have been inappropriate to say for a Levite. It is appropriate, however, for a Levite to say: “The Eternal said to my Lord – King David – ‘Sit at my right hand.’” Sitting at God’s right hand means being protected by God and being saved, and prevailing over one’s enemies. This did in fact happen to David, who once prevailed over 800 enemies (as told, e.g., in 2 Sam 23:8). This is more than any of your knights, King, can do by their own might, because such things were done by God’s “right hand.” David also said, “Your right hand supported me” (Ps 18:36 NRSV – Nahmanides also adds other examples of the same, like Ps 118:15–16, and Isa 63:12 about Moses, and others). This proves that the Psalms in general were written to be sung *about* David and his son *by* the Levites in the Temple. David’s son is the Messiah. Things as a rule came out favorably for David; they will always do so for the Messiah. Just as God’s right hand supported David, so it will support the Messiah until all peoples are made his footstool. They are all his enemies because they oppressed his people and denied his coming [in the future] and his coming kingdom. Some of them even set up another Messiah! So, it is very appropriate for this Psalm to be sung in the Temple during the reign of David and during the reign of the Messiah.

*Comment:* One notices that Nahmanides understands Psalm 110:1 in such a way that he eliminates any idea of heavenly enthronement from the text. This was a characteristic of all documented Jewish interpretations right

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<sup>715</sup> See the impressive study of the history of these rabbinic efforts in Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 68–149.

from the middle of the second century onwards. In the middle of this century, Justin Martyr reports the following Jewish interpretation of this text: Trypho's teachers "refer the statement 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool,' to Hezekiah, as if he were ordered to sit on the right side of the Temple, when the Assyrian king sent men to him with menacing messages and he was warned by Isaiah not to be afraid" (*Dial.* 83.1).<sup>716</sup> In general, Justin reports that the Jewish sages in his time did not take messianic sayings in the royal Psalms as referring to a future Messiah, but either to the alleged author of the Psalm in question (Psalm 72: Solomon, *Dial.* 34), or to the most Messiah-like son of David before the Exile, Hezekiah (Psalms 24 and 110 together with the Isaiah Immanuel figure, Isa 7:14 and 8:4), *Dial.* 32.6–33.2 and 83.1–4. Very likely, this "messianizing" of Hezekiah (the "son" of Isa 7:14 and 8:4) was originally a way of defusing the messianic fervor that had been aroused because of and during the Bar Kokhba war. In the third century Rabbi Hillel succinctly stated the underlying principle: "There shall be no [future] Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah" (*b. Sanh.* 99a).<sup>717</sup>

This "historicizing" tradition of interpretation was carried on in the later rabbinic tradition, several examples being collected in the *Midrash on Psalms*.<sup>718</sup> Here, Abraham is taken to be the "my lord" referred to, and, based on the use of "under your feet" in Psalm 110, another text was used as the key to the meaning of the Psalm verse: In Isaiah 41:2 it is said (about Abraham, cf. 41:8) that he "tramples kings under his feet."<sup>719</sup> In some of the Midrash's examples, this in turn is combined (1) with the Abraham/Melchizedek encounter in Genesis 14:17–20, Abraham and his descendants taking over Melchizedek's priesthood; and (2) with Abraham's war with and victory over king Amraphel and his allies in Genesis 14:1–16. In many and very creative ways, different interpretations of Isaiah 41:2 are launched, each of them considered as a possible interpretation of Psalm 110:1 as well. The final example quoted by the Midrash is quite different from the others because it makes Psalm 110:1 speak of David himself. *Samuel*, anointing David, said the Lord had said about "my lord," viz. David, that he should be seated as lord and sovereign over Israel. "But since God knew that no reign ought to overlap another by even a hair's breadth, he said to me: "Sit you at My right hand (*shev limini*)." [That is:] *Await (shev)* the end of Saul ... the Benjaminite (*jamini*), for he has still a little while."<sup>720</sup>

There were, however, other (and later?) rabbinic interpretations which in fact spoke of an eschatological enthronement of the Messiah, son of David, at God's right hand according to Psalm 110:1. (But in order to forestall any divinization of the Messiah, Abraham was made to sit at God's left hand). As we shall see immediately below, Paul was not slow in pointing this out: The rabbis had in fact spoken of a heavenly enthronement!

Nahmanides aligned himself with the "historicizing" tradition of interpretation. He made Psalm 110:1 speak of David himself, the Psalm's alleged author. David, in this Psalm verse, did not say "The Lord said to me" because he consciously formulated the Psalm so as to be appropriate when sung not by himself, but by Levites. Nahmanides may have been the first to use this argument. True, it is found in *The Book of the Covenant* by Joseph ben Isaak Kimhi (ca. 1110 – ca. 1170, active as a scholar in Provence).<sup>721</sup> In the preserved text of the book Kimhi says that according to the testimony of the late Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), David wrote his Psalms under the guidance of God's Spirit but was forbidden to sing them himself. This was the task of the Levites according to the book of Chronicles. Therefore, when the author of the Psalms speaks of himself in the third person in many of them, this was in anticipation of the Levites singing them. The problem here is that the part of the text attributed to Maimonides is clearly not written by Kimhi. Maimonides died 34 years after Kimhi, but in the introduction of the quotation Maimonides is said to be "of blessed memory," i.e., as being deceased for some time. But this passage, attributed to Maimonides, is nowhere to be found in his preserved writings. It is so similar to Nahmanides' passage, however, that Talmage in his translation tacitly corrects the text by eliminating *ben Maimon* and turning "Rabbi Moses ben Maimon" into "Rabbi Moses" ben Nahman!<sup>722</sup> Before reading Talmage, I was myself struck by the great similarity between Nahmanides' passage in his *Vikuah* and the corresponding passage in Kimhi's book. I therefore accept Talmage's proposal.

<sup>716</sup> Trans. according to Halton, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 129.

<sup>717</sup> See Skarsaune, "Jews and Christians in the Holy Land, 135–325 C.E.," Markus Bockmuehl & James Carleton Paget (eds.), *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 158–70; here at 160–61.

<sup>718</sup> English translation in William G. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms II* (Yale Judaica Series 13; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), on Psalm 110, pp.205–207.

<sup>719</sup> This quite literal translation is the one of NRSV, which displays the close parallel between the two verses: "Until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet," and "He [God] tramples kings under foot." In the Midrash, however, several other "parallels" are found.

<sup>720</sup> Here *shev limini* is read as *shev le [Ben]jamini*: Wait until the Benjaminite[']s end].

<sup>721</sup> See Frank Ephraim Talmage, *The Book of the Covenant of Joseph Kimhi Translated* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), 59.

<sup>722</sup> Talmage, *Book of Covenant*, 19 note 46.

In other respects, however, Kimhi did anticipate Nahmanides' simple and rational explanation of the "my lord" in Psalm 110:1, although in a different way. According to Kimhi, an anonymous poet formed the verse, calling David "my lord." Kimhi criticizes Jerome for translating the "my lord" by *Dominus meus* with a capital D, ignoring that the first Lord, speaking to David, is *Adonaj* in the Hebrew (plural form for divinity), while the second lord in "my lord" is in singular form: *adoni*, used for human lords. This interpretation is different than Nahmanides', but theologically they make the same point: Psalm 110 refers to David during his lifetime, and there is no question about a heavenly enthronement in this Psalm.<sup>723</sup>

And this precisely was the decisive point for Nahmanides. He goes on to argue that "sitting at God's right hand" in Psalm 110:1 has nothing to do with *heavenly enthronement*. Instead, "the purport of the [term] 'sitting' is to state that the Creator, blessed be He, will protect him [David] during his lifetime and that He will save him and cause him to prevail over his enemies."<sup>724</sup> On this point Nahmanides had a precursor: Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164).<sup>725</sup> In his commentary on the Writings (*Ketuvim*) he interpreted "sit at my right hand" as meaning: "sit in my House and serve me," and "at my right [hand]" as "God acts powerfully by his right [hand]." By his right hand God will make David's enemies his footstool.<sup>726</sup>

Even when Nahmanides ends on an eschatological note – David's son, the Messiah, sitting on David's throne in the last days, – it is still an earthly throne he is speaking about.

## 2. The rabbis interpreted Psalm 110:1 as affirming a heavenly enthronement of the Messiah

(94) Friar Paul: How can he say this, when the Sages of his people state that this Psalm speaks about the Messiah who is to sit at God's right hand quite literally. A haggadah says: "In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will seat the Messiah to his right and Abraham to his left."<sup>727</sup>

(95) Nahmanides: This haggadah also proves my point because I said already that the Psalm partly suits David, but fully the Messiah. Nahmanides then asked for the haggadic book.

(96) With the book in his hand, he read the whole passage from which Paul had just quoted the first sentence: "In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will seat the Messiah to his right hand and Abraham to his left. Abraham's face will become grieved, and he will say, 'A descendant of mine [the Messiah] sits to the right hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, and I to his left,' but the Holy One, blessed be He, then appeased him..."<sup>728</sup> This makes it clear that

(1) the Messiah is not God, and also (2) that Jesus is not the Messiah. (1) If the Messiah was God, Abraham would not be jealous because God-Messiah was accorded greater honor than himself, and (2) Jesus was not the Messiah, for he was not the son of a son of Abraham, but

<sup>723</sup> Talmage, *Book of Covenant*, 58–59.

<sup>724</sup> Translation according to Chavel, *The Disputation at Barcelona*, 34.

<sup>725</sup> On him, see Uriel Simon, "Abraham Ibn Ezra," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, I/2: The Middle Ages* (ed. M. Sæbø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 377–87. In fact, Nahmanides was in constant debate with Ibn Ezra throughout his entire exegetical production, and respected him, while disagreeing on many points.

<sup>726</sup> I here rely on von Mutius' German translation of Ibn Ezra's Hebrew text, *Zwangsdisputation*, 250, note 9.

<sup>727</sup> For reference, see the next note. Paul rightly perceived that Nahmanides had gotten off the hook too easily, because there were in fact rabbinic haggadot which portrayed the Messiah sitting at God's right hand on the heavenly throne. But he was unfortunate in his choice of haggadah to prove this point, as Nahmanides was not slow in pointing out.

<sup>728</sup> *Yalqut Tehillim*, 869. Translation Chavel, 36. Chavel notes that the haggadah continues, [God appeased Abraham by saying:] "Your descendant [the Messiah] will sit at your right hand, and I will be at your right."

the son of a daughter of Abraham.<sup>729</sup> A further proof that the Messiah is not divine is that the Messiah and Abraham are put on the same level by their seating by God's side. A further argument of Jesus not being the Messiah is that the Sages formulating the haggadah spoke about the Messiah as someone to come in the future, and they lived some five hundred years after Jesus! Paul only picks words from the haggadah to suit his argument, and shamefully omits the context.

*Comment:* Again, Nahmanides points out the basic flaw of the entire Dominican argument: How can texts that are written centuries after Jesus by people not believing in his Messianism, prove that he was the Messiah after all? Paul, however, was basically right in pointing out that Nahmanides was not in agreement with the talmudic sages when he eliminated entirely the idea of heavenly enthronement in Psalm 110:1. From the middle of the second century onwards, the rabbis, partly as a riposte to the Christological interpretation, said that the figure seated on the heavenly throne to God's right was Abraham.<sup>730</sup>

### 3. God saying "I am as you are" to human beings implies God becoming incarnate

(97) Paul brought in another haggadah.<sup>731</sup> Its main point was that God once walked in his garden with his tenant, and the tenant avoided him.<sup>732</sup> God asked: Why do you hide from me? 'I am as you are.' In the same way, God will walk in Paradise with the righteous, and they will see Him and tremble before Him. God will ask: Why are you afraid of me, 'I am as you are'? This [latter statement] does not imply that you should have no reverence for Me. Scripture says [in the same verse], "I will be your God, and you shall be my people."<sup>733</sup> Paul concluded: The haggadah's saying "I am as you are" meant that God became a man as they were.

(98) Nahmanides: Everything he quotes, speaks against him. This event will occur in the future in the Garden of Eden. Jesus never walked with the righteous there. On the contrary, throughout all his life he had to flee before his enemies and his persecutors. This midrash, however, is a parable. It begins by saying: "With what can this be compared?" The thing to be compared is the "seeing of God" in this world, and the thing with which it is compared is the seeing of God in the world to come. Scripture says about the prophets: "I make myself known to them in visions" (Num 12:6 NRSV). The meaning is that in this world one cannot see the full splendor of God, which is called Gloria. Even our Master Moses trembled at the beginning of his service as a prophet, as it is said: "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to

<sup>729</sup> The words translated "descendant" in the text of the haggadah are literally "son of a son." According to the gospel story, Mary was the only human parent of Jesus.

<sup>730</sup> For a review of the rabbinic texts, see Paul Billerbeck's excursus "Der 110. Psalm in der altrabbinischen Literatur," in Str-B 4.1:452–65.

<sup>731</sup> *Yalhut Behuqotay*, 672.

<sup>732</sup> Leviticus 26:12a (NRSV), "And I will walk among you."

<sup>733</sup> Leviticus 26:12b (NRSV).

look at God” (Ex 3:6 NRSV). But in the coming days, the souls of men will be cleansed from every sin and stain. Then they will be allowed to see God through that transparent glass through which Moses was allowed to see him already in this world, as it says in Scripture: “The LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just like a man speaks to his neighbor” (Ex 33:11). The sages in the Midrash used the same comparison: God said, I am like you, i.e., you should not fear me, in the same way as you do not fear one another. They picked up the comparison in Scripture: “like a man speaks to his neighbor” (Ex 33:11). It does not imply that God actually became a man when he spoke with Moses. In Midrash *Yelamdeinu* the sages said the same: “When you keep My commandments, you become like Me.”<sup>734</sup> Scripture says the same: “You will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5 NRSV); likewise: “See, the man has become like one of us” (Gen 3:22 NRSV). And in another place, “The feeblest among them shall on that day be like David, and the house of David shall be like God” (Zech 12:8). It does not mean that they shall be like God in their appearance.<sup>735</sup>

#### 4. *The Messiah being the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:2)*

(99) Paul now introduced another haggadah from *Genesis Rabbah* [2.4], ““And the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters’ [Gen 1:2], this is the spirit of the Messiah.” He argued that this implies the Messiah is not a man, but the Spirit of God.<sup>736</sup>

(100) Nahmanides: But look how the midrash [8.1] interprets ““And the Spirit of God hovered...’ [Gen 1:2], this is the spirit of the first man.” By saying this, the Rabbis in no way implied that the first man would be God. He who does not know his way in such rabbinic books, is bound to pervert the words of the living God!<sup>737</sup>

<sup>734</sup> This quotation cannot be verified.

<sup>735</sup> This passage and the following ones are probably examples that illustrate that Nahmanides, without anyone being able to accuse him of false reporting, could polish in writing what he had said orally.

<sup>736</sup> It is possible that Nahmanides’ rendering of Paul’s argument is colored by his own interpretation of the rabbinic midrash. For Nahmanides, the midrash speaks of the spirit of God in Gen 1:2 as being the spirit of wisdom in Isa 11:2, being bestowed on the Messiah in the last days. Paul no doubt understood the text differently. For him, the text of Gen 1:2 was no prophecy, but a statement about the state of affairs at the beginning of creation. He took the midrash to presuppose the same understanding. For Paul, the midrash made the equation “spirit of God = spirit of the Messiah” which would then give “Messiah = God”. The second important point for Paul would certainly have been that the midrash also proved the preexistence of the Messiah. <sup>737</sup> Literally, “what is above or what is below,” a veiled reference to *Mishnah Hagigah* 12.1: “Whoever speculates on four things, it would have been better for him not to have come into the world: what is above, what is beneath, what is before, what is after” – a warning against mystical speculations (see Maccoby, 140, note). This midrash on Adam’s spirit does in fact not occur in the context of *Genesis Rabbah* 2.4 (quoted by Paul), as Nahmanides makes the reader believe. The midrash on the Messiah’s spirit is found in *Genesis Rabbah* 2.4, the midrash on Adam’s spirit in 8.1. As von Mutius points out, however, there is another midrashic work in which the two interpretations occur together: *Yalqut Shimoni* 4. He wonders if Paul and Nahmanides may have used a version of *Genesis Rabbah* in which the order in *Yalqut* had been adopted. See vom Mutius, 273–74.

The words of *Genesis Rabbah* [in 2.4] are based on an allegorical reading of Genesis 1:2, the whole verse. This verse is interpreted in the light of the four kingdoms (in Daniel 7), which means that the verse hints at *future* events. The interpreter took “And the land was waste [*tohu*]” [Gen 1:2b: The earth was *tohu va bohu*, waste and void] as referring to Babylon, as in Jeremiah 4:23, “I saw the land, and lo, it was *tohu*.” Further, he took “and *bohu*” as referring to Media, as in Esther 6:14.<sup>738</sup> “And darkness” in Genesis 1:2 was taken to refer to Greece, who darkened Israel’s eyes with evil decrees; “... on the face of the deep” was taken to refer to the wicked kingdom of Rome.

Finally, when Genesis 1:2 speaks of the “Spirit of God hovering” over the waters, this is a prophecy of the spirit of wisdom that was to be bestowed on the Messiah (according to Isa 11:2). By what merit did this spirit “hover over the waters”? Because of the merit of repentance, which is likened to water.<sup>739</sup>

The Midrash thus makes the four kingdoms pass before our eyes. The fourth is Rome. Finally, the Midrash introduces “the spirit of God,” meaning the Messiah, a human being like us, but filled with wisdom and the spirit of God [Isa 11:2]. The same is said of other human beings of the past: (1) Bezalel, who God “filled with the spirit of God” (Exodus 31:3), and (2) Joshua, “Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9). It is thus clear that the Midrash speaks of a future Messiah who will come after the fourth kingdom, Rome.

Nahmanides concedes to the reader that he had not been able to explain to Paul the ingenious play on linguistic minutiae in the biblical text by which the Midrash had extracted these allegorical interpretations. The Midrash in no way claimed that these meanings corresponded to the primary, plain, meaning of the text.<sup>740</sup> He had added: In *Genesis Rabbah* there are many passages like this, e.g., the passage beginning “And Jacob went out...” (Genesis 28:10).<sup>741</sup> He explained that he had said this in order to make the audience understand that Paul did not know how to interpret a text like *Genesis Rabbah* correctly, since he was unfamiliar with its style.

(101) The king then rose, and all the others with him.

<sup>738</sup> The verse contains the verb *vajabhilu*, “the eunuchs hastened to bring Haman to the king’s banquet.” The association of *bohu* with the root *b-h-l*, to hurry, is at best farfetched. Nahmanides admits the subtleness of these catchword explanations below.

<sup>739</sup> Nahmanides here combines two texts in *Genesis Rabbah* which are several chapters apart from each other, see von Mutius, 273. The merit spoken of is probably the merit of Israel repenting their sins. In rabbinic literature this is often spoken of as meriting the coming of the Messiah.

<sup>740</sup> See note 735.

<sup>741</sup> In *Genesis Rabbah* the ladder and the angels ascending and descending on it, seen by Jacob in his dream, were taken to symbolize the four world-powers of Daniel 7.



*Comment:* Again, Nahmanides attacks Paul for having misunderstood a rabbinic haggadah because he was unfamiliar with its hermeneutic. He briefly refers to the sophisticated technique of explaining one word in the text by quoting another text in which a similar word occurred; but refrains from explaining it in any detail. It was not fundamental to his argument, and Nahmanides himself had reservations about it. His main point would stand independently of this: The last of the four kingdoms in the allegorical interpretation of *Genesis Rabbah*, is Rome. When the Messiah comes, he will abolish the reign of Rome. This has not yet happened; accordingly, the Messiah has not yet come. In a sense, Nahmanides ends the discussion by using the same argument *against* the Messiah's coming that Paul had used *for* it in the beginning of the discussion: Paul said that since the rulership had been transferred from the Jews to Rome, the Messiah must have come (Genesis 49:10). Nahmanides responds by saying that precisely because Rome is still ruling, the Messiah cannot have come (Gen 1:2 allegorically interpreted in *Genesis Rabbah*). In a sense, the debate had come full circle, ending on the same question with which it began. Not only had Paul not proved that the Messiah had come, Nahmanides had, at least to his own satisfaction, proved that the Messiah had not come.

### *Nahmanides' Afterword*

(102) Nahmanides assures the reader that this is as faithful a report on what took place as he can give. On the very day the debate ended, he stood before the king who declared the debate closed and added that he never had seen a man who was wrong arguing his case so well.

*Comment:* This is a suitable place to try to characterize the very interesting relationship between Nahmanides and King Jaime I, and also the latter's role in the disputation. The two questions are clearly related.

(1) We have Nahmanides' own words for there being a very good and genuinely cordial relationship between himself and the king. On the day after the later event in the synagogue, "I stood before our lord king, and he said to me, "Return to your city, to life, and to peace." He gave me three hundred *dinarim*. I parted from him in abounding love" (*Vikuah*, passage 108 below).<sup>742</sup> One could say that Nahmanides wrote this to calm down worries among his Jewish compatriots that he had worsened their position by offending the king. But there is documentary evidence for the 300 denarii, and all the other indirect indications in the *Vikuah* point towards the basic truth of Nahmanides' declaration.

(2) The fact that when commanded by the king to dispute with Friar Paul, Nahmanides had declared his willingness to do so *on very specific conditions*, testify to the trust Nahmanides had in the king's goodwill towards himself. The basic condition was that he was granted *freedom of speech*. This was granted by the king as well as by Ramon of Penyafort. During the Disputation, and especially afterwards, Nahmanides held the king to this promise; and the king asserted in royal documents that it had in fact been given him.<sup>743</sup>

The agreed ground rule was that Paul should ask Nahmanides questions, and that the role of the latter was to answer them. The king seems to have acted as moderator of the Disputation, and he consequently held Paul to this rule. But he seems to have sided with Nahmanides in a very liberal interpretation of what was allowed within the category of "answer." While the Dominican ground rules, according to the Latin Protocol, were that the truth of Christianity should not be questioned, the king repeatedly allowed Nahmanides to attack Christian convictions.

I get the impression that part of the reason for this royal permissiveness, was the king's own delight in the intellectual sparring between two learned men, debating existentially important matters to both parties. I believe one could apply to the king the following statement, made with reference to Christian authorities in general: "It can be assumed that the disputes were often initiated by the [Christian] authorities, who sought to convince the Jews of the truth of Christianity, but who were also curious in regard to the culture and religion of the "other" and viewed these disputes as a kind of knightly tournament of the intellect and faith" (Ram Ben-Shalom, "Between Official and Private Dispute: The Case of Christian Spain and Provence in the Late Middle Ages," *AJS Review* 17:1 (2003): 23–72; here at 61). I suspect it was this type of curiosity that spurred the king to break his own rule and himself enter the debate. He seems genuinely interested in what Nahmanides might say in response to the questions he put to him. And Nahmanides, assuming that his written report, the *Vikuah*, would be

<sup>742</sup> Translation Chavel, *The Disputation*, 42.

<sup>743</sup> See below, pp. 282–83 and 286–87.

translated for the king, could not risk saying that the king's words to him after the debate were: "I have never seen a man who is not right argue his case as well," unless the king really said that. These words testify clearly to the sheer intellectual enjoyment the king had found in the disputation.

This, I guess, is the reason why Nahmanides felt no great risk in opposing the king as well as Paul with extraordinarily frank comments about the flaws of the Christian case. I also remind the reader of my observation in passages 43-47 that Nahmanides and the king probably discussed the issues in private parallel with the public disputation. The frankness of both sides in such discussions could then be displayed also in public, Nahmanides trusting the king's interest in, and condoning of, his frank utterances.

In this way, I agree with David Berger that Robert Chasan's doubt about Nahmanides uttering in public the five passages in the *Vikuah* noted above (passages 45;47; 49 end; 53 end; 78), need not be all that well founded. Additional observations on what happened in the wake of the disputation support this conclusion, see below.

## B. General Comment on the Barcelona Disputation as a whole

For the Dominicans, very much was at stake. They must have felt that acquiring a Jewish convert with considerable rabbinic competence into their ranks, was a great win. Paul had the expertise in rabbinica necessary for putting the new missionary strategy into practice. Perhaps he was also in great measure the mastermind behind the new strategy. In any case, his public preaching in Provence in the years after his conversion must have been seen as a very promising new strategy by the Dominican general at the time, Ramon of Penyafort. He was now settled in Barcelona, and learned that Paul, according to the Dominicans, had successfully debated with the greatest of rabbis, Nahmanides in Gerona. He must have thought that staging a spectacular public debate in the capital of Catalonia, Barcelona with its royal palace, between the great rabbi and the learned convert, would secure the success of the new missionary strategy. To modern readers, this may sound like a strange confidence in the effect of such events. One must remember, however, that among lay Christians and Jews, reliance on the expertise of religious leaders in matters of doctrine was almost universal and usually very strong. On both sides, one trusted one's more learned leaders. Expertise in theological or legal intricacies was reserved for small elites, on both sides.

This being the case, it is not strange that the Dominicans could believe that a spectacular showdown of the most famous rabbi in Spain could have a devastating effect on trust in their leaders among the Jewish laity.

Nahmanides on his part would have foreseen that much depended on how well he stood his ground. He also knew that the only choice, if he disobeyed the king's order, would have been a hasty flight abroad. It would not boost his reputation as a great Jewish leader. Very likely, Nahmanides realized that the new missionary strategy could take many Jews by surprise, and that it was potentially dangerous for that very reason. No readymade answers to

it were available. Nahmanides must have felt a strong calling to provide those answers. So, he obeyed the royal order. Since he must have foreseen that his *Vikuah* and everything he said in it, would become known to the king, I find it hard to believe that the complimentary words uttered by the king concerning Nahmanides' defense of the Jewish position, are pure fiction. In other words: Nahmanides could with great satisfaction report to his Jewish compatriots that he had stood his ground triumphantly, and that the king himself had said as much. It also speaks for the basic authenticity of Nahmanides' account that one senses that he was sometimes cornered in ways that made him resort to intricate arguments in order to extricate himself.

What is clear beyond any doubt is that Nahmanides all the time tried his best at bringing the discussion back to what he had stated before the dispute began: He wanted the debate to focus only on questions "upon which the entire controversy is contingent."<sup>744</sup> In fact, he narrowed this down to the first point of the agreed agenda: Has the Messiah come, or has he not? The question can also be formulated like this: Are we now living in the Days of the Messiah, or are we not? All the other controversial points between Christians and Jews depended on the answer to this single question. And Nahmanides was not in any doubt: The prophecies describing the Days of the Messiah had by no means been fulfilled by Jesus nor after his time.<sup>745</sup>

When Paul quoted rabbinic haggadot apparently claiming the birth or coming of the Messiah as having happened already, Nahmanides followed a consistent strategy. He admitted that such haggadot were indeed to be found, but (1) if taken literally, they could not speak of Jesus, since he was not born at the stated time, e. g., on the day of the fall of the second Temple. But (2) they should not be taken literally; they were simply stories told to illustrate some deeper truths or principles, known only to the initiates of kabbalistic wisdom.

Paul and the Dominicans had probably anticipated the first of these points, for Paul rather consistently claimed he was only out to show that the Messiah had in fact come, not that the rabbis had had Jesus in mind. The same tactic was applied when haggadot were quoted that seemed to accord the Messiah divine attributes or that he would suffer and die for human sins. Taken one by one, Paul did not claim these sayings had Jesus in mind. All he wanted to show was that the Talmud and the midrashim contained scattered pieces for a

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<sup>744</sup> Passage 5.

<sup>745</sup> Passage 49. One notes with interest that Paul had no immediate answer to this challenge, but moved on to another question, the divinity of the Messiah.

portrait of the Messiah, and when pieced together, this portrait matched that of Jesus and of no-one else.

I agree with the scholars who complain about what they call the “abstractness” of the Dominican argument. Paul never addressed Nahmanides’ main argument – lack of the signs of the Days of the Messiah as proving that Jesus was not the Messiah. And he never parred Nahmanides’ first objection, also fundamental: How can you prove that the rabbis’ portrait of the Messiah fits Jesus perfectly, when they clearly lived after him, but did not believe in his Messiahship? Instead, Paul tried to circumvent both objections by silently admitting that no single rabbinic haggadah was speaking about *Jesus*, but taken together, it was him they portrayed. It is perhaps fair to say that it takes a great deal of bias in Paul’s favor to find this a convincing argument. Scholars have this in mind when they brand his argument “abstract.”

This concludes my presentation of the Disputation proper according to Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*. But the book does not end here. It continues with an immediate aftermath, ordered by the king himself. I now turn to this.

#### ***The King’s visit to the synagogue, Sabbath August 4***

(Passage 102 continued) Nahmanides heard from others at the court that the king and the Dominicans wanted to come to the synagogue of Barcelona the next Sabbath. Nahmanides therefore decided to stay in the city for the next eight days to respond to whatever might be said in the synagogue.

When they came to the synagogue, the king himself “lectured vigorously that Jesus was the deliverer.”

(103) Nahmanides thereupon rose and said that the words of the king were noble, exalted and honored, coming from the mouth of a prince more noble, exalted and honored than any other. Even so, they did not agree with the truth. He said he had clear proofs which demonstrated this, but since it was inappropriate for him to argue with his sovereign, he would only say the following: The words spoken by the king to induce belief in the Messiahship of Jesus were argued by Jesus himself to his contemporary Jewish sages. Yet they rejected his argument completely. But Jesus, according to Christians, was divine, and he certainly had a better knowledge and capability to prove his case than the king. If our forefathers, who saw and knew Jesus, were not convinced, how shall we be convinced by the king’s words? His

knowledge of the matter derives from remote reports he has heard from some who neither knew Jesus nor were from his land, whereas our forefathers knew him and were eyewitnesses.

(104) Thereafter, Friar Ramon of Penyafort rose and gave a sermon on the Trinity. He said it consisted of wisdom, will and power. He added that according to Friar Paul, Nahmanides had agreed to this on an earlier occasion in Gerona.

(105) Nahmanides, however, called on everyone's special attention to what he would now say. What had happened in Gerona was that Paul had asked him whether he believed in the Trinity. Nahmanides had answered by asking: What is the Trinity? Does it mean that God consists of three material bodies? Paul: No. Nahmanides: Are they three immaterial substances like souls or three angels? Paul: No. Nahmanides: is the Trinity one thing composed of three elements, in a similar way as one material thing is composed of the four elements? Paul: No. If so, Nahmanides had asked, what is the Trinity? Paul had answered: Wisdom, will and power. Nahmanides: I agree that God is wise and not foolish, willing and not inert, powerful and not powerless. But calling this a Trinity is wrong, since God's wisdom is not an accidental attribute, but He and His wisdom are one. In the same way with God's will and power, they are also one with God, and therefore identical with His essence and with each other.<sup>746</sup> But even if one admitted accidental attributes in God, they would still not make Him a Trinity, but rather one substance with three accidental properties. Our King used this simile in his sermon: His erring teachers had taught him that one wine has three properties: color, taste, and smell, and yet the wine having these qualities is one thing, not three. [In a similar way with God, he has power, wisdom and will, and yet is one God]. But this is a mistaken analogy. The color of the wine may vary (red, white, etc.) independently of the other qualities, and they in turn may vary independently of each other. And we do not call the redness "wine", nor do we call the taste or the smell "wine," for the wine is the substance that fills the vessel. It is a material substance with three separate accidental properties. They do not form a unity. Which means we end up with a Quaternity: the substance (the Deity) and three attributes (which are not substances by themselves): its wisdom, will, and power. And why stop with three attributes. God having life is an essential divine attribute. So, we have a Quaternity: God's substance, God being living, wise, willing, and powerful. This is all completely erroneous.

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<sup>746</sup> From a Christian standpoint, a Christian protagonist could basically have said: So far, so good. This is of importance for understanding the Latin Protocol, see passage 106 and the Comment below.

(106) Paul responded that he firmly believed in the real Unity of the Deity, at the same time being a Trinity. This, however, was a mystery so deep that even the angels and the other heavenly ministers could not understand it.

(107) Nahmanides retorted that no one can believe something which he does not understand, and the same must be true of the angels, so even they cannot believe in a Trinity.<sup>747</sup>

Nahmanides having said this, Paul wanted to answer, but his friends prevented him from saying anything more.

(108) The king rose and descended from the pulpit, and they left the synagogue.

On the following day Nahmanides had an audience with the king, who said to him: Return to your city [Gerona] to life and to peace. They parted with great mutual affection, the king giving the rabbi 300 *dinarim*. Nahmanides ends his report by saying “May God make me<sup>748</sup> worthy of life in the World to Come. Amen.”

*Comment on the synagogue event:* In the Latin Protocol, the synagogue event seems to be treated as an integrated part of the Disputation: It was said to Nahmanides that when Brother Paul had come to Gerona to discuss matters pertaining to salvation, among other things the belief in the Holy Trinity, both the unity of the Divine essence, and the Trinity of the Persons, as held by Christians, Nahmanides had conceded that if Christians believed what Paul had expounded, they believed in something true. And when this was repeated in the presence of the lord King, he did not deny it, but was silent, and so, by his silence, assented.

If the last clause referred to the synagogue event in Barcelona, it is a strongly tendentious rendering of what actually took place. As so often, the Latin Protocol accuses Nahmanides of silence when his answers were found wanting, from the Dominican perspective. It is very likely that this passage really refers to the meeting in the synagogue, since the theme of Christian Trinitarian doctrine was not included in the agenda set for the Disputation in the Protocol itself.

In fact, the Latin Protocol ignores the almost total contrast between the Disputation itself and this aftermath in the synagogue. In the synagogue, no questions were put to Nahmanides, instead, two sermons were held: the first by the king, the second by Ramon of

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<sup>747</sup> Maccoby has a clarifying comment on this: The Christian doctrine of the Trinity is logically inconsistent, it asserts and denies something at the same time, which means it does not succeed in asserting anything at all. No one can believe a self-contradictory statement since it is known to be false. See Maccoby, 63.

<sup>748</sup> Harvey J. Hames in his article “‘Fear God, my Son, and King,’ Relations between Nahmanides and King Jaime I at the Barcelona Disputation,” *Hispania Judaica* 10 (2014), 5–19, prefers the reading of a manuscript in Cambridge, “make *him*,” i.e., the king (p. 15, note 33).

Penyafort. The king's sermon proclaimed the Messiahship of Jesus, and (in the light of Nahmanides' comments on Friar Ramon's sermon) it also touched upon the doctrine of the Trinity. Ramon's sermon concentrated exclusively on the doctrine of the Trinity. There is no indication that the new strategy of proving Christian doctrine from rabbinic sources was employed by either speaker.<sup>749</sup> And when Nahmanides *at his own initiative* rose and made comments on both of the two sermons, he only commented in general terms on the king's sermon, and in philosophical terms on Ramon's.

Concerning the king's sermon, Nahmanides' response was along the same line as his first challenge to Paul at the very beginning of the Disputation. At that point he had said: How can rabbis living centuries after Jesus and not believing in his Messiahship, have formulated texts supporting it? Because the king obviously had based himself only on New Testament texts, Nahmanides now had to reformulate his objection: How could the king – from these Christian sources, later than Jesus – hope to convince any Jew that Jesus was the Messiah, when Jesus himself could not convince the sages of his own time – they who were his contemporaries and listened to his own words?

In Friar Ramon's sermon, we are back to the centuries-old discussion among Christians, Jews and Muslims concerning Christian Trinitarianism. For readers of this book, I suppose Petrus Alfonsi's philosophical exposition of this doctrine in the Sixth Title of his *Dialogue*, and the Toledan Anonymous' very similar treatment in his *Trinitizing the Unity*, come to mind.<sup>750</sup> Alfonsi explained the unity of the divine substance as compatible with the trinity of (1) the divine substance itself (the Father) and (2) the attribute of wisdom (the Son) and (3) the attribute of will (the Holy Spirit). The Anonymous equated the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with God the Omnipotent, the Knowing, and the Willing. This latter model was very close to the one Ramon proposed in his sermon: the one uniting divine substance comprised three attributes: wisdom, will and power. Nahmanides does not specify which divine person corresponded to which attribute, but analogies from other medieval Christian theologians, first and foremost the Toledan Anonymous, could indicate that the sequence reported by Nahmanides could correspond to Son, Holy Spirit, and Father. In any case, this sequence would be of no concern to him since he rejected the whole model. He also seems to have known Alfonsi's model, since he proposes that the divine substance must be added to the

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<sup>749</sup> This point is rightly emphasized by Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 82–83. I also think Chazan makes a good observation when he says, “The traditional quality of the argumentation used in the synagogue in no way represents repudiation of the new missionizing tack tested in the public disputation; it simply reflects a public follow-up to the disputation *involving speakers incapable of presenting the new missionizing line*” (p. 83, my emphasis). I will return to this important point later.

<sup>750</sup> On Alfonsi, see above, pp. 135–42. On the Anonymous, see pp. 181–84.

three attributes, resulting in a quaternity rather than a trinity. The real problem, according to Nahmanides, is that this whole way of thinking blurs the distinction between substance and attributes, because the three or more attributes are treated both as substances of their own, *and* as attributes of a common substance. This is philosophically impossible. See the reviews of the history of the whole debate concerning divine essence and divine attributes above, pp. 135–40.

## 2. The Aftermath of the Barcelona Disputation: Royal Edicts, Nahmanides' *Vikuah*, and Papal Letters, 1263–1267

The first significant documents relating to the Disputation were not slow in the coming.

(1) The first is a royal order by Jaime I concerning missionizing among the Jews, dated 26 August, 22 days after the synagogue event.<sup>751</sup> It contains traditional rulings against (a) Jewish interference when someone of their own wants to convert, (b) confiscation of their property, or (c) calumny from their former coreligionists. Basically, these rulings go all the way back to the Jewish laws of Constantine in the fourth century, and Jaime I had already renewed them in a decree of 1242. Therefore, from these three rulings, no conclusion is possible concerning actual conversions taking place in the wake of the Barcelona Disputation and as a result of it.

King Jaime I, however, added – or rather: repeated – a fourth ruling, being put at the beginning of his order this time.<sup>752</sup> In this prioritizing we may hear an echo of the 1263 disputation, and of lobbying from the Dominicans and Franciscans.

We say and charge you [all royal officials] that when the friars of the Order of Preaching Brothers come to you and wish to preach to the Jews or to the Saracens [Muslims], you should accept those same brothers kindly, and bring Jews and Saracens, young and old, men and women, and, if it should be necessary, compel them to meet face-to-face with the same friars, where and when and however they (the friars) wish,

<sup>751</sup> Text in Denifle, "Quellen zur Disputation," 234–35. English translation in Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 117.

<sup>752</sup> In his order of 1242, this order was the last one. For a translation of it, see Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages: Edited, with Introductions and Notes* (New York: Behrman House, 1980), 255–56.



and diligently listen to their words in silence, [and that you should be] punishing those who have disregarded assembling as it was declared, by a fine or other punishment.<sup>753</sup>

(2) The second decree came only two days after the first.<sup>754</sup> In this second ruling, there seems to be a noticeably clear reference to something that came up during the disputation. First, the king speaks generally about the illegitimacy of any utterance of blasphemy against the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he zooms in on what was the actual problem: “[O]n our behalf you must firmly instruct the Jews living under our authority in your counties to show and surrender to you all books that are called *Soffrim*, composed by a certain Jew, Moses son of Maimon, the Egyptian from Cairo, containing blasphemies against Jesus Christ,” as promptly as possible. They are to be burned in view of the people, and the officials should announce to the Jews “that if anyone should retain the aforesaid books and does not immediately surrender them to you, he will be punished just as a blasphemer of our Lord Jesus Christ both on his body and in his property, with due censure.”

This points back to what was “disclosed” about Maimonides’ tractate *Shoftim* (*Judges*, here misheard or miswritten as “Soffrim,” the last of 14 tractates in Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*) on day three of the disputation (see passages 72–78 in the *Vikuah* above). In that tractate, Maimonides subordinated Jesus as well as Muhammad as being at best precursors of the Messiah, but by no means the Messiah himself. In fact, Jesus is characterized as a deceiver, leading his followers astray.<sup>755</sup>

The disputation was moderated by the king, and I have argued above that the king in practice allowed Nahmanides’ the “freedom of speech” he had been granted – even to the extent of openly stating why the Jewish interpretation of Scripture was right and the Christian wrong. This was in flagrant contradiction of the Dominican requirement that the truth of

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<sup>753</sup> Translation according to Caputo and Clarke, 117. Jaime I had already given an order to the same effect in his decree of March 9, 1242. Three years later Pope Innocent IV had endorsed it and made it Papal law for all Christian kings and princes, see Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews*, 255–57, doc. nr. 105.

<sup>754</sup> August 28, text: Denifle, “Quellen zur Disputation,” 235. Verbatim quotations are from Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 118.

<sup>755</sup> The last part of the tractate is entitled “Kings and Wars.” In chapter 11 of this part, the last passages have fallen prey to censorship, but are preserved in some manuscripts. One of these passages reads as follows: “Even of Jesus of Nazareth, who imagined that he was the Messiah, but was put to death by the court, Daniel had prophesied, as it is written, “And the children of the violent among your people shall lift themselves up to establish the vision, but they shall stumble” (Dan 11:14). For has there ever been a greater stumbling than this? All the prophets affirmed that the Messiah would redeem Israel, save them, gather their dispersed, and confirm the commandments. But he caused Israel to be destroyed by the sword, their remnant to be dispersed and humiliated. He was instrumental in changing the Torah and causing the world to err and serve another besides God” (trans. according to Isadore Twersky (ed.), *A Maimonides Reader* (Springfield, N.J.: Behrman House, 1972), 226. The censorship of these passages must have some relationship with the Barcelona disputation and king Jaime I’s decree in its wake.

Christian faith should not be a theme of debate. They could not silence Nahmanides during the debate, but they could persuade the king afterwards of the need to suppress the terrible blasphemies that Nahmanides had read out loud from Maimonides' *Shofetim*, thus hiding his own blasphemies behind this great Jewish authority. Accordingly, the older strategy from the 1240ies of either burning the blasphemous Jewish books, or submitting them to censorship, was now made royal law in Aragon, only 33 days after the "blasphemies" of Maimonides' book had been revealed publicly for all to hear on the third day of the debate.

(3) The third edict came on the following day, August 29.<sup>756</sup> It is addressed directly to the Jews themselves, and these are the king's orders:

[W]hen our beloved brother Paul Christian from the order of preaching friars, whom we send to you for the sake of showing the way of salvation, will have come to you, whether to the synagogues or to your homes or in any other locations suitable for the purpose of preaching the word of God or disputing or discussing sacred scripture with you, in public or in private or in an intimate conversation, together or separately you must come to him and meekly and favorably listen to him and respond to his interrogations regarding faith and sacred scriptures to the degree that you know, with humility and reverence and without opprobrium or subterfuge, and provide him with your books, which he needs to show you the truth, and you must pay the expenses which the aforesaid friar incurs from transporting his books from location to location, [books] which he will have caused to be brought in order to demonstrate the truth to you.

There follows an order that since members of the Dominican order have no means to pay for the transport of their books, the Jews should cover these expenses – and then be reimbursed by the king, by deducting the expenses from their tax to the King. Finally, the royal officials are admonished that, if necessary, they should see to it that the Jews obey these orders.

I have quoted the central passage of this royal letter because of the quite detailed and vivid picture it paints of Paul's practice under his missionary campaigns. This detailed picture speaks volumes concerning the question: Why could the new missionary strategy never become a mass movement led by many wandering missionaries? In practice, Paul was probably, in 1263, the only Christian in Spain having the necessary competence to read

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<sup>756</sup> Text: Denifle, "Quellen zur Disputation," 235–36; English trans. in Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 118–19.

rabbinic books, and his strategy could only function when the Jews were shown concretely where in their books the haggadot used by Paul could be found.<sup>757</sup> It was obviously important for Paul to forestall all suspicions that the rabbinic texts he quoted were invented by himself. In this, he faithfully followed the Dominican practice of persuading by controllable argument, not by sheer authority. Therefore, he travelled around with many books in his luggage; he also had the right to require access to books not in his luggage but available at the local synagogue.

But of course, among the common Jews there was little if any competence in reading rabbinic texts, so they would have to rely on Paul's authority in any case. In fact, for this new missionary strategy to have any impact on the masses, spectacular public events like the Barcelona disputation had better potential of success than occasional missionary campaigns by Paul. If, among the Jews, an impression was left that their superior spokesman had been defeated and dumbfounded by one of their own scholars turned Christian monk, it could have had negative effect on the confidence of the Jews in their religious leaders, even one of Nahmanides' caliber.

This did not happen in the wake of the Barcelona disputation. But 150 years later, during and after the even more spectacular Tortosa disputation, one clearly observes a general weakening of Jewish morale regarding their confidence in their own leaders. They had no one like Nahmanides to defend their cause on this occasion, and although the spokesmen for the Jewish side in Tortosa did a decent job in defending their cause, the conditions under which they had to speak were characterized by intolerable pressure and outright extortion, resulting in rumors that the Jewish leaders had lost the debate. Several conversions followed in the wake of this disputation, including that of one of the Jewish spokesmen in the disputation itself.<sup>758</sup>

(4) The fourth royal edict must have been very important for the Dominicans, because the king issued it on the same day as the former, 29 August.<sup>759</sup> In this document, the ban on Maimonides' *Shoftim* (edict 2 above) was extended by the following ruling: In the entire corpus of Jewish writings, the Jews should expunge passages containing blasphemies against Christ and his Mother. These passages were to be pointed out to them by Paul Christian

<sup>757</sup> Backstage, another one was waiting, and he would soon overshadow Paul when it came to expertise in rabbinica. But as far as we know, he was mainly active in his study chamber, writing the superior manual of demonstrating the truth of Christianity from rabbinic testimonies: Ramon Martí. I shall return to him below.

<sup>758</sup> For a brief but very instructive account and analysis of the Tortosa disputation (1413–14), see Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 82–94.

<sup>759</sup> Not “a day later,” as stated by Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 90. Text: Denifle, “Quellen zur Disputation,” 236–37. This document is not included in Caputo and Clarke's collection of documents, but there is a good paraphrase of it in Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 90.

(assisted by Ramon of Penyafort and Arnold of Segarra, both Dominicans), but the Jews were also responsible for examining all their books for such passages. All such passages should be deleted within three months, if still found after this time, the books containing them would be burnt and a heavy fine (thousand *moravedis*) would be imposed.

I think Chazan is right in pointing out the rather “mild” nature of this ruling, compared with the more brutal procedure followed in Northern France in the 1240ies. In that case, the Jews had to deliver their books for inspection by Christian experts, and the latter had full control of which books were to be burnt. In addition, the criterion for burning books was not only blasphemy against Christ or Mary, but more general “offensive” passages of any nature. The process in Aragon left much more to the Jews themselves, and before a book was burned, a rather laborious procedure of first inspection, then, after three months, new inspection, left the Jews much more room for sabotaging the whole procedure.<sup>760</sup> I suspect the king himself was the one responsible for this softening of the earlier French rulings.

What we see here is, I believe, a conflict between the king’s Jewish policy and that of the Dominicans. The latter never abandoned the policy of censoring the Talmud after having had some success in making this royal law in France after the Talmud trial in 1240. They even required the Talmud to be burned in the Kingdom of Aragon if censorship proved impossible. They never abandoned this strategy; their new strategy of proving Christian truth from scattered passages in the Talmud was a *supplement* rather than an alternative. But it seems that *burning* the Talmud was perceived, even by the Dominicans, to be somewhat paradoxical, not to say counterproductive, in the light of the new missionary strategy. Therefore, they may silently have acquiesced concerning the laborious procedure before the *burning* of books could take place – they never softened their right of censorship, however.

(5) That there was a real conflict of interest between the Dominicans and the king becomes evident in the next royal edict, given already on the day after the two former ones, 30 August.<sup>761</sup> In fact, its contents are such that scholars suspect effective Jewish lobbying having taken place. The document is, in fact, making the first edict (document 1 above) null and void. It is addressed to all royal officials and tells them that

you shall not compel, nor shall you permit the Jews of your communities, villages, and places of your jurisdiction to be compelled, including their wives and children, to go to

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<sup>760</sup> Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 90–91.

<sup>761</sup> Text: Denifle, “Quellen zur Disputation,” 237; English translation in Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 119.

any location outside their *calla iudayca*<sup>762</sup> for the purpose of listening to sermons of any of the preaching friars. But if any brother among the preachers wants to enter any of their communities or synagogues and preach to them in that place, they may listen to him *if they so desire*. For this we concede to those Jews, that they would not be obliged to go outside their Jewish quarters for the purpose of hearing the preaching of anyone or even to hear the preaching itself in any location *through force*. And to them we concede this *unobstructed by any charter to the contrary granted by me to the preaching friars*.

I suspect it is not very often one can see a king so frankly admitting that he has changed his mind. The Dominicans must have felt it as a slap in the face, considering the rather stiff edicts they had elicited from the king earlier. This last edict was as big a relief for the Jews as it was a great disappointment for the Dominicans. We see a king distancing himself from the Preaching Friars.

Behind this change, we also see a king caught in a conflict of interests. On the one hand, he had no doubt been favorable towards trying out the new missionary strategy of the Dominicans. It may also have appealed to his intellectual curiosity to see it in combat with the leading Jewish intellectual in his kingdom. On the other hand, we also see a king who only grudgingly allows use of force to make Jews attend the missionary campaigns. My feeling is that it is in this last decree that the king really speaks his own mind.

Nearly all Christian kings in Europe found themselves in an internal conflict of interest in this period. On the one hand, rulings by the Pope, often supporting missionary efforts by the two new Orders of the thirteenth century, were not to be easily ignored, considering the notable increase of the Pope's political clout throughout this century. On the other hand, no genuine love of the Jews was necessary for the kings to try softening the harshest Papal or other ecclesiastical decrees. Sheer pragmatism was sufficient: the Jews were irreplaceable in several administrative, monetary, and commercial functions in the Christian territories. Therefore, kings, counts and other Christian overlords often shielded the Jews from ecclesiastical attempts at diminishing their civil rights and functions. One indicator of this pragmatism is that resistance to Papal decrees often increased in proportion to the geographical distance from Rome. For a long time, the kings and counts of the Iberian Peninsula had been among the most independent rulers as far as ecclesiastical influence was concerned. The decree we have just quoted and studied is as good an example as any.

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<sup>762</sup> According to Caputo and Clarke, a "Catalan term referring to physical boundaries of the Jewish community. *Call* (or *calla*) is a Catalan adaptation of the Hebrew word *kehillah*, or community."

(6) The same is true of the next royal edict, issued 27 March 1264.<sup>763</sup> It picks up on edicts 2 and 3, and specifies the procedure to be followed concerning censorship of blasphemous passages in the books of the Jews. They were now relieved from the duty of self-censorship and should only delete passages pointed out to them by the Christian experts. But they now also got the possibility of appeal in such cases, and only had to effect deletions when the appeal had been turned down. “Clearly, under these new arrangements, the likelihood of fines and burning of books was much reduced.”<sup>764</sup>

(7) The climax in this tug of war between the king and the Dominicans came in 1265; probably immediately after Nahmanides had published his Hebrew *Vikuah*.<sup>765</sup> Obviously and understandably, the Preaching Friars were enraged by the very derogatory portrayal of their spokesman Paul in this book, and by Nahmanides’ blatant rejection and criticism of central Christian dogmas in it. As we have seen from the Latin Protocol, the Dominican understanding of the agreed terms for the disputation was that the Christian faith “because of its certitude should not be put into dispute, [nor] should [it] be drawn into the arena with the Jews as if it were a matter of doubt.”<sup>766</sup> Nahmanides’ role should only be to answer questions put to him by Paul.

But Nahmanides had required freedom of speech, and been granted this, as well from the king as from Ramon of Penyafort. This freedom he had exploited to the full in his “answers,” which often turned into powerful counter-polemic against basic Christian points of faith. Nahmanides claimed that all he had done was to use the freedom of speech that had been granted him, during the disputation as well as in his book about it. Add to this that the book had been written at the request of the bishop of Gerona (Nahmanides’ hometown), and given to him.<sup>767</sup> Nahmanides, by reporting no criticism from the bishop, was in fact implicating the bishop in his own alleged crime – the book!<sup>768</sup>

One last time the king gave in to Dominican pressure, and arranged a trial before a tribunal of ecclesiastics, *none of whom, however, were Dominicans!*<sup>769</sup> Nahmanides here faced

<sup>763</sup> Text: Denifle, “Quellen zur Disputation,” 238–39. Not included in Caputo and Clarke’s translations, but good summary and comment in Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 91.

<sup>764</sup> Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond*, 91.

<sup>765</sup> The document telling the story of the following proceedings and their outcome is dated April 12, 1265, roughly one and a half year after the disputation. Latin text: Denifle, “Quellen zur Disputation,” 239–40, English translation, from which I quote, in Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 120–21.

<sup>766</sup> For reference, context, and comment, see above, pp. 229 and 247.

<sup>767</sup> The bishop in question was Pedro del Castellnuo (in office 1254–1279), von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 304.

<sup>768</sup> The relationship between the version, probably in Catalan, given to the bishop, and the Hebrew *Vikuah* probably made somewhat later, is difficult to determine. See above, p. 226.

<sup>769</sup> I owe this observation to von Mutius, *Zwangsdisputation*, 304. His comment: “The Monarch was clearly concerned to make the proceedings against Nahmanides unbiased, and not to deliver him unprotected over to his accusers’ [the Dominicans’] thirst for revenge” (my English).

the charges brought by the Dominicans but insisted that he had been granted complete freedom of speech at the disputation by the king himself and by Ramon of Penyafort. Having consulted with the ecclesiastics in the tribunal, King Jaime decided that the freedom of speech granted to Nahmanides only applied to the period of the disputation, and hence did not cover the publication of a book. In a show of apparent strictness, the king meted out the following punishment for Nahmanides: two years of exile outside the king's territory and burning of the copies of his book. The king, of course, remained in full control concerning the execution of this sentence.

But now, a curious turn of events took place. The Dominicans were by no means satisfied by this – in their view – all too soft punishment of the rabbi. Which, in turn, enraged the king and made him finish the whole affair with the following ruling, addressed to the rabbi in person:<sup>770</sup>

[Since the Dominicans did not accept the king's ruling,] we, Jaime, called king by the grace of God, concede to you, Master Bonastruc de Porto the Jew, that *you need not respond to the preceding charges or any of the preceding charges under the power of any person... at any time unless it is under our power and in our presence.*

Again, if the former decree had contained at its end a ruling that in practice nullified the rather stiff rulings the Dominicans had persuaded the king to publish, this last ruling made no attempt at hiding the king's wrath over the Dominican zeal to go after Nahmanides, alias Bonastruc de Porto. The document cannot be understood in any other way than this: When in his former document the king had tried to placate the Dominicans by a severe, but limited, punishment of the rabbi, and they were not satisfied with this, the king's last ruling testifies to a man having become sick and tired of the Dominicans' unrelenting thirst for revenge *vis-à-vis* the rabbi.

When the sum result of this whole process was that the Dominicans had no right to command any Jew to attend their missionary preaching, and that Nahmanides was left untouchable and immune to any further legal proceedings, it seems reasonable to assume that the friars found Aragon an unpromising field for their new missionary strategy – Paul in particular, and that he and his brothers now looked for more promising locations.

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<sup>770</sup> Nahmanides is in this document called by his Catalan name Bonastruc de Porta. This identification is nearly universally agreed upon in recent scholarship; see the note in Caputo and Clarke, 120.

(8) One last attempt at overturning king Jaime's last ruling is documented, however. This time the Dominicans had alerted the then Pope, Clement IV, to King Jaime's lack of will to punish Nahmanides the way he had deserved.<sup>771</sup> Probably in 1266, the Pope sent a letter to king Jaime I, first flattering and praising the king for his liberating Valencia from Muslim rule, and exhorting him to support it economically; next reprimanding the king for his lack of appropriate action against Nahmanides.<sup>772</sup> The king's zeal for the Church should be more visibly displayed against its enemies, the Jews, "who before all others persecute the Faith and blaspheme the name of Christianity." The Jews should not be admitted or promoted to any official position, instead, the privileges granted them in ecclesiastical law should be "reined in" as far as possible!

And do not overlook their incorrect blasphemies, but particularly punish the audacity of the one who is said to have written a book about the debate he had in your presence with our beloved son, the pious man Friar Paul, from the Order of the Preachers, with many fabricated lies added. And to extend his error, he has reproduced many different copies with plans to send them to different various regions. Let the judgement of justice rightly punish his reckless effrontery to such an extent (but without the danger of death or maiming) that the severity of his castigation will make plain how much more [castigation] he has earned, so that the audacity of others will be curbed by his example.<sup>773</sup>

One is struck by the proximity between the description of Nahmanides' offense in this papal letter and the description in the king's report of April 12 the year before. If Paul Christian had been the prime originator of the proceedings against Nahmanides in Barcelona early in 1265, he could also be the one who brought the affair to the Pope's attention and prompted him to send this letter of rebuke to king Jaime I in the following year.

(9) There are two letters from Pope Clement dated 15 July 1267 (the year after the one just quoted), the one to the bishop of Tarragona, Benedict of Rocaberti, and the other to king

<sup>771</sup> On February 5, 1265, the French cardinal bishop of Sabina, Guy Foulques, was elected Pope, taking the name Clement IV (residing first in Perugia, then in Viterbo, Rome being closed to him). When he died November 29, 1268, he was buried in the Dominican convent in Viterbo. During his entire papacy, he was an avid supporter of the Dominican missionary enterprise, and an unusually anti-Jewish pope, as can be seen from his many anti-Jewish rulings; conveniently collected in Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents 492–1404* (Vol. 1 of 8 with the same main title; Studies and Texts 94; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1988), 225–41.

<sup>772</sup> Text: Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See I*: Nr. 226; pp. 230–31; English trans. Caputo and Clarke, *Debating Truth*, 121–22.

<sup>773</sup> Trans. according to Caputo and Clarke, loc. cit, slightly modified.



Jaime I, which clearly indicate that (1) the king had taken no action on receiving the former letter of the Pope, and (2) that Paul had visited the Pope in Viterbo and was now the carrier of the letter to the bishop of Tarragona, probably also of the one to king Jaime.

The letter to the Tarragona Bishop mandated him to move the king and all his officials to make the Jews of Aragon bring their Talmuds and their commentaries and all their other books to the bishop for his inspection.<sup>774</sup> The books containing the Hebrew bible without any offensive additions were to be given back to the Jews. All the remaining books were to be locked up in safekeeping until the Holy See decided what to do with them. In carrying out this order, the Dominican and Franciscan Friars and other learned men should assist with their expertise. It was also important that this action was taken simultaneously in all parts of the kingdom, so that the Jews were given no opportunity to hide away their books.

In this undertaking will, We believe, Our beloved son Paul, called Christian, of the Order of the Preaching Friars, the carrier of this letter, be of great use. Firstly, because he is of Jewish stock and therefore has a Jewish education. He knows the Hebrew language, their ancient law, and their erroneous ideas. Secondly, because born again in Holy Baptism, he is zealous for the Catholic Faith and has demonstrated a laudable education in the science of Theology.<sup>775</sup>

This letter proves beyond reasonable doubt that Paul Christian had taken his concerns about the lack of appropriate action against the Jews of Aragon by king Jaime, to the Pope in Viterbo. And the Pope responded as Paul had wanted. Not only did he write this letter to the bishop of Tarragona; he also followed up his former letter to king Jaime by a new one, dated the same day as the letter to the bishop.<sup>776</sup> In this letter the Pope reiterates the measures against the Jewish books that he mandated the bishop of Tarragona to implement, and in a somewhat menacing tone he calls the king to support the bishop in any way and by all the means a king has at his disposal. “Although We do not believe that it is necessary to entreat Your Majesty for long concerning that which contributes to the increase of the glory of God’s name, We do, however, sincerely entreat Your Majesty in this for Us very important matter: From the bottom of Our heart and in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ we ask and entreat

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<sup>774</sup> Latin text: Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See I*: Nr. 228; pp. 233–35.

<sup>775</sup> My English translation, cf. the German translation of the whole document in Heinz, Schreckenber, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (13.–20.Jh.)* [vol. III]. (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23 Theologie, 497; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994), 234–36.

<sup>776</sup> Text: Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See I*: Nr. 229; pp. 235–36. German translation in Schreckenber, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte (13.–20. Jh.)*, 237–38.

You, reminding You also of how closely the remission of Your sins is related to what we command you concerning the Talmud etc. (!)”<sup>777</sup>

Schrekenberg is certainly right when he comments that “in both these letters, Clement was presumably acting at the initiative of Paul Christian.”<sup>778</sup> Bringing these letters to Aragon, he made his last effort to spur the king into action against the Jews. Perhaps he knew that Nahmanides had, the same year, left Aragon for Palestine, and therefore saw no point in pursuing him anymore.

In Aragon, these letters seem to have had no effect; no confiscation of Jewish books is recorded. In other words: Paul’s ambitious plans for his new type of Christian mission to the Jews in Aragon had, after an apparently promising debut in the Barcelona Disputation, come to nearly nothing in the wake of it. Paul may have concluded it was time for a new field of mission, under a more cooperative king. In 1269 we find him in Paris, acting under the protection of king Louis IX (1226–1270). Here he had found a king more prone to anti-Jewish measures than Jaime I of Aragon ever was.<sup>779</sup> I shall soon turn to this second phase of Paul’s career. But before that a little known *second* Jewish response to Paul’s missionary campaigns in Aragon and Southern France (Nahmanides’ *Vikuah* being the first) deserves a brief mention.

*Addition 2021:* Having written the above, I have now come across an important article by Harvey J. Hames that is very relevant concerning Nahmanides’ relation to King Jaime I.<sup>780</sup> Hames approaches this relationship from Nahmanides’ perspective, arguing that the rabbi acted all along according to his own theology about how Jewish leadership should ideally interact with Gentile kings. This theology can be reconstructed from Nahmanides’ commentary on the Torah, especially Genesis 10:8–12 (king Nimrod, the first empire-building king with ambitions of world-wide, God-like, power), Genesis 14 (Abraham behaving as a king among other kings), Genesis 20 (Abraham acting as the equal of king Abimelech, finding a peaceful solution of their conflict over Sarah, Abimelech saying to Abraham: “My land is before you; settle where it pleases you”), and Genesis 23 (Abraham dealing wisely with Ephron the Hittite).

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<sup>777</sup> My translation.

<sup>778</sup> Schrekenberg, *Adversus-Judaeos-Texte* III:238.

<sup>779</sup> For a good review of the extremely anti-Jewish policy of Louis IX (1226–1270), see Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 100–153. Paul Christian’s influence on the king is detailed on pp. 149–53.

<sup>780</sup> “‘Fear God, my Son, and King’: Relations between Nahmanides and King Jaime I at the Barcelona Disputation,” in *Between Edom and Kedar: Studies in Memory of Yom Tov Assis* (Hispania Judaica Bulletin 10, Part 1; eds. Aldina Quintana, Raquel Ibáñez-Sperber and Ram Ben-Shalom; Jerusalem: The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2014), 5–19.

According to Hames, Nahmanides – inspired by the method of Christian *typological* reading of biblical persons and events – saw himself and King Jaime I in the light of these biblical types, Nahmanides himself in the role of Abraham, King Jaime in a more ambiguous role (negative features of Nimrod as well as positive features in Abimelech and Ephron; the latter two types dominating in Nahmanides’ portrayal of king Jaime). In this light, Hames reviews all the interactions and verbal exchanges between the two in the *Vikuah*. I find in his article the same evaluation of this relationship as I sensed when reading the *Vikuah* and the king’s different letters and edicts after the disputation, but in Hames’ article I find a reasonable background in Nahmanides’ own theology that I was unaware of.

Let me add a last point: Many scholars assume that Nahmanides’ going to Jerusalem at the end of his life was due to the unrelenting pressure against him by the Dominicans, especially as manifested in Papal letter nr. 8 above. This may seem plausible at first sight but is by no means a certainty. For my part, I have remained skeptical towards this point of view, especially since there is implicit evidence in Papal letter 9 (above) that king Jaime did nothing at all to follow up the Papal threats. Hames argues, to my mind convincingly, that one should not exempt Nahmanides from the widespread longing among the Jews of going to the Holy Land and the Holy City, that manifested itself during the thirteenth century. There are several such travels on record, and Nahmanides was in good company in this regard.<sup>781</sup>

### 3. A Rabbi Responds

The rabbi in question was Mordechai ben Joseph, and the little book that he published had the title *Mahazik Emunah (The Reinforcer of Faith)*.<sup>782</sup> Paul Christian had preached in Southern France before as well as after the Barcelona event. Rabbi Mordechai was the rabbi of Avignon, and was probably acquainted with Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*. Inspired by it, he wrote his own rejoinder to the new Christian missionary strategy. Under no constraint to answer Paul point by point, as Nahmanides had been, he was free to concentrate on the one decisive point which divided Jews and Christians. According to Mordechai, that was the question: Has the Messiah come, or has he not? For Mordechai, the essential task of the Messiah was to gather

<sup>781</sup> Most famous among his predecessors was no doubt Judah Halevi. For early 13<sup>th</sup> cent. examples, see Ram Ben-Shalom, “The messianic journey of Jonathan ha-Kohen of Lunel to the Land of Israel re-examined,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 33 (2018), 1–25 and literature referenced there.

<sup>782</sup> To my knowledge, this work is only known from a single manuscript containing it, Manuscript Vatican 271. Robert Chazan comments on it and provides excerpts in Hebrew with English translation in his *Daggers of Faith*, 103–114 (English translations and comments) and notes 41–84 on pp. 197–201 (references and Hebrew excerpts). Jeremy Cohen mentions it briefly in *The Friars and the Jews*, 108–109 (note 14), and 127–28. In what follows, I depend heavily on Chazan.

Israel from their exile and bring them back to their land. He argues this mainly from the Bible, exactly like Nahmanides had done. But unlike him, he addresses the Christian question of why the present exile of the Jews has lasted so much longer than any previous one.

Paul had not brought this forward at Barcelona but may have used it in the traditional Christian way on other occasions. We met it in Alfonsi's *Dialogue, titulus 2* (above, pp. 121–127). It is the first *argument from history* that Alfonsi brings up, and his argument is, briefly stated, that since the Babylonian exile was of brief duration, the sin for which Israel is now punished with an incomparatively much longer exile, must be of an extraordinary nature: the killing of their Messiah. Thus, the present exile is a proof, not of the Messiah's not having come; rather the contrary: it proves that he has come and was killed by Israel.

Mordechai knows all this well, and he begins his exposition (chapter 1) by proving from Genesis 15:13–16.18–21 that *three* exiles of Israel were announced already to Abraham (the Egyptian of 400 years, the Babylonian, and the present), and the Messiah's task will be to redeem Israel from the third and hardest of them. Accordingly, he has not come. In chapter 2, he goes on to show that the long duration of the third exile was also predicted by the prophets. It has therefore nothing to do with killing the Messiah. In the remaining 11 chapters, except chapters 6 and 13, the rabbi underpins this historic argument from different angles.

In chapter 6 he briefly repeats Nahmanides' argument against the divinity of the Messiah, and in chapter 13 (the final one) he rejects the Christian argument that the Messiah should annul all ceremonial commandments in the law. This point was put on the agenda at Barcelona, but never came up for discussion. The thirteenth and final chapter in Mordechai's book is therefore of significance because it “provides us with a sense of both the Christian argument and the Jewish counterargument” concerning this point.<sup>783</sup>

I have treated this second rabbinic response to Paul's missionary preaching quite briefly, but sufficiently, I believe, to demonstrate that Nahmanides' insistence in the Barcelona debate that one question and one question only was of the essence for the Jewish/Christian controversy, viz. the question of the Messiah's coming, was very representative. In both Jewish spokesmen,

the basic stance is that the entire picture of messianic days as presented throughout the Scriptures has not been yet realized and thus the suggestion that the Messiah has already come is patently untrue. There is little sophistication about this argument, but it is clearly a highly meaningful one to such Jewish leaders as Rabbi Moses ben Nahman

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<sup>783</sup> Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 121.

and Rabbi Mordechai ben Joseph. In this sense, the increasingly adroit argumentation mounted by Friar Paul proved of limited effectiveness. The central Jewish response elaborated for internal Jewish usage is that the overwhelming weight of biblical truth clearly and simply repudiates the new (as well as old) Christian claims.<sup>784</sup>

But this rabbinic response to Paul's argumentation at Barcelona was not the only one to appear in the years after. A Christian player also entered the field. He was a Dominican; like Paul, he was a native of Greater Catalonia, probably not a convert like Paul, though this cannot be ruled out with certainty. What is sure, however, is that he was to surpass Paul by far when it came to mastery of the entire corpus of rabbinic writings. He was also a master of constructing arguments by knitting tight webs of rabbinic quotes to prove Christian truths. Meet Ramon Martí.<sup>785</sup>

#### 4. Friar Ramon Martí Answers Nahmanides: The *Capistrum Iudaeorum* (1267)<sup>786</sup>

I said above that in 1263 Friar Paul was probably the only Christian missionary to the Jews who had the competence to read extensively in the rabbinic corpus of writings and collect sayings relevant for the new Dominican missionary strategy. But I also indicated that behind the scenes we get an early glimpse of another Dominican with competence in rabbinica. In document 6 above (27 March 1264), the following names are enumerated as members of a commission overseeing the removal of blasphemous passages in rabbinic literature: Ramon de Penyafort, Arnol de Segarra, *Ramon Martí*, Pere of Genova. We recognize the two first and the fourth name from the Disputation at Barcelona, but not the third, Ramon Martí. He was to

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<sup>784</sup> Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 111. For copyright reasons, I could not access Yocheved Engelberg Cohen, "Machazik Emunah, The Reinforcer of the Faith: Rabbi Mordechai ben Joseph's Polemical Work" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2003). This work, written under the tutelage of R. Chazan, contains a critical transcription of the Hebrew text, an English translation, and a first full-scale study of Mordechai's work.

<sup>785</sup> This is how his name was written in Catalan, his mother tongue. I use this form in my own text but keep other varieties of it as they occur within quotations, most often Raymond Martini.

<sup>786</sup> The standard edition is now Adolfo Robles Sierra, *Raimundi Martini Capistrum Iudaeorum: Texto critico y traducción* (2 vols. Corpus islamo-christianum (CISC), Series Latina, vols. 3/1 and 5. Vol. I: Würzburg: Echter Verlag/Altenberge: Telos Verlag, 1990. Vol II: Würzburg: Echter Verlag/Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1993).

become a towering figure within the camp of Dominican experts in rabbinica, active in the new missionary enterprise. A few words on him are relevant at this point.<sup>787</sup>

Ramon was born around 1220 in Subirats in Catalonia and died ca. 1285 in Barcelona. He entered the Dominican Order ca. 1235, and very soon followed the advice of Ramon Penyaforat that he should study Arabic and Hebrew to improve the competence in the Dominican missionary work among Muslims and Jews.

He seems to have lived for some periods in Tunisia where, in 1257, he wrote a Latin *Explanation of the Apostles' Creed*.<sup>788</sup> In this book, he departs from the usual pattern of this genre by discussing extensively the Muslim and Jewish objections against the articles of the creed, his primary concern being the *Muslim* objections. He tries to beat the opponents with their own weapons, he argues his case for the Christian faith with quotations from the writings deemed authoritative by Jews and Muslims. In other words, we see the first beginnings of his two great volumes (see below). In this early period, his main interest was the mission among the Muslims. He therefore also authored a book entitled *De secta Mahometi*.

He seems to have studied in Paris under the tutelage of Albertus Magnus, and together with another giant, Thomas of Aquino. The influence from Thomas is visible in the first part of Martí's *opus magnum*, the *Pugio Fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*, 1278). According to one source, Thomas asked Ramon to write a manual in support of his own planned book *Contra Gentiles*. Where Thomas argued his case by reason and by biblical and Christian authorities, Ramon could supplement the case by select quotations from Muslim and Jewish authorities.<sup>789</sup>

Whether or not Ramon was present at the Barcelona disputation, there is no doubt that it became a turning point in his career as a missionary theologian. Until then, his focus of interest had been the anti-Muslim arguments. This was now to change. After 1265, he

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<sup>787</sup> The only modern biography known to me is Adolfo Robles Sierra, *Fray Ramón Martí de Subirats, O.P., y el diálogo misionar en el siglo XIII* (Caleruega: Semblanzas, 1986), which I have not seen. I have seen the same author's shorter summary in his *Raimundi Martini Capistrum Iudaeorum I: 7–21*. A somewhat older one is A. Berthier, "Un Maître orientaliste du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: Raymond Martini, O.P.," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 6 (1936): 267–311 (not consulted by me). For the brief biographical sketch here I lean on Thomas Willi, "Judentum, Christentum und Islam in der geistesgeschichtlichen Situation Spaniens im 13. Jahrhundert," in Ina Willi-Plein and Thomas Willi (eds.), *Glaubensdolch und Messiasbeweis: Die Begegnung von Judentum, Christentum und Islam im 13. Jahrhundert in Spanien* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 16–18; Adolfo Robles Sierra, "Datos cronológicos de Ramón Martí," in Robles Sierra I: 8–14; Schreckenberg III: 290–91; and, more recently, Syds Wiersma, "Weapons against the Jews: Motives and Objectives of the Preface of the *Pugio Fidei*," in Görge K. Hasselhoff and Alexander Fidora (eds.), *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Exemplaria Scholastica: Textos i Estudis Medievals 8; Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2017), 103–19.

<sup>788</sup> For the manuscript evidence, see Denifle, "Quellen zur Disputation," 225, note 2.

<sup>789</sup> On the relationship between these Latin theologians and Martí, see now Ann Giletti, "Early Witness: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Peter of Tarentaise in Ramon Martí's *Pugio fidei* (c. 1278)," in *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Exemplaria Scholastica: Textos i Estudis Medievals 8; ed. Görge K. Hasselhoff and Alexander Fidora; Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2017), 121–56.

published two monumental volumes in which he took up the method of Paul Christian but refined it.

The first mature fruit of this endeavor was Martí's *The Muzzle of the Jews, Capistrum Iudaeorum*, published 1267, four years after the Barcelona disputation (and two years before the Paris disputation, see below). The whole work is in Latin, but with some Hebrew words transliterated in Latin script. As a whole it reads like an "answer" to Nahmanides' *Vikuah*. It "was written in the direct aftermath of the Disputation of Barcelona, when Raymond was a member of the royal commission investigating and censoring rabbinic literature."<sup>790</sup>

Since the entire text of the book is in Latin, the book was certainly written for a Christian readership, and it addressed the objections of Nahmanides at the disputation in 1263 in such a manner as to make them seem irrelevant. The time and the diligent effort invested in this project is indirect testimony that Ramon was eager to reassure his fellow Christians that Nahmanides had by no means won that brilliant victory at Barcelona that he himself made it look like in his *Vikuah*. But I have a suspicion that Ramon also thought that Nahmanides had in fact pinpointed weaknesses in the newly developed Dominican argument, as Paul had presented it at Barcelona. It was now urgent to strengthen the soft spots in the new missionary argument.

That Nahmanides is the main antagonist in this book, is easily seen from its disposition. I here quote the headings of its *tituli* (chapters, as in Alfonsi's *Dialogue*) and summarize their argument very briefly. The book has two *partes*, each with seven *tituli*. The *tituli* of Part One are called *rationes*, positive arguments for the Christian view; in Part Two the counterarguments of the Jews, which he refutes, are called *nequitia iudaeorum*, the useless arguments of the Jews.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>790</sup> Syds Wiersma, "Weapons against the Jews: Motives and Objectives of the Preface of the *Pugio Fidei*," in Görg K. Hasselhoff and Alexander Fidora, *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Exemplaria Scholastica: Textos i Estudis Medievals 8; Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edèndum, 2017), 103–119.

<sup>791</sup> In what follows, all translations from the *Capistrum* are my own, except otherwise noted. Since on several occasions I refer to texts in the *Pugio*, I mention here, once and for all, which edition of it I have used: Johan Benedict Carpzov (ed.), *Raymundi Martini Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judæos* (Leipzig: Heirs of Frederic Lanckis, 1687), digitally available as pdf-file. The work is divided in three parts, in my references indicated with Roman numerals: I, II, and III. The third part is subdivided into three *distinctiones*, here given in Arabic numerals, 1, 2, and 3. The next subdivision is chapters, also in Arabic numerals, the next level is paragraphs, also in Arabic. *Pugio*, III.3.4.11 means: Part III, distinctio 3, chapter 4, paragraph 11. (In parenthesis I give the page reference in Carpzov's edition).

Part One<sup>792</sup>

First *ratio*: *That the Messiah was born before the destruction of the Temple.*

Proof from Scripture: Isaiah 66:7-8, *before she came in the pains of labor, she bore a son.*

This means that the Messiah should be born *before* the Temple was destroyed, hence before the *pain* that the fall of the Temple caused among the Jews. In *Genesis Rabbah* ad Gen 26:24 the pain of Zion observing the fallen Temple is compared with the *pain of a woman in labor*, as in Jeremiah 4:31.<sup>793</sup>

Second *ratio*: *That the Messiah was not only born [at that time] as the Jews admit, but had in fact also come.*<sup>794</sup> Proof: Genesis 49:10. This text is quoted, not according to the Vulgate Latin,<sup>795</sup> but according to the Targum's interpretation: "The ruler shall never depart from the House of Judah, nor the scribe (or: teacher) from his children's children [lit. from between his feet] for evermore – until the Messiah comes, whose is the kingdom, and him shall the nations obey."<sup>796</sup> In Martí's Latin the biblical text comes out as "the scepter (staff, *virga*) shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from his feet, until *Shiloh* comes and the nations obey him; or: the nations gather around him."<sup>797</sup> The Targum Onqelos paraphrase in Martí's Latin reads: "There is no end to the rulership of the House of Judah, and a scribe from his children's children forevermore, until the *Messiha*<sup>798</sup> comes, whose is the kingdom, and him shall the nations obey."<sup>799</sup>

<sup>792</sup> In what follows, all translations from the *Capistrum* are my own, except otherwise noted.

<sup>793</sup> Robles Sierra I: 68/70. At Barcelona 1263, Nahmanides had pointed out that the haggadah about the Messiah being born on the day the Temple was destroyed, even if taken literally (as Paul did), no doubt proved that the Messiah was born that day, but Jesus was born some seventy years earlier. Isa 66:7-8 was not quoted against this by Paul.

<sup>794</sup> Nahmanides made much out of this distinction: even allowing for the Messiah to have been *born* on the day the Temple was destroyed did not mean he had already *come*; cf. *Vikuah* passage 24.

<sup>795</sup> *Non auferetur sceptrum de Iuda, et dux de femore eius, donec veniat qui mittendus est, et ipse erit expectatio gentium*: "The scepter will not be removed from Judah, nor a leader from his loins, until he comes who will be sent, and he will be the expectation of the nations." *Qui mittendus est*, he that is to be sent, is one way of interpreting the enigmatic Hebrew word *shiloh*. It is read as *shaluach*, passive participle of *sh-l-ch* = to send, hence "one who is sent." Cf. John 9:6. Perhaps Jerome's interpretation was inspired from this verse.

<sup>796</sup> Translation according to Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onqelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (Denver, Colo.: Center for Judaic Studies University of Denver / Ktav Publishing House, 1982), 284–85. In the earliest Jewish interpretative tradition *shiloh* was read as *shelo[h]*, an often-occurring abbreviation of *asher lo*, either "he to whom it [the kingdom] belongs," or "that [the kingdom] which belongs to him." Both interpretations are to be found in the Septuagint tradition (see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 25–27). The first one is dominant among the early rabbis and is the one chosen in Targum Onqelos.

<sup>797</sup> *Non recedet virga de Yehuda, et legumlator de infra pedes eius, donec veniat siloh et oboedientia populorum; vel ad eum congregabunt populi.* (*Capistr.* Ratio 2.1, Robles Sierra I:72).

<sup>798</sup> Not a typo, but the Aramaic form of the word Messiah.

<sup>799</sup> The translations of Latin quotes here are mine.



Martí here ignores completely the new *peshat* exegesis launched by Nahmanides at Barcelona and returns to the traditional *derash* exegesis in vogue among the rabbis of the talmudic age. According to this tradition, the Davidic royal rule of Judah was continued by the Exilarchs of Babylon and the Ethnarchs of the Land of Israel – descendants of David – in their capacity of teachers of the Law.

As Martí points out, one midrash located this authority to the Sanhedrin which assembled in the Chamber of Hewn Stones on the Temple Mount, another midrash attributed this authority to the Sanhedrin only when it assembled in this chamber. Forty years before the fall of the Temple the Sanhedrin moved to a village Hannuth outside Jerusalem, and thus the time for the coming of the Messiah according to Genesis 49:10 had arrived – in other words, the time of the Messiah’s coming coincided perfectly with the time when Jesus entered his messianic ministry.<sup>800</sup> Nahmanides’ argument – that there was a mismatch between the “coming” of Jesus on the one hand and the set terms of the Messiah’s coming according to Scripture as well as the rabbis on the other – was in this way invalidated.

Martí also pays Nahmanides a visit when he ridicules the Jewish idea that the Messiah was indeed *born* on the day of the Temple’s destruction, but that he now abides his *coming* in the earthly Paradise or as one of the lepers at Rome.<sup>801</sup>

Third *ratio*: [*Further proof*] that the Messiah has come.<sup>802</sup> Main testimony: Daniel 2:31–45, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the stone cut loose “not with human hands,” and this stone smashing the colossal statue representing the four great kingdoms of the earth, and bringing them all down, itself becoming a mountain filling the whole world. The fourth of these kingdoms, symbolized by the legs and feet of the statue, was of iron, but the feet were partly of iron, and partly of clay. The clay was the Jewish people, who closed a covenant with the Romans after the latter had conquered the kingdom of bronze, meaning the Greek kingdom of Alexander and his successors. The small stone that smashed the whole statue of the four kingdoms was the Messiah, born without male seed, hence “cut loose not by human hands.”<sup>803</sup>

<sup>800</sup> *Capistrum*, First Part, R2,4–10; Robles Sierra I:72–81. I will return to this argument more fully in my treatment of the *Pugio Fidei* below, pp. 330–31.

<sup>801</sup> See Nahmanides *Vikuah*, passages 29–30 and 40–42.

<sup>802</sup> Robles Sierra I:100–25.

<sup>803</sup> This prophecy was not discussed at Barcelona but was by no means a novelty discovered by Martí. The first Christian writer to exploit Dan 2:34.45 as testimony of the virgin birth of the Messiah was Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue*: “When Daniel says that “he who receives the eternal kingdom” is “as a Son of Man” [Dan 7:13], does he not make a veiled allusion to this same truth [his birth of a virgin]? The words, “as a Son of Man,” indicate that he would become a man and appear as such, but that he would not be born of human seed. Daniel states the same truth figuratively when he calls Christ “a Stone cut without hands;” for, to affirm that he was cut out without hands signifies that he was not a product of human activity, but of the will of God, the Father of all, who

Having smashed the four kingdoms, the whole statue, the small stone grew into an enormous mountain that filled the whole world – symbolizing the universal kingdom of the Messiah. This kingdom is a spiritual one, and it began its irresistible growth from Jesus onwards.

But Martí was not satisfied with these traditional ideas. For him, the decisive point was to show that this prophecy also signaled the *time* of the Messiah's coming. The covenant between the Jews and the Romans was established after the end of the Seleucid rule in the Land of Israel. The Jews broke loose from this covenant by their insurrection under Titus (the first Jewish war against Rome). In Nebuchadnezzar's dream the covenant is symbolized by the double material of the statue's feet: iron and clay combined. And it was this statue with these feet the little stone, the Messiah, destroyed. In other words, the Messiah was predicted to destroy the whole statue *before* the covenant between the Jews and the Romans was broken (66 C.E.). Therefore, "it was necessary that the Messiah should not only be *born*, but also *come* [accomplish his messianic task] during the period of these kingdoms, in this way; and begin his own kingdom."<sup>804</sup> In this way, the third *ratio* is made a close parallel to the second, even if many side-points are made along the way.

Forth *ratio*: [*Further proof*] that the Messiah has come. Main proof-text: Daniel 9:24–27.<sup>805</sup>

This is by far the most extensive *ratio* in the book, and the most impressive demonstration of Martí's immense learning.<sup>806</sup> It comes in two versions in the manuscripts,<sup>807</sup> one of which is close to his final exposition of the Daniel weeks prophecy in the *Pugio*. A full exposition of this *ratio* would require a whole monograph; I limit myself to the central point.<sup>808</sup> Following

brought him forth" (*Dial.* 76.1, cf. short references also in 114.4 and 126.1). After Justin, this text in Daniel became a classic in the Christian dossier of Old Testament proof-texts.

<sup>804</sup> *Capistrum*, First Part, R3.6; Robles Sierra I:106.

<sup>805</sup> Again, Martí may have felt the need to improve considerably the somewhat lackluster performance of Paul at Barcelona 1263 concerning this passage, see *Vikvah*, passages 56–61. For an excellent review of the interpretation history of this enigmatic passage, see Robert Chazan, "Daniel 9:24–27: Exegesis and Polemics," in Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (eds.), *Contra Iudaeos: Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews* (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism 10; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 143–59. I discussed the interpretation history above, when commenting on Alfonsi's use of Daniel's prophecy, and I refer to this discussion (in text and notes), pp. 146–48 above.

<sup>806</sup> Robles Sierra I: 126–201.

<sup>807</sup> Robles Sierra's text is mostly based on two complete manuscripts: (1) Manuscript 1675 of the University Library of Bologna (*siglum* B in his edition); and Latin Manuscript 3643 of the Bibliothèque National, Paris (*siglum* P). In Ratio IV.18–31 they differ significantly, in text as well as extent (P having long passages missing in B). Passages only contained in P have close parallels in the *Pugio Fidei* (table in Robles Sierra I:33), which may indicate that someone, probably Martí himself, rewrote this part of the *Capistrum* when working on the *Pugio* (see Robles Sierra I:32–33).

<sup>808</sup> Martí himself is slightly apologetic in the *Pugio* concerning the length of his laborious exposition of the Daniel weeks prophecy: "Someone has said, "Whoever follows a dung beetle is led into filth." That is why in this chapter the discussion has become so exceedingly long, looking more like a book than a chapter; before finally I could end it. So, please forgive me if this abundance of words has been burdensome. I could not dissolve the many and different, the long and wide insanities and tricks of the Jews by few and short expositions.

Julius Africanus and Beda Venerabilis, Martí focusses on the single word *næhtek* in Daniel 9:24, which may mean “have been decreed,” but also “have been cut short.” If the latter meaning is the correct one, as Martí argues, the prophecy reads, “Seventy weeks have been cut short.” Like Africanus and Beda, Martí opts for this translation and takes it to mean that the 490 years are not solar years of 365 days, but the shorter lunar years of 354 days. By an incredibly detailed and learned calculation Martí concludes that the end of these years coincides perfectly with the end of Jesus’ ministry, when every prophecy about the Messiah and his coming was fulfilled.

*Fifth ratio: [Further proof] that the Messiah had indeed come before the destruction of the Temple.* Proof-text: Malachi 3:1–2, “See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight – indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”<sup>809</sup>

Martí’s argument from this text is that the messenger in question is also, in other biblical texts, called Lord (e.g., Psalm 110:1), therefore he must be the divine Messiah appearing on earth as a human being. He was to come to “his temple” [i.e., the temple that fell in 70 C.E.]. But also, he is now building the last temple, which is spiritual, the Church.

*Sixth ratio: “That the Messiah has already come and that he is the one for whom the nations had been longing.”* Proof-text: Haggai 2:9, “The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.”<sup>810</sup>

Martí first takes issue with the rabbinic exegesis of the passage. They try to explain how the second temple, built under Zerubbabel and the High Priest Jeshua ben Jozadak, had greater glory than Solomon’s, in spite of lacking the most essential things that gave the first temple its glory, and in spite of the sorrow expressed by the elderly of the Israelites, who remembered the dimensions of the first temple, when they observed the smaller foundation of the second (Ezra 3:12–13). Martí ridicules all these attempts as unsuccessful. He then turns to the context of the Haggai passage, and from verses 7 and 8, immediately before the quoted verse, he deduces that the greater glory of the last temple has to do with this temple being filled up by

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But had they remained unrefuted, they could have fascinated many of the uneducated Christians” (*Pugio Fidei* II.3.33, Carpzov 294, my translation).

<sup>809</sup> Translation: NRSV. Not discussed at Barcelona but in Paris 1269. In the latter case, influence from Martí?

<sup>810</sup> Translation NRSV. Martí translates “peace” instead of “prosperity.” The same remark applies here as in the former note. The saying that the Messiah should be longed for by the nations is an allusion to the last stanza of Gen 49:10. Hence the Haggai prophecy’s function is to shore up the fundamental testimony, Gen 49:10.

the Gentiles also, bringing their gifts. He elaborates on this, saying that the Messiah was not only to be longed for by the Jews; but also, by the Christians (which needs no proof), and then even by the Saracens, which he then demonstrates by favorable sayings about Jesus and his mother in the Qur'an.<sup>811</sup> He wraps the whole argument up by demonstrating from the Bible and the rabbinic writings that the greater glory that pertains to the final temple is the glory of the Messiah who fulfils all the promises given concerning him: he will save not only the faithful of his own people, but also the non-Jewish nations. Together, they will *be* the last temple, and in this way, the longing of the Gentiles (Gen 49:10) will be fulfilled.

Seventh *ratio*: “[Further proof] that the Messiah has already come.”

Proof-text: Habakkuk 1:5, “Look at the nations, and see! Be astonished! Be astounded! For a work is being done in your days that you would not believe if you were told (*non credetis cum narrabitur*).”<sup>812</sup>

For Martí, the decisive word in this text is “in your days.” Within the period of Jewish self-rule, a wonderful thing will happen that will cause miraculous events among the nations, while the Jewish nation will stubbornly refuse believing in it. As is his wont, Martí substantiates this interpretation with a wealth of other biblical texts. He also demonstrates that according to the rabbis, Jewish self-rule ended 40 years before the destruction of the temple (here cross-referencing what he expounded concerning the time of the Messiah’s *coming* [not his birth] in *Ratio* two). In other words, what Habakkuk foretold in this brief text, was that the Jews would remain God’s people, experiencing self-government and God’s protection until 40 years before the temple’s destruction [i.e., the year 30 C.E.]. After that time, the Jews would, because they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, with amazement observe how all God’s blessings and miracles were transferred from them to the Gentiles. This also meant that the Jews had no reason to complain that none of God’s gifts being granted for the Days of the Messiah had in fact been realized for them.

Briefly summarized, of the seven *rationes*, numbers 2, 3, and 4 directly address objections raised by Nahmanides against Paul’s argument (from biblical and rabbinic texts) at Barcelona, Martí showing that other rabbinic texts than those quoted by Paul could meet the objections of

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<sup>811</sup> *Capistrum* I.6.12 (Robles Sierra I:254–260). Martí is here clearly drawing on his learning acquired as a missionary to the Muslims; the passage on the Qur’an is then repeated in the *Pugio Fidei* III.3.7.14–15 (Carpzov 749–50).

<sup>812</sup> Translation NRSV. Not discussed at Barcelona, but after the text’s presentation in the *Capistrum*, used by Paul Christian in Paris.

the rabbi. In the other *rationes*, he adds other biblical texts not quoted by Paul, and demonstrates that not only the texts themselves, but also scattered sayings in the Talmud, shore up the case for the true Messiahship of Jesus.

*Ratio* seven, towards its end, serves as a transition to the second part of the *Capistrum*, the seven *Nequitiae*. I shall deal with them in a very summary fashion, concentrating on those themes that are of special relevance to the Paris disputation of 1269ff.

## Part Two

The *first* Jewish objection is based on Jeremiah 23:5–6, “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘JHVH is our righteousness’.” Jesus cannot be this Messiah, because Judah/Israel has experienced the exact opposite of justice, salvation, and safety, since Jesus. Martí counters with detailed exegesis of the name Judah – it does not mean all the Jews – and after Jesus, God’s servants are the Christians, not the Jews. He devotes considerable space to an exegesis of God’s four-letter name, the *tetragrammaton*, *JHVH*. The Jeremiah text played no role in the Barcelona disputation but did so in Paris, although a lacuna in the Hebrew report makes it difficult to gauge the exact argument based on it. I will return to this when commenting on the Paris event.

The *second* objection is based on Isaiah 2:2–4/Micah 4:1–3 and Isaiah 11:1–9. These texts promise a universal absence of war and a universal and eternal peace on earth in the days of the Messiah; after Jesus, the exact opposite situation has prevailed. Martí insists that especially the latter passage in Isaiah employs metaphorical language, and that the Jews in fact lived in peace under Rome until they broke their covenant with them before the Jewish war. Since then, the believers in Jesus have received the peace promised in the texts, in part according to the letter, in part according to the spiritual meaning of the texts.

Martí here addresses the weightiest objection brought forward by Nahmanides against the Messiahship of Jesus.<sup>813</sup> His response to it will recur at the Paris Disputation, not stated by Paul, but in the mouth of the General of the Franciscans. It is so like Martí’s that a dependence seems highly likely.

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<sup>813</sup> *Vikuah* passage 49.

The *third* objection takes its departure from the Jewish doctrine of the two Messiahs; the Messiah of Joseph suffers death (e.g., Zech 12:10), while the Messiah of David is always victorious.<sup>814</sup> Jesus, however, can legitimately be called by both names: He was nurtured by Joseph and born as son of David. His death was predicted to be for the salvation of all, as in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. An extended exegesis of verses from this text runs like a red thread through the greater part of this *nequitia*.

The *fourth* objection is based upon Daniel 7:13: Jesus did not come on the clouds of heaven. Answer: this text speaks about his second coming, not his first.

The *fifth* objection is taken from Zechariah 9:9–10, in which it is said that the Messiah's reign will be universal: "from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (NRSV). This cannot be claimed for Jesus. Answer: Jesus has indeed been proclaimed the Messiah to all peoples of the world; whereas the Jewish claim that they are represented even beyond the Caspian Mountains is a mere fable. And the ten tribes have never returned to resume their life as Jews; they were assimilated and absorbed by their Gentile neighbors and as Gentiles many of them became Christians!

The *sixth* objection is a collection of different disputed questions with no discernible thematic center.

The *seventh* objection, on the other hand, begins with a noticeably clear theme, viz. what Jesus meant when he said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (Matt 5:17, NRSV). The Jews say: If Jesus said this and meant it, how can you Christians claim that he came to abolish the greater part of the law, viz. all the non-moral commandments that abound in the law. If he did, he undid what he said in the quoted saying. In his answer, Martí – in typical scholastic fashion – solves the apparent contradiction by making a distinction between four different components of the law. (1) Jesus "fulfilled" the ethical commandments, like the Ten, by requiring not only an outer, bodily obedience to them, but also an inner observance of the soul or mind. (2) The law contained sworn promises (by God), which Jesus fulfilled by making them come true. Christians fulfil these commandments by believing that they have come true. (3) The ceremonial commandments, like offering sacrifices; not eating forbidden food, celebrating festivals, etc., are no longer to be observed according to the letter, because the acts prescribed by these commandments were types of what was to come in the days of the Messiah. They were fulfilled in a new, spiritual way because of the saving act of the Messiah. For example,

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<sup>814</sup> The doctrine of the two Messiahs was hinted at by Nahmanides at Barcelona, *Vikuah*, passage 61.

carnal circumcision was supplanted by spiritual baptism. (4) The law of Moses contained many commandments for use in the jurisprudence of courts of law.

In the latter part of this *Nequitia*, Martí again uses the occasion to treat topics that he felt had been missing so far, and to repeat things of special importance.

The intended readership of the *Capistrum*, according to Syds Wiersma, was primarily Martí's fellow Dominicans engaged in mission to the Jews, but also those who were members of inquisitorial commissions examining Jewish books, as Martí himself was from 1264 in Aragon. "The fact that one of the dedications Raymond makes in the prologue of the *Capistrum* regards Peter Martyr, the famous Dominican General-inquisitor in Northern Italy who was murdered in 1252, adds to the assumption that the *Capistrum* was closely connected to inquisitorial activities."<sup>815</sup> In other words, Martí was part of an expert team carrying out the Parisian strategy of censoring the Talmud. He obviously saw no contradiction here.

But this was not the only context and purpose of the *Capistrum*; also preaching to and debating with Jews was very much part of the Dominican agenda, and Martí's book would be an invaluable arsenal of arguments for this purpose. The title *Capistrum*, muzzle, comprises both purposes, the inquisitorial as well as the argumentative preaching. Martí explains his choice of title as follows:

[S]ince it is written, "Bind with bit and bridle the jaws of those who refuse to come to you" [Ps 32:9], this little [!] work may serve not so much as a bridle (*frenum*) but rather as a muzzle (*capistrum*), until God should bestow the bridle which He is preparing, since, indeed, it is an unpolished and roughly patched thing, whence it may be called a "Muzzle for the Jews" (*Capistrum Iudaeorum*)."<sup>816</sup>

Wiersma comments: "A *capistrum*, a 'muzzle', is meant to prevent a horse from biting, not to lead it, for which a *frenum*, a rein bridle is needed. As long as the Jews refuse to accept Christianity, and the majority will do so until the return of Christ, a *capistrum* is needed to restrain them."<sup>817</sup> This "restraining" consists in showing, point by point, that the Jewish objections against the Dominican argument for the truth of the Christian faith (as well from

<sup>815</sup> Syds Wiersma, "Weapons against the Jews: Motives and Objectives of the Preface of the *Pugio Fidei*," in *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Exemplaria Scholastica: Textos i Estudis Medievals 8; ed. Görgo K. Hasselhoff and Alexander Fidora; Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edendum, 2017), 103–119; quot. p. 103.

<sup>816</sup> *Capistrum*, prologue 8, Robles Sierra I:60; translation Wiersma, "Weapons against the Jews," 109.

<sup>817</sup> Wiersma, "Weapons against the Jews," 110.

the Scriptures as also from the Talmud) are of no consequence. The Christian readers of the *Capistrum* should be fully convinced of this, having worked their way through the dense pages of the book. The second step, Martí taking the offensive and positively proving the truth of the Christian faith in Jesus, was reserved for his *Pugio*, published eleven years after the *Capistrum*.

A comparison of the two works indicates that work on the *Pugio* was already in full swing when the *Capistrum* was published, and that work on the two volumes in great part was done in parallel rather than in succession.<sup>818</sup> This means that material in the *Pugio* may also be seen as possible background resources for Paul at the Paris disputation.<sup>819</sup>

This opens a wide field of research that has not yet been done. The Hebrew report on the disputation at Paris should be carefully compared with (1) Nahmanides' *Vikuah* and (2) the Latin Protocol on the Barcelona disputation; further (3) with the Hebrew summary of the *Vikuah* made especially for the Jewish spokesmen at Paris, and (4) Martí's *Capistrum* and his *Pugio*. In this way I believe one could come a long way in mapping to what extent Martí gradually took over the lead of the Dominican missionary campaign between Barcelona and Paris, and not least *during* the Paris disputation. There is every reason to assume that during a disputation that lasted so long, many internal consultations and preparations took place on both sides. Among Paul's advisers, I suspect Ramon Martí soon became the supreme authority.

This would be my working hypothesis if I were to make such a detailed analysis, but I have had neither the time nor the means to carry it through. In the notes to my summary of the Paris disputation that follows, I have referred to the very few and incomplete observations I did make, hoping to whet the appetite of a scholar younger than me to carry through such a project – ideal, I believe, for a Ph.D. thesis.

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<sup>818</sup> As already argued by Thomas Willi, "Judentum, Christentum und Islam," 17–18. In fact, as Willi points out, the *Capistrum* contains several cross-references to the *Pugio*. According to Willi, the *Capistrum* was the official Dominican "answer" to Nahmanides' *Vikuah*, addressed to the Christian audience that might have become bewildered by Nahmanides' apparent or rumored victory at Barcelona 1263, whereas the *Pugio* is addressed to learned Christian (mostly Dominican) missionaries to the Jews. See further below. According to Robert Chazan, "this achievement would have been impossible without the support of the rest of his research staff. Almost certainly the financial and personnel support reflected in the collaborative achievement of the *Pugio Fidei* flows from the missionizing circle at the hub of which sat the active and influential Ramon of Penyafort." *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 116. A different view is argued by Philippe Bobichon, "Le manuscrit Latin 1405 de la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (Paris), autographe et œuvre d'un converti," in Hasselhoff and Fidora, *Texts and Studies*, 39–101. Based on a very detailed study of the handwriting, the ink and pen and paper used, and other details, Bobichon concludes that this manuscript was written by Martí himself, and that the entire book is his own personal achievement. I will return to this question.



## 5. The Paris Disputation 1269ff

This was Paul's second public debate after the one in Barcelona in 1263. But unlike the Barcelona debate, this second at Paris has received little scholarly attention. This no doubt has to do with the lack of a critical edition of the main source of the disputation until 1994. In that year Joseph Shatzmiller published the only critical edition of the only Hebrew manuscript that contains an incomplete report on the themes and arguments that were presented during the disputation itself.<sup>820</sup> In addition to an annotated and critical transcription of the text,<sup>821</sup> Shatzmiller also presents a photographic reproduction of it,<sup>822</sup> and an annotated French translation.<sup>823</sup> More or less all the other relevant documents concerning the debate are also included, in Latin as well as in French translations. Shatzmiller's "Introduction," (pp. 7–32) may be called the first thorough study of the disputation and contains a lot of valuable observations and background data. I depend heavily on Shatzmiller for nearly everything I say in the following, only adding a few observations of my own.

When Paul Christian left Aragon, apparently for good, and went to Paris in 1269, he could enjoy a boon that he had lacked in Barcelona in 1263 and in the Kingdom of Aragon in the years after, viz. the enthusiastic and unconditional support of the king – in France, Louis IX, 1226–70.<sup>824</sup>

Before the Paris disputation, Louis IX issued two documents relevant for Paul's French campaign in general, and the disputation in particular. Both were issued the same date, June 18, 1269. The first one commands the Jews to wear an easily recognized circular badge "of felt or yellow cloth, stitched upon the outer garment in front and in back."<sup>825</sup>

The ruling about distinctive dressing for Jews and Muslims in the 68. canon of Lateran Council IV 1215 had only sporadically been mandated by the French kings, and never enforced. This time it was serious; an anonymous French chronicle says that at the date given (above), "by royal order and in the presence of the provost, the Jews of Paris were ensigned

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<sup>820</sup> Joseph Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au Moyen Âge* (Collection de la Revue des Etudes juives 15; Paris: E. Peeters, 1994).

<sup>821</sup> "Annexe III," 41–57. Some readers may be disappointed to learn that the valuable footnotes accompanying this text are in the same language (although in a contemporary version) as the manuscript itself: Hebrew.

<sup>822</sup> "Annexe V," 105–125.

<sup>823</sup> "Annexe IIIa," 57–76.

<sup>824</sup> For a good review of the extremely anti-Jewish policy of Louis IX (1226–1270), see Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 100–153. Paul Christian's influence on the king is detailed on pp. 149–53.

<sup>825</sup> Latin text: Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 15, note 16; English translation in Robert Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France*, 150.

with a circle of felt, in front and back on all the clothes which they wore.”<sup>826</sup> The edict itself makes no secret about who inspired the king: “Since We wish that the Jews be distinguishable from Christians and be recognizable, we order you [royal officials] that, *at the order of our dear brother in Christ, Paul Christian, of the Order of the Preaching Brethren*, you impose signs...” Paul obviously wanted no Jew of France being able to hide his or her Jewishness when summoned to the enforced sermons and disputations held by him.

The second edict orders the king’s servants to force the Jews to be present at Paul’s missionary sermons, answer all his questions, and, if requested, show him their sacred books for inspection. The royal officers should provide Paul and his companions with guards to protect them from assault.<sup>827</sup> – The last point is telling testimony to the intense resentment created among the Jews by the use of coercion that accompanied Paul’s preaching activity. Again, the anonymous chronicle reports the enactment of this decree: “In the same year (1269), close to Pentecost, a certain brother of the Order of Preaching Brethren ... came from Lombardy... Publicly, in the royal court at Paris and in the court of the Preaching Brethren, he preached to the Jews – who came there by royal order –, showing them that their law was null and worthless...”<sup>828</sup>

In other words: While the wording of the two edicts was general, envisaging several preaching events, they were both tailor-made for the first public event after their publication, viz. “The Disputation at Paris” 1269–73. According to Shatzmiller’s careful analysis of the sources documenting this disputation, it was not a single event of some days, as in Barcelona, but rather a series of debates over a few years. We may assume that only a selection of the themes that were discussed has been recorded in the only, incomplete, Hebrew report that has come down to us, found in one manuscript in Moscow.<sup>829</sup>

In some ways, this Hebrew narrative can be called the Paris counterpart to Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*; and the similarities between the two reports is no accident. A second Hebrew manuscript, kept at the Victor-Emmanuel Library at Rome, contains a summary of the arguments exchanged at the Barcelona disputation, obviously assembled as a manual for

<sup>826</sup> Quoted here from Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: A Political and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 150.

<sup>827</sup> Latin text: Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 35; English translation in Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages: Edited, with Introductions and Notes* (New York: Behrman House, 1980), 261–62.

<sup>828</sup> Quoted from Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 151.

<sup>829</sup> For details, see Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 8–11. The Moscow manuscript was published by Shatzmiller in photographic facsimile as “Annexe V”, pp. 106–125; in quadratic Hebrew transcript as “Annexe III”, pp. 43–57; and in French translation as “Annexe IIIa,” pp. 57–76. The manuscript is now kept in the Lenin Library in Moscow and was collated by Shatzmiller in 1991. The only earlier publication of parts of it was by A. Neubauer, “Another Convert by the Name of Paulus,” *JQR* 5 (1893): 713–14.

the Jewish respondents at the Paris disputation.<sup>830</sup> Paul's thrusts and Nahmanides' parries are recognizable in a few passages of the Hebrew account of the Paris event, probably reflecting the use of this summary by the Jewish sages in Paris.

What is striking, however, is the general *novelty* of Paul's scriptural as well as rabbinic prooftexts at the Paris disputation. One gets the feeling that Paul and his assistants knew that in Paris the rabbis had been preparing themselves for the debate by studying the Hebrew compendium of the Barcelona disputation. Accordingly, Paul advanced other and new arguments at Paris, hoping, perhaps, that these could hit the Jews off-guard.

The Hebrew report begins by portraying the very threatening aspects under which the Jews were commanded to take part in the debate. Paul, coming from Spain, had as his real purpose to annihilate the remnants of the Holy People still living in the lands of the French King. Even their wives and children would not be spared. He addressed the Jews in front the Parisian crowd and their priests, saying: Listen to me, House of Jacob, and all families of Israel. Be aware that if you do not obey and follow the arguments that I present, and in consequence abandon your covenant, you will never enjoy peace, and I will take revenge and claim your blood and your souls. You are a people without faith, heretics who deserve to be placed on a pyre.<sup>831</sup> I will put before you questions, and, [depending on the answer,] each of them may result in you being condemned to death.<sup>832</sup> So, send for the greatest of your sages so that they can answer me, without delay. The king has ordered me to carry this affair through until its end [your conversion].<sup>833</sup>

*First theme:* While you Jews say the Messiah has not yet come, I shall prove the contrary from your own writings (biblical and rabbinical).

*Second theme:* According to the prophets, the Messiah was to be born by a virgin whom no man had come near.<sup>834</sup>

*Third theme:* I will demonstrate that the Messiah is divine but assumed flesh from the virgin.

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<sup>830</sup> For this document, see Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 20–21.

<sup>831</sup> Heretics: in the Hebrew text, the French word *bougres* is written with Hebrew characters. The word was derived from *Bulgares*, who were typical heretics to Medieval Latin Christians because they were *Eastern Orthodox*!

<sup>832</sup> This introduction in the Hebrew account is in part translated into English in Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France*, 152.

<sup>833</sup> There is a much greater ingredient of threats and coercion towards conversion during the whole extent of the Paris event than at the Barcelona event. At Barcelona, it was mainly in the aftermath that the coercive measures became apparent; in Paris they were clearly displayed right from the beginning.

<sup>834</sup> Not part of the Barcelona agenda, but an important matter for Marti in the *Pugio*, see below.

*Fourth theme:* I will demonstrate that the Messiah, according to the prophets, was destined to suffer and die – called his *passion* – in order to save his people from *gehinom*.<sup>835</sup>

*Fifth theme:* The divine Messiah announced by the prophets should annul the entire Law of Moses and reject all those claiming to live by it.<sup>836</sup>

The Jewish side was represented by a group of rabbis headed by one Abraham ben Samuel, later only called “the Sage,” and possibly replaced or supplemented by other rabbis during the long-lasting encounter.

Opening words by Rabbi Abraham:

You should know that all our sages are deeply wounded by your arrogance when you speak about our Law. The little finger of the first apostate [Donin] is thicker than Paul’s waist!

“The (royal?) officer”: I remind you that all of you rabbis present are here at the king’s order, and that you shall only answer Paul’s questions, not, unasked, propagate your false faith.<sup>837</sup>

The Disputation proper:

*(A) Theme 1: The Messiah has come already.*

*Paul:* Already the talmudic Amoraim decreed an end to calculations of the time of the Messiah’s coming, implying that he had come already. The early rabbis did not expect the advent of the Messiah in the distant future, how else could they proclaim Bar Kokhba the Messiah?<sup>838</sup>

*The Sage:* The calculations of the calculators were never trustworthy; therefore, the rabbis wanted them ended.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> In the Hebrew manuscript this Hebrew-Greek word is transcribed with Hebrew letters. For an extensive elaboration of this topic – Christ’s salvific work culminating in his redeeming the just ones from *gehenna*, Shatzmiller aptly refers to Martini’s *Pugio fidei*, III.17 (Carpzov, 873–76).

<sup>836</sup> The first, third, and fifth point correspond to the agenda of the Barcelona disputation, according to Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*, passage 6.

<sup>837</sup> One easily recognizes this rule of the game from the Barcelona Christian Protocol.

<sup>838</sup> This is the best I can make out of Shatzmiller’s emended text at this point. Compare *Pugio Fidei* II.4.17–28 (Carpzov, 320–30).

<sup>839</sup> Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 97a-b: “Even as R. Zera, who, whenever he chanced upon scholars engaged therein [i.e., in calculating the time of the Messiah’s coming], would say to them: I beg of you, do not postpone it [the Messiah’s coming], for it has been taught: Three come *unawares*: Messiah, a found article and a scorpion” [the Messiah is hindered from coming when someone has calculated his coming and expects him.] *Ibid.*, 97b: “R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted [the verb *puach* in Hab 2:3 is taken to mean “blow away, blast”] be the bones of those who calculate the end. For they would say, since the predetermined time has

*Paul:* Proof from Scripture: Haggai 2:9: The glory of the last temple will be greater than that of the first. Why? Because the last (a spiritual one) will be built by the Messiah.<sup>840</sup>

*The Sage:* Different interpretations of this prophecy among the sages, none of them supporting Paul's.

(B) *Theme 2: The Messiah to be born by a virgin.*

*Paul:* This can be proved from Scripture: Isaiah 7:14, because *almah* in this text clearly means virgin, cf. Genesis 24:43 in which the word *almah* clearly designates a virgin, and explicitly in Genesis 24:16.<sup>841</sup>

*The Sage:* This “sign” was promised to be seen by King Achaz! And *almah* may refer to a young, married woman, as in Proverbs 30:19. In Genesis 24:16, the saying about Rebecca that she was an *almah* whom *no man had touched*, is proof that the latter fact was not already implied in the word *almah*.

(C) *Additional arguments that the Messiah must have come:*

*Paul:* Prophecy was to terminate with Jesus, the fulfiller of all prophecies.

Proof from Scripture: Daniel 9:24: After 70 weeks iniquity will end, sin be sealed off and offences atoned for, so that an eternal righteousness will come. All this was fulfilled by Jesus, a contemporary of the last days of the (second) Temple.

arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come.” “Rab said: All the predestined dates [for redemption] have passed, and the matter [now] depends only on repentance and good deeds” *ibid.*, 97b. For a rich collection of rabbinic dicta to the same effect, see Str-B 4,2:1013–1015 and Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 195–206.

<sup>840</sup> The same argument in Martí, *Capistrum*, Ratio 6, above. At Barcelona, Genesis 49:10 and its talmudic interpretation carried the main burden of proof concerning the Messiah's having come already. At Paris, Genesis 49:10 was not even quoted (according to the Hebrew report which may be incomplete); the scriptural prophecy as well as the talmudic proof was different. At Barcelona, Nahmanides had effectively, and probably quite surprisingly, undercut Paul's entire argument by his historicizing exegesis of Genesis 49:10. At Paris, I assume Martí's influence behind the change in Paul's new approach. Martí himself preferred to counter Nahmanides' critique by sticking to the traditional exegesis of the rabbis but choosing one that made the “scepter” and the “ruler's staff” end 40 years ahead of the Temple's fall. See my rendering of *Capistrum*, Ratio 2 above (pp. 292–93), and the comments on Martí's *Pugio* below, pp. 330–31.

<sup>841</sup> Isaiah 7:14 was a classic in the Christian proof-text tradition, right from Matthew 1:22–23. It may seem puzzling that it was left out at Barcelona 1263, but the explanation is obvious: Ever since the days of Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 43.8), the Jews claimed that the child spoken of in Isaiah 7:14 was king Ahaz's son Hezekiah (cf. Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 380). No rabbinic interpretation of this text was available that could support the Christian one. Paul's master strategy of supporting a Christian interpretation by matching rabbinic interpretations was not applicable apropos Isaiah 7:14. He therefore dropped this text at Barcelona, but reintroduced it in Paris, perhaps inspired by Ramon Martí who was later, in his *Pugio Fidei* (III.7.1–4; Carpozov, 737–42), to develop Jerome's argument for *almah* meaning “hidden virgin,” based on Genesis 24:43 (Jerome, *Against Jovinian*, I.32, PL 23:254–55; English translation in Robert Louis Wilken, *Isaiah: Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators* [The Church's Bible; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007], 101–102.)

Proof from the Talmud: In *b Yebamot* 15b–16a rabbi Dosa son of Hyrkan spoke prophetically about a prophecy by Haggai (not contained in his biblical book). Accordingly, prophecy did not end at the *beginning* of the second Temple, as said by the rabbis, but lasted to the *last* days of the second Temple. This is in accordance with my interpretation of Daniel 9:24.<sup>842</sup>

*The Sage:* Your argument is not valid; rabbi Dosa could have his non-canonical tradition from a chain of intermediate transmitters. Prophecy ended during the *first* days of the second Temple.

(D) *Further proof concerning Daniel 9:24–27:*

*Paul:* The chronology points to Jesus. The seventy year-weeks are to be counted like this: They began with the destruction of the First Temple and ended with the destruction of the Second. In the year 420 (60 year-weeks) into the era of the Second Temple, Jesus stood forth as Messiah, and prophecy ended. After seven more weeks (six plus one), the Second temple was ended.<sup>843</sup> The Daniel prophecy further states that after 62 weeks the Anointed one is “cut short,” this refers to the longer name *mashiach* (four consonants) being shortened to *Jeshu* (three).<sup>844</sup>

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<sup>842</sup> Something may be going on here that is not spelled out:

(1) In the Christian interpretation of Genesis 49:10, one way to make kingdom in Judah continuous from David to Jesus was the idea that it was the privilege of prophets to anoint kings. Accordingly, the authority to anoint kings was present from David to Jesus, with whom it came to an end (see above, pp. 231–32, on Justin’s interpretation along these lines.) (2) In Christian tradition, Genesis 49:10 was often combined with Daniel 9:24–27 in the following way: Genesis 49:10 predicted that kingship in Judah would end with the Messiah’s coming; Daniel 9:24–27 gave the *date* of his coming (see above, pp. 251–53). (3) A new idea of Martí’s, not propounded by Paul, was that the valuable sayings about the Messiah’s coming in rabbinic literature derived from pre-Christian sages who were still passing on the true prophetic tradition. Perhaps this idea underlies the argument here. On Martí’s theory, see below (pp. 328–29).

<sup>843</sup> In the perhaps somewhat garbled report in the Hebrew manuscript, it is difficult to see any mathematical consistency in Paul’s explanation. During the disputation at Barcelona, Paul also presented this argument, and here his chronology seems better presented (by Nahmanides): First seventy years of the Babylonian exile (10 weeks), then 420 years (60 weeks) to the fall of the second temple, adding up to 70 weeks all in all. In Paris, the Jewish opponent was not slow in pointing out the rather artificial and non-consistent chronology of Paul, and in the very long passage on the prolonged discussion concerning Dan 9:24–27 that follows, the Jewish reporter allows ample room for rabbi Abraham to develop his own chronology for Daniel 9:24–27. His main point is that what happened at the time of the Second Temple’s fall fulfilled every end-time event described in Daniel’s prophecy, and those prophecies that did not point to the end-time, had the end of the first and the beginning of the second Temple in mind. While Daniel 9:24–27 played a significant role in the Barcelona debate (passages 56–61 in Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*), Paul’s argument in Paris is more extensive and has new elements. Ramon Martí in his *Capistrum* devotes his fourth proof (Part I.4) that the Messiah has already come to a detailed interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27. He comes back to it very extensively in *Pugio*, Part 2, chapter 3 (Carpzov, pp. 269–94). Could it be that Paul in the Paris disputation had revised his argument inspired by Martí’s improved statement of it? If so, one would also have a good explanation of the fact that rabbi Abraham in Paris used more time and effort in refuting Paul than Nahmanides did in Barcelona.

<sup>844</sup> Some modern scholars have regarded the name-form *Jeshu* as being a pejorative misreading of Jesus’ Hebrew name *Jeshuah* (*Y-sh-u* being an acronym for *Y’mach Sh’mo V’zichro*(no), “cursed be his name and his memory”). Paul’s argument here, however, only makes sense with the name written as *Jeshu*, which indicates that Paul found no fault in writing it like this. (It also proves that it was Paul himself, not the Jewish writer of the Hebrew manuscript, who used this form).

*The Sage:* Your counting of the year-weeks makes no sense; prophecy ended with Haggai and Zechariah, and the last single week of the Daniel prophecy corresponded with the years of Vespasian and thus was contemporary with the destruction of the Second Temple.

(E) *Further proofs from the prophets:*

*Paul:* Malachi 3:1 says, the “Lord whom you seek will soon [*pitom*] come to his temple, and the Angel of the Covenant in whom you delight.” This messenger of God cannot be your Messiah, for he has not yet come. It must be Jesus; he came within the period of the second Temple, thus “soon” after Malachi’s time.<sup>845</sup>

A long discussion ensues about the correct translation of *pitom*. Rabbi Abraham is the better philologist of the two when he argues that *pitom* does not mean a short period of time, but rather “suddenly and surprisingly, when all hope was lost.”<sup>846</sup>

(F) *Theme 4: The Messiah will suffer*

*Paul:* Two or three times a day you Jews make the sign of the cross by wagging your head right and left, up and down.

*The Sage:* Paul is an ignorant in things Jewish: While praying, the Jews wag their head in six, not four directions (because also back and forth). But this is not essential; the Sages of the Talmud have taught us that praying *with full attention* is what counts (*b. Berakot* 13b).

(G) *Further proofs that the Messiah has come*

(1) *Paul:* The haggadah on the lowing cow<sup>847</sup> clearly says that the Messiah was born on the day of the fall of the second Temple, accordingly, he has come.

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<sup>845</sup> While Malachi 3:1 played no role at the Barcelona disputation, it looms large in Martí’s *Capistrum* I.5, as well as in the *Pugio*, II.9 (Carpzov, 376–91). Combining this prophecy with Haggai 2:9 (“The latter splendor of this [second] house shall be greater than [the splendor of] the former”), Martí argues that without any doubt the temple built under Zerubbabel is referred to as “the former” in Haggai 2:9.

<sup>846</sup> As far as I can see, this focus on *pitom* does not occur in Martí’s *Pugio*. He translates it *subito*, which means suddenly, unexpectedly, rather than soon (II.9, Carpzov, 376). Could it be that he revised the argument after the Paris disputation?

<sup>847</sup> Quoted by Paul also at Barcelona, Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*, passage 19 (see above). According to the Hebrew manuscript, Paul at Paris said he was quoting the “Talmud,” while Nahmanides said he quoted *Lamentations Rabbah* at Barcelona. The haggadah in fact occurs twice in the rabbinic corpus of writings, once in *y. Berakhot* 2:4/12–14; and also, in *Lamentations Rabbah* 1:16 §51. For a fascinating modern interpretation of the whole story, arguing that it is a very carefully constructed *polemic* directed precisely against the gospel stories of the birth as well as the death of Jesus, see Peter Schäfer, “The Birth of the Messiah, or Why Did Baby Messiah Disappear?” Chapter 8 in Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), 214–35.

*The Sage*: If the Messiah was born on the day of the fall of the *first* Temple, he cannot be Jesus. On the other hand, if the second Temple were meant, Jesus was born seventy years too early.<sup>848</sup>

(2) Paul quoted *the haggadah on the Messiah at the gate of Rome among the sick* (*b. Sanhedrin 98a*).

Here Paul's argument is exactly the same as at Barcelona: According to this haggadah, the Messiah has undoubtedly come already, and was in Rome, and has to be Jesus, who now rules there (cf. *Vikuah* passage 29).<sup>849</sup>

*The Sage's* answer follows Nahmanides' answers at Barcelona (passages 20–22 and 39) quite closely: (1) This type of haggadah is not meant to be taken literally but is more like a story made up to alert the people of the deeper meaning of the *peshat* (plain meaning) of Scripture (in this case Isaiah 53:4, see above, p. 241). One finds the same in your greatest priest, Jerome!<sup>850</sup> (2) Our Sages were of two opinions concerning the haggadah of the lowing cow. Some thought the Messiah was in fact born on the day of the fall of the Temple; others that he has not been born yet. But those who held the first opinion said he was now in Paradise, and that it was there that Rabbi Joshua met Elijah and asked him about the Messiah.<sup>851</sup> When he is said to suffer illness, it is because he identifies himself with the sufferings that his people of Israel has to endure under Christian Rome. (3) How can Paul argue that Jesus is the Messiah from our Talmud, when all the sages of the Talmud were posterior to Jesus and did not follow him or believe in him?<sup>852</sup>

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<sup>848</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Paul seems to have presented this simple interpretation of the haggadah while knowing how Nahmanides had shot it down at Barcelona. Perhaps the Hebrew account simplifies somewhat here. A comparison with Martí's *Pugio* may be relevant. He is clearly aware of the objection brought forward by the Jewish sage: Jesus was not born on the day of the fall of the Temple, but *before*. In *Pugio* II.6.1 (Carpzov, 348–49) he quotes the haggadah according to the *Yerushalmi Berakhot* version (but noting the parallel in *Lamentations Rabba!*), according to which the juxtaposition of the Temple's fall and the birth of the Messiah is deduced from Isaiah 10:34–11:1: The saying "Lebanon [the Temple] will fall" (10:34) is immediately followed by the saying "a shoot shall come forth from the root of Jesse" (11:1). Martí counters this by quoting from *Genesis Rabbah* ad Genesis 30:41: "Why do you say that the Messiah was born on the day the Sanctuary was destroyed? Because it is said: "*Before* she was in labor, she [Zion] gave birth; *before* her pain came upon her, she delivered a son" (Isa 66:7). I take Martí's argument to be that, unlike Isaiah 10:34–11:1, Isa 66:7 is explicit in saying that the birth of the Messiah happens *before* Zion's pain (caused by the fall of the Temple). He developed this argument from Isa 66:7 already in his *Capistrum* (I,1, Robles Sierra I: 68/70), so I believe there is every reason to think that Paul presented this argument at Paris, but that the Jewish report ignored it.

<sup>849</sup> Martí in his *Pugio* discards this haggadah as absurd,

<sup>850</sup> See Nahmanides' *Vikuah*, passage 39.

<sup>851</sup> Cf. *Vikuah*, passage 40.

<sup>852</sup> Cf. *Vikuah*, 8.



(3) *Paul*: A rabbinic saying has it that the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13 was Anani, belonging to the fourteenth generation of Zerubbabel's descendants according to 1 Chronicles 3:19–24.<sup>853</sup> With Anani, the genealogy ends. This means that Anani is the Messiah, and he can be no other than Jesus.<sup>854</sup>

*The Sage*: Anani belonged to the seventh generation after Zerubbabel, this is too short to cover the period between Zerubbabel and Jesus. Besides, if Anani were in fact Jesus, it would mean that Jesus had a father as well as a mother, and six brothers (enumerated in 1 Chron 3:24).

According to the Hebrew report, the Christian princes in the audience were shocked at Paul's words when this implication was made clear to them.

*Paul* therefore immediately continued: For those who have insight, the seven names of Elieoenai's sons in 1 Chron 3:24 do not signify carnal brothers. Instead, they signify the *seven candles* of the Menorah, with Anani in the center (Zech 4:2). He is the light of the world, as also indicated by *the seven-eyed stone* in Zechariah 3:9, which corresponds to the *seven-branched* Menorah according to Zechariah 4:2. The Targum refers this to the Messiah. Furthermore, this [seven-eyed] *stone* is the same as in Daniel 2:34.45, it was taken from the mountain without the help of human hands (thus indicating the virginal birth of Jesus).<sup>855</sup>

*The Sage*: It should be evident to all, even children, that the text of 1 Chronicles is a genealogy plain and simple, there is no deeper meaning to it. On the other hand, in the prophecy of Zechariah, which admittedly *Targum Onqelos* took to be about the Messiah, there

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<sup>853</sup> According to Paul (as he is quoted in the Hebrew manuscript), this saying occurred in *Genesis Rabbah*. As Shatzmiller remarks in his Hebrew note ad loc. (p. 52, note 125), the saying is not found in *Genesis Rabbah*, but something like it is found in *b. Sanhedrin* 98a and *Pesiqta Rabbati*, Pisqa 34. Daniel 7:13 says that the Son of Man was coming with "the clouds of heaven (Aramaic: *Ananey shemaya*)." The consonants in *ananey* are the same as in the Hebrew name *Anany* (1 Chron 3:24). With some goodwill, the Aramaic consonant text of Dan 7:13 could be read as a Hebrew one: "*Anani shemo*": "The Son of Man – Anani was his name" (in fact, the Hebrew text in the report substitutes *waw* for *aleph* at the end of Aramaic *shemaya*, which clearly indicates this re-vocalization.) This could be Paul's own creative re-vocalization of the Daniel text, making it possible to combine this text with 1 Chron 3:24: The very last name in the list of Davidic descendants according to 1 Chron 3:24 was the same as the name of the Messiah (Son of Man) according to Daniel 7:13. But in 1 Chronicles 3, Anani belongs to the seventh, not the fourteenth generation after Zerubbabel, as the Jewish sage correctly points out in his response. Highly likely, Paul took the number 14 from Matt 1:17, but did not try to harmonize the two numbers, at least not according to the hostile Hebrew report.

<sup>854</sup> The same combination of Dan 7:13 and 1 Chron 3:24 occurs in the *Capistrum*, Ratio 5 (Robles Sierra I:210) and later in the *Pugio* III.9.6 (Carpzov, 769–70), but Martí simplifies the identification of David's offspring Anani with the Son of Man by keeping the Danielic text as it stands, and taking Anani to mean "the *nubeus*," "the cloud-man" of Dan 7:13. This also seems to be the case in the (now lost) rabbinic source Martí is quoting.

<sup>855</sup> Martí, following the passage referred to in the former note, immediately follows up with an exposition of a large cluster of "stone" testimonies, with "seven" as a subordinate catchword, including the ones quoted here by Paul (*Pugio* III.3.9.6, Carpzov, 770). For a more extended treatment of Daniel 2:34–35. 44–45, the stone cut loose without human hands, see *Pugio* II.7.3 (Carpzov, 354). Martí had already developed this argument in his *Capistrum*, I.3 (Robles Sierra, 100–25). Concerning Zech 3:9, the seven-eyed stone, see *Pugio* II.9.10 (Carpzov, 384–85). Martí's expositions of these texts, and their interrelatedness, seem more skillfully worked out than Paul's.

is no mention of the name Anani, and also, our sages did not accept the interpretation of the Targum. But, most importantly, know and acknowledge that the signs of the Messiah have not appeared!<sup>856</sup>

*(H) The signs of the Messiah's coming*

Here the *Master of the Franciscans* intervened and said: *Tell me about these signs that have not appeared.*

*The Sage* answered by quoting Isaiah 11:6: Predatory animals living peacefully with grassing ones.

*The Franciscan Master:* You know that this text is not to be taken literally, but as a parable of the great peace that will reign in the days of the Messiah.

*The Sage:* See and understand that in the days since Jesus there has been great and terrible wars; how could he be the Messiah? Where is the peace described in Isaiah 2:4? Since the days of Jesus people have continued to kill each other.

*The Master of the Franciscans:* This verse refers to the peace during the ten last years prior to the birth of Jesus.<sup>857</sup>

*The Sage:* Do you seriously think that the prophet uttered such a long ranging prophecy about a peace of such short duration?

*The Master:* Why do you not pay more attention to the fact that you are more despised and more cursed than any other people and that you have had to endure such a long exile?<sup>858</sup> And what other reason can explain it than the sin you committed against Jesus when you transpierced him, – the very day that the royal crown, the High Priest, and all prophecy were taken away from you? Why do you not take note of this fact, so as to abandon your law?

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<sup>856</sup> Here the sage voices the same basic objection against the purely a-historical nature of Paul's argumentative strategy as Nahmanides had done at Barcelona; cf. passage 49 in the *Vikuah*. It is interesting to note that at this point the Master of the Franciscans found it wise to take over the Christian case at Paul's expense!

<sup>857</sup> Shatzmiller in his note ad loc. refers to the Spaniard Paulus Orosius (Paulo Orosio), a contemporary of Augustine, as the source of this idea. Following a request of Augustine, he wrote the first comprehensive Christian world history, propounding the thesis that whenever Christianity progressed, Pax romana also thrived, and universal peace ensued. As a sign of this, in the last years before Jesus was born there was universal peace, and it was this peace the angels celebrated in Luke 2:14: "And on earth peace among those whom God favors." See also the more extensive note 32 in Shatzmiller's "Introduction," p. 25. Of great interest is Shatzmiller's comment that in Martí's *Capistrum* this idea is also present, but Martí adds that this peace lasted until it was broken by the Jews in their revolt against Rome in A.D. 66 (*Nequitia* 2.11, Robles Sierra II:88).

<sup>858</sup> The Franciscan Master is right on target here because this was in fact a sore point for many Jews and had been so for a long time. How should one explain why the second exile had been so incomparably much longer than the Babylonian? Alfonsi considered this such an important theme that he devoted the entire *titulus* 2 in his *Dialogue* to it, and Halevi recognized it as "our weak spot," see *The Kuzari*, I:111–115 (trans. Hirschfeld, 79–78).

*The Sage:* How can a Sage like you propose that we exchange our Law for an end to our exile? According to you, all the generations from Adam to Jesus had no access to Paradise but were kept in darkness and shadows until Jesus came and released them.<sup>859</sup>

[At least one folio is missing at this point.]

(I) *The Messiah is called JHVH*

[*The Sage:*] ... because of the righteousness which he will bring.<sup>860</sup>

*Paul:* How come that the Holy One, blessed be He, calls himself “The Righteous” [*zadiq*] and by no other name? Find an answer, or else you are defeated.

*The Sage:* God has seventy names, and the four-letter name [JHVH?]<sup>861</sup> is just one of them. Perhaps these three were called by one of these many names.<sup>862</sup> God often transfers or includes his own name in the name of those to whom he grants authority and power. For example, (in Exodus 23:20–21) we read: “I am going to send my angel in front of you, ... do not rebel against him, for *my name is in him*.” Another example was Solomon. In 2 Samuel 12:25 he is called *Jedidiah*, “The Beloved of JH[VH]”, thus having God’s name included in his own. A third example of the same principle could be Ezekiel 48:35, the name of the rebuilt

<sup>859</sup> Cf. Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*, passages 44–45.

<sup>860</sup> As the following exchange shows, this was the end of an argument by the sage concerning God being called “The Righteous.” Very likely, this was elicited by Paul claiming Jeremiah 23:5–6 as proof that the Messiah would carry God’s name as his own: “The days are surely coming, says JHVH, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (*zemach zadiq*), and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘JHVH our righteousness’ (*JHVH zidqeinu*).” For Paul, this meant that the name JHVH was transferred to the Messiah himself. Against this, the sage may have argued that no identity of divine being was involved, but that the name rather meant that the Messiah was authorized to bring about the righteousness of JHVH. If this is correct, we re-enter the discussion at a point where the *third* set theme, the divinity of the Messiah, was discussed.

<sup>861</sup> In Martí’s *Pugio*, the name JHVH is called “the *tetragrammaton*,” III.2.1 (Carpzov 641–42), the Greek word being marked as an established name by being written with Greek letters. *Pugio* III.2.9 is entitled “De excellentia nominis *tetragrammatou*,” (“On the unique status of The-Name-of-Four-Letters,” Carpzov, 641).

<sup>862</sup> This possibly indicates that the three men of Genesis 18 had also been brought into play in the manuscript’s lacuna. More specifically, Christian tradition identified the man speaking with Abraham about Sodom in Genesis 18:22–33 with God’s Son. He is called JHVH three times in this text. In Genesis 19:24 the following is narrated: “JHVH rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from JHVH out of heaven.” Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* (*Dial.* 55–56) is the first Christian author that we know of who took this to mean that the man JHVH with whom Abraham spoke in Genesis 18 (God the Son) made sulfur and fire come down from JHVH in heaven (God the Father). For Justin, this verse was convincing proof that the Genesis narrative knew *two* JHVHs, one on earth and one in heaven. After Justin, this testimony became part of the core repertoire of Christological prooftexts. See, e.g., Lars Thunberg, “Early Christian Interpretations of the Three Angels in Gen 18,” in *Studia Patristica* 7 (= *Texte und Untersuchungen* 92; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 560–70 and Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 410–13.

Jerusalem being “*JHVH* is its name”<sup>863</sup>. All these texts have this in common: the bestowal of God’s name on someone or something only means that God’s power and authority is conferred, not his divine being.

Accordingly, (returning to Jeremiah 26:5–6), the Messiah spoken of is [not divine] and by no means Jesus, since he has at no time ruled over Judah, nor delivered the Jewish people from slavery nor made it rest safely. During the time since Jesus, Israel has been subject to others, has never been delivered, and Jerusalem has not remained safe.<sup>864</sup>

*(J) Theme 3 continued: Genesis 18 contains proof of the Trinity*

*Paul:* While being a Jew, I was confounded by the idea that God could be three and one at the same time. Now, I understand the text: First, it says: “God [singular] appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre” (Gen 18:1), and then it continues, “He saw up and saw three men” (Gen 18:2). Here one has the Trinity in a nutshell: God, being one, appears in three persons.

*The Sage:* You distort the text and do not pay attention to the sequence of statements. One should not find God’s presence (*Shekinah*) in the three men; they were angels. As Rashi<sup>865</sup> has explained, the first verse (Gen 18:1) narrates *two* encounters: On the one hand, God himself appearing to Abraham, [comforting him when he was sick after being circumcised],<sup>866</sup> and then a second encounter of Abraham with three angels appearing to him as men.<sup>867</sup> While the *Shekinah* was still with him, Abraham left it to welcome the three men, according to the

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<sup>863</sup> The sage here launches another vocalization of the consonant text: Instead of *JHVH shamah* (“*JHVH* is in it”), read *JHVH shemoh* (“*JHVH* is its name”). He could do so on the authority of Rabbi Jonathan in *b. Baba Batra*: “read not ‘there’ but ‘his name’”. It is interesting to notice that also Marti in his *Pugio* III.2.10 and 12 combines Jer 23:6 with Ezek 48:35 (Carpzov, 653). His heading for these two passages is “the Messiah shall be called *JHVH*.”

<sup>864</sup> Whatever the lacuna of two folio pages may have contained, it seems that with these last remarks by the Jewish sage the discussion of whether Jesus fulfilled the prophetic promises concerning the Days of the Messiah or not, came to a conclusion.

<sup>865</sup> Rabbi Shelomo Yishaqi (1040–1105), acronym Rashi, was the dominating figure in the so-called “School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France” that flourished ca. 1050–1200. See Avraham Grossman’s chapter with this title in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation, Vol. 1.2: The Middle Ages* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 321–71. On Rashi in particular, see pp. 332–46. Rashi was the only one whose fame was to endure long after his own time; in fact, Grossman calls him the greatest Jewish exegete of Scripture ever. He combined rabbinic midrash with minute attention to the *peshat*, the literal, plain meaning of the text. It is therefore no surprise at all that Rashi should be the authority invoked by the Rabbis at Paris around 1270.

<sup>866</sup> Cf. *b. Baba Mezi’a* 86b; *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* 29; and the *Targum Yerushalmi* ad loc. I owe these and the following references to Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909–1938) 1:240–42 (synthetic summary of rabbinic haggadot on Gen:18:1–8), and 5:234–36 (notes with rabbinic references for the haggadot).

<sup>867</sup> The three men being angels in disguise: *b. Baba Mezi’a* 86b; *Genesis Rabba* 50.2; *Fragm. Targum* ad loc. They are named as being Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, each with his own mission: Raphael should heal the wound caused by Abraham being circumcised; Michael should bring Sarah the good tidings of her bearing Isaac, and Gabriel should bring destruction down on Sodom and Gomorrah (Ginzberg, *Legends* 1:241).

talmudic saying “receiving guests is more important than greeting the Divine Presence.”<sup>868</sup> Abraham asked God not to leave him because he left God for attending to the three guests: “Do not pass by your servant” (Gen 18:3).<sup>869</sup> This God granted, and in gratefulness, Abraham worshipped the *Shekinah* by prostrating himself (Gen 18:2 end).

The one angel (with whom Abraham later bargained concerning which number of righteous people in Sodom could avert the impending punishment of the city, Gen 18:22–32), returned to his Creator having fulfilled his mission (Gen 18:33), while the two other angels proceeded to Sodom and helped rescue Lot and his family (Gen 19:1–29).<sup>870</sup>

*(K) Further argument for a Divine Messiah.*

*Paul:* In *Midrash Song of Songs*, one reads apropos Song of Songs 1:14 (“My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms”) that the “cluster” alludes to the bridegroom being omniscient of, as well as contained in, all true human prophecy: the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, the *Halakot* and the *Haggadot*. This fits Jesus.<sup>871</sup>

*The Sage:* From the book-page quoted by Paul, he supplemented the entire quotation: “‘The cluster of henna blossoms,’ this is a man who contains all: the Bible, the Mishnah... and who *rejects the nations of the world but recognizes Israel.*” If you refer this saying to Jesus, it means (1) that he recognized the entire rabbinic literature (not yet written), which until now you have characterized as full of magic, and (2) that he rejects you and recognizes us!

<sup>868</sup> *b. Shabbat* 127a, quoted by Rashi in his commentary on Gen 18:1.

<sup>869</sup> *b. Shabbat* 127a.

<sup>870</sup> In all of this, the sage was following traditional rabbinic haggadah (probably as transmitted by Rashi) very closely. He sticks to this traditional exegesis and pays no attention to the radically different exegesis launched by Maimonides on the one hand, and Nahmanides on the other (see below). All in all, one gets the sense that Genesis 18 represented a real challenge to the Jewish interpreters. The question creating the greatest problems, however, was not addressed at all in the discussion at Paris: How could heavenly beings like the angels eat, drink, and have their feet washed with water? Paul was perhaps wise to avoid this question altogether, because having the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit eat and drink and having their feet washed with water would have been a greater, not a lesser problem than the same being said about angels. Maimonides solved the problem by taking the whole story of Abraham and the three men as not occurring in the real world, but only in Abraham’s vision. Nahmanides rejected the interpretation of the men being angels, because in many passages in Scripture it is directly said that angels do not consume material food or water. He “solved” the problem by positing that these three beings were created ad hoc for this very occasion. – Martí, *Pugio* III.3.6.2–3 (Carpzov, 728–29) seems to accept the rabbinic understanding that God appeared to Abraham under two guises: as One, the Lord, and as Three angels or men, but arguing that this supports the Christian interpretation perfectly: God appeared as One and Three at the same time, because He *is* One in Three.

<sup>871</sup> Like Paul here, Martí also, in his *Pugio* III.3.3.2 (Carpzov, 662) tries to exploit the saying in *Song of Songs* 1:14 that the bridegroom is a “cluster of Henna” (*eshkol ha-kofer*) Christologically by saying it means “a man in whom everything is,” following the *Midrash on Song of Songs* ad loc. (*ish she-hakol bo*).

*(L) Theme 5: Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant and a new Law fulfilled in Jesus.*

*Paul:* You believe that by observing the covenant and the law that were enjoined upon you during the exodus from Egypt, you deserve reward. You ignore Jeremiah's prophecy: "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand ... out of Egypt – a covenant that they broke. But this is the covenant that I will make... I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts..." (Jer 31:31–33). This means that only those commandments in the old law that remain in the new covenant are those that agree with reason: do not kill, do not blaspheme, etc. The others are annulled. Such a complete renewal of covenant and law took place under no other than Jesus, our Messiah.

*The Sage:* You have not observed that in this prophecy it is only the covenant that is renewed, not the law. The renewal of the covenant means that the law (given at Sinai) will be inscribed on the hearts of the Israelites in a new way, so that they do not need to learn it from others anymore (Jer 31:34). This renewal did not come with Jesus – if it had, what need would there be of all the teaching institutions you have in this city, in Rome and everywhere?!

*Paul:* But now (since Jesus), everyone knows God, even without having studied.

*The Sage:* Even in the period of the prophets (before Jesus), all the world knew God, in spite of their idolatry. Proof: Malachi 1:11. Even you have admitted that several rational commandments in the law remain forever. [There follows a passage in which apparently an argument is made concerning the non-rational commandments, based on Deuteronomy 28:37, but according to Shatzmiller it is very difficult to reconstruct the text as well as the meaning of it.]<sup>872</sup>

*(M) The Jews are guilty of killing Jesus*

The next episodes are said to have taken place in the Dominican House, with all the more than thousand Jews of Paris in enforced attendance, and more than 20.000 Christians. Paul's secret plan is said to have been "to annihilate the Jews in one moment and to excite the teeth of the lions against them."

*Paul* therefore began, addressing the Christian crowd, by saying that he would now speak about the Jews having pierced (*daqaru*) and killed (*haragu*) Jesus.<sup>873</sup> Though

<sup>872</sup> See Shatzmiller's note ad loc., p. 74; and also, his Hebrew note 181, pp. 55–56.

<sup>873</sup> The piercing is no doubt a reference to Zech 12:10 "they shall look on the one whom they have pierced," a classic testimony since John 19:37.

completely innocent, Jesus had been shamefully pierced, killed and suspended (on the cross) by the Jews, and subjected to terrible pain and torture.<sup>874</sup> In spite of his miracles, the Jews have still not repented their sin. Therefore, as they have killed Jesus, they deserve to be killed, and woe to those who tolerate them! Even in their own law this is written: “You despised the Rock that bore you; you forgot the God whom you killed” (Deut 32:18).<sup>875</sup>

Paul having said this, the Hebrew report says that the Jewish sage rightfully feared that a debate about Jewish guilt in the death of Jesus could only play into the hands of Paul, whose real intention was the extermination of all Jews by creating hatred of them among the Christians.

*The Sage:* Brother Paul, why do you raise this topic? Jesus died according to his own will and granted forgiveness to those who crucified him. Why do you accuse us and seek to deliver us to this (Christian) crowd? They will not obey you, nor will the king, because he grants us toleration, and even more so the wise and educated Christians, like the princes and the Pope! Had we been in a closed setting, I would have explained to you that this text (Deut 32:18) does not speak of killing Jesus – God forbid! The verb *chul* (as in *mecholal*) does not mean kill, it means *profane* as in Ezekiel 36:22: You Israel profaned my Holy Name among the nations – and in many similar passages.

This resulted in the king and his officers adjourning the assembly, fearful that the mob might cause injury to the Jews. From this point on, the Jews who were called to take part in the disputes with Paul were no longer required to bring their women and children with them, in

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<sup>874</sup> These words recall Zech 12:10 as well as Isa 53:5 (“He was wounded/pierced (*mecholal*) for our transgressions”).

<sup>875</sup> In the Hebrew text, the last stanza reads: *we-tishkah mecholeleka*. The Masoretic vocalization is based on taking the verbal root to be *ch-w-l* (in *polet*), “give birth” (as in Brown-Driver-Briggs and most Bible translations): “You forgot the One [God] who gave you birth.” Paul’s reading presupposes another verbal root: *ch-l-l*, meaning “pierce.” “You forgot your Pierced One.” In this way, the last stanza of Deut 32:18 is made into a parallel of Zech 12:10: “When they look on Me [God] whom they have pierced (*daqaru*)...” as well as Isa 53:5 (*mecholal*). In Martí’s *Pugio*, Deut 32:18 is taken the same way: “*Zur jeladeka teshi, we-tishkach El mecholeleka*”: “Deum qui te nasci fecit debilitabis, et oblivisceris Deum occisum vel afflictum tuum” (Deut 32:18). Martí then goes on to quote a passage from *Sifre*, in which the Deuteronomy text is interpreted by adducing more prophetic verses concerning God’s painful labors in bringing Israel to life (*Pugio*, III.3.16.4, Carpzov, 844). See also the references to the *Pugio* in Shatzmiller’s Hebrew note ad loc. (p. 56 note 186). He seems to be referring directly to the folios of the Paris manuscript, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève MS 1405 (273a and 359a), but I have not been able to find the lines quoted by him in Carpzov’s text.

fact, only the rabbis and other sages were called, nine or ten altogether. The Dominicans and the Jews only met again on these terms.<sup>876</sup>

*(N) Return to theme 1: The coming of the Messiah*

Paul brought in the talmudic saying taught in the school of Elijah, that the world would last for six thousand years, this duration being subdivided in two thousand years of chaos, two thousand years of Torah, and lastly two thousand years of The Days of the Messiah.<sup>877</sup>

According to Paul, this meant that the first two thousand years had been a time with chaos and without Torah, the second period a time with Torah but without chaos, and the Days of the Messiah would be without Torah as well as without chaos. At the end of the first four thousand years Jesus came and annulled the Torah, thus proving the truth of Elijah's prediction.

*The Sage*, with a somber mien, responded: Brother Paul, how could you add such an obvious mistake to what you have said already. Everyone knows that it is false to claim that the first two thousand years were (entirely) without Torah, since already Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean animals (Gen 7:2); and Abraham practiced circumcision and all the other commandments (of the Torah) according to Genesis 26:5 and 18:19.<sup>878</sup> The saying about the 3x2000 years should be interpreted like this: Two thousand years of chaos (*tohu*, Gen 1:2) means that people in general did not obey all the commandments of the Torah, only

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<sup>876</sup> I think it likely that the king's protective measures regarding the Jews may be a sign that this phase of the debate occurred not under Louis IX, who died 25 August 1270, but under his son and successor, Philip III. He improved the situation of the Jews under his reign (1270–85), see Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France*, 154–61.

<sup>877</sup> *b. Sanhedrin* 97a–b; *b. Avodah Zara* 9a.

<sup>878</sup> It is relevant to note here that the discussion between Jews and Christians about which commandments were given and known at which time is a very old one. Already Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* (ca. 160 C.E.) argued that the Law given at Sinai comprised two categories of commandments: (1) commandments known by all human beings because given with human nature itself. e.g., the Decalogue except the Sabbath commandment; (2) commandments given to discipline the Israelites in particular because of their stubborn nature: circumcision, Sabbath, sacrifices, and other commandments concerning rituals (*Dial.* 18.2; 19.5–6; 20.4; 22.1; 27.2; 43.1; etc.; see Skarsaune, *Proof from Prophecy*, 313–23). In my treatment of this material in *Proof from Prophecy* I considered corresponding sayings in the rabbinical sources as *background* for Justin's sayings. In line with the new paradigm propounded by, e.g., Burton L. Visotzky, Peter Schäfer, and Israel Yuval, I now take such sayings as often being *responses* to Christian anti-Jewish statements. See my article "Who Influenced Whom? Contours of a New Paradigm for Early Jewish-Christian Relations," in Knut H. Høyland and Jakob W. Nielsen (eds.), *Chosen to Follow: Jewish Believers through History and Today* (Jerusalem: Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, 2012), 35–52. The general tendency of the rabbinical sayings is to consider the ritual commandments as known by the righteous ancestors of Israel right from Noah onwards, as in the sage's answer here.



the Seven Precepts.<sup>879</sup> Two thousand Years of Torah means that now all the commandments of the Torah were made known and meant to be respected. It does not mean that all Israel in fact respected them – consider how the majority of Israel practiced idolatry under Ahab and most of the other kings. The point is the *widespread knowledge* of the Torah. The two thousand years of the Days of the Messiah are (not without, but) *with* the Torah. The point is that knowledge and practice of the Tora *increases* by each period.

The disciple in the school of Elijah who calculated these periods [implying the coming of the Messiah in the year 4000 after the creation of the world] was an ambitious fellow craving the reward promised in Daniel 12:12: “Happy those who attend [to the coming of the Messiah] ...,” accordingly he calculated and succeeded in obtaining [this date]. But he was not a [personal] disciple of the prophet Elijah; had he been, no one would have dared to contradict him. But they did, as in the saying “the *seven* thousand years of the world.”<sup>880</sup> Also, the Talmud never quotes the prophet Elijah without adding “of blessed memory” [which is not the case here].

Jesus cannot be intended, because he came before the four thousand years were completed – this happened in the days of Judah the Prince (in office ca. 160 C.E. – 220 C.E.). The four thousand years were in reality completed one hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction of the Temple.<sup>881</sup>

*Paul*: It is about this that the prophet says: “I, JHVH, will hasten the matter in its time” (Isa 60:22), and the Haggadah explains: “Israel has not been retributed...”<sup>882</sup>

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<sup>879</sup> Six of the Seven Precepts of Noah were identical with the Six Precepts of Adam, twisted out of single words in Gen 2:16, the seventh of Noah was taken from Gen 9:4: You should not eat meat with life, that is blood, in it. For details, see Str-B 3:37–38.

<sup>880</sup> This may refer to *b. Sanhedrin 97a-b* where several rabbis reckon a full “week” for the duration of the “old” world: Six 1000-years workdays and a final 1000-year Sabbath. The relevant sayings are collected conveniently in Str-B III:844–45.

<sup>881</sup> According to standard rabbinic chronology, the four thousand “days” since creation would be completed in 240 C.E. The sage followed this chronology: fall of the Temple: 68 C.E. plus 172 = 240 C.E.

<sup>882</sup> Here the Hebrew manuscript breaks off. Paul was apparently beginning a good rabbinic argument that the term of the Messiah’s coming could be forwarded as well as postponed, depending on the behavior of Israel. It could be hastened, *b. Sanhedrin 98a*: “R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction: It is written, in its time [i. e., the Messiah will come at the promised term], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] *will hasten it!* (Isa 60:22, i.e., the Messiah will come *before* the fixed term) — *if they are worthy*, I will hasten it; *if not*, [he will come] at the due time.” The same prophecy appears to be quoted by Paul for the same purpose. He may have presupposed the same view as the Master of the Franciscans propounded earlier: The years before Jesus was born were peaceful and good years. – But the Messiah’s coming could also be delayed, *b. Sanhedrin 97b*, “The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era, but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost” [“i.e., he should have come at the beginning of the last two thousand years; the delay is due to our sins” (footnote ad loc. in the Soncino translation)], *ibid.* All in all, Paul is very close here to Marti’s handling of the same 3x2000 years scheme in the *Pugio* II.10.1–3,

## 6. The Aftermath of the Disputation – and some General Comments

King Louis IX died in 1270, during the disputation. His son and successor, Philip III (1270–85) made an appearance of continuing his father’s Jewish policy, but silently dropped two of his father’s anti-Jewish measures. “[H]e stopped short of the all-out offensive against the Jewish faith embodied in Louis’s 1269 support for the conversionist preaching of Paul Christian. More significant yet is the deletion of a key item in Louis’s long campaign against the Jews, his attack on Jewish moneylending.”<sup>883</sup>

This may throw some light on one conspicuous piece of information provided in the Hebrew report. When, towards the end of the discussions, the scene had been moved to the Dominican convent, a dangerous situation for the Jews was created by Paul bringing in the theme of the guilt of the Jews concerning the killing of Jesus. The Jewish sage forestalled this by saying that he refused to discuss this theme, and saying that the king as well as the Christian leaders, including the Pope, would not tolerate any harm to the Jews. The king and his officers in fact followed suit and adjourned the debate. It was only resumed in a shielded setting in which there was no danger of mob violence. That this happened, was much more likely under Philip III than under his father and gives additional credence to Shatzmiller’s suggestion that the Paris disputation lasted well into 1272 or even 1273.

The Dominicans may well have felt that the new king was not unconditionally supportive of their missionary project. This makes me believe that they are the real authors of a rather strange document issued after the debate had ended. It is entitled “Sentence passed by the illustrious king of France against the Jews living under his rule.”<sup>884</sup> It comes in two parts, is quite extensive, and reads like the king’s summary and conclusion of the Paris disputation, and the legal consequences to be drawn from it. The whole document has a very menacing tone to it. We see the build-up of an argument that was to result in the expulsion of the Jews from France. One gets the feeling that the voice speaking in the twofold document is Paul’s – perhaps he was assisted by Martí. That Paul may have been the man penning the document is perhaps indicated in a phrase not commented upon by Shatzmiller: “In fact, [the king] himself has proposed *through me*...”<sup>885</sup> The king in question is named at the end of the document: “This was the reason why Saint Louis, King of France, ordered that all the Talmuds found in

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Carpzov, 394–96, where Martí also emphasizes Isa 60:22. For instructive comment, see Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 127–28.

<sup>883</sup> Chazan, *Medieval Jewry*, 157. See his instructive review of Philip III’s Jewish policy in general, pp. 154–61.

<sup>884</sup> Latin text: Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 77–91; French translation 91–105. On pp. 26–29 of the same work, Shatzmiller has some useful comment.

<sup>885</sup> Passage 15, Latin in Shatzmiller, 79; French, *ibid.*, 93.

his kingdom should be burned. He knew that they contained abominable blasphemies against Christ.” It was only some time after Louis IX’s death that he was sainted. Perhaps the document was written some years into the reign of Philip III, invoking the authority of his father against his own more lenient treatment of the Jews.

The document itself makes no sense as coming from a king’s secretary since it is a rather extensive summary of the debate, written by a trained theologian, resembling the Dominican Protocol of the Barcelona Disputation very much. In fact, some of Paul’s arguments are stated much clearer here than in the Hebrew report. If someone were to make a detailed synoptic study of the two reports – the Latin “Sentence” and the Hebrew account – and compare them with Ramon Martí’s two great books, I suppose a sharper picture could be drawn of the development of the new Dominican argument designed for converting the Jews, and of Martí’s role in this process.

Unlike the Latin Protocol from Barcelona, this royal document indeed lives up to its title: It is a royal “sentence”; the disputation is understood as a trial, the Jews were the defendants, and they were not able to prove themselves innocent of severe offences against the Christian faith, the faith of the king and his kingdom. In conclusion, the “sentence” reads: “Wherefore in truth the Lord King invites you [Jews] and exhorts you by this proposition to receive baptism according to the teaching of the Gospel so that you become his brethren. Otherwise, the sane public justice cannot tolerate you, nor the civil society, the Christian faith, or the society of Christians.” It is styled as an invitation and exhortation but seen in the light of the dire consequences of not accepting the invitation, it reads more like a threat – a threat of expulsion. It reads like a Dominican manifesto, invoking the authority of “Saint Louis” IX, formulated under a king (Philip III) much less supportive than he was.

If this is correct, we see in France in the 1270ies a second debacle for the Dominican strategy for converting the Jews, after the failure in Aragon. For Paul Christian, the driving force behind the enforced disputations, this must have been a severe blow, the second after his failure in Aragon. After the Paris disputation, we hear no more of him in the preserved sources. All in all, he comes out as, on the one hand, a man concerned to convince his Jewish compatriots of the truth of the Christian faith by rational argument, but on the other hand combining this with threats and intimidation if his arguments did not have the hoped-for effect. When the Jews refused to convert to the Christian faith, this was just another proof of their stubborn refusal of accepting the evident truth. Since they refused to accept Christian truth once it had been presented to them with irrefutable arguments, they no longer had any right of existence within the territory of a Christian king. There is more than a little truth in

what the Jewish (Hebrew) report on the Paris Disputation asserts about Paul, viz. that he had as his real purpose to annihilate the remnants of the Holy People still living in the lands of the French King (above, p. 303). – After the public disputation in Paris our sources go silent about Paul. He may have carried on with missionary campaigns without that kind of royal support which he had wanted, but only enjoyed a few years under Jaime I in Aragon and Louis IX in Paris. It stands to reason that Paul Christian was one of those Jewish converts who contributed his share to the stereotype of Jewish converts, viz. that among the enemies of the Jewish People their own apostates were the worst.

### 7. Ramon Martí Perfects the Dominican Missionary Argument: The *Pugio Fidei*

I begin by simply giving an overview of the structure of this great book published in 1278.<sup>886</sup>

*The Preface* is of great significance for understanding the book's purpose and method. It mainly concerns the second and third part, suggesting that the first part is more of an obligatory and introductory exercise.

*First Part:* Philosophical discussion of Pagan and Muslim arguments against the Christian concept of God – arguments based upon the philosophical “theology” of Aristotle. Good Arabic translations of books by Aristotle (books that had been unknown in Latin Europe for many centuries) had now been available to the Muslim and Jewish scholars of Spain for quite some time, resulting in Muslim and Jewish appropriation of Aristotelian arguments by some of these scholars, while others angrily rejected the “new” Aristotle (see p. 95 above). Delayed by about a century, the same process now took place in Latin Europe, Thomas Aquinas becoming the “Maimonides” of the Latin Church. Unlike the many Christian theologians who now banned Aristotle's newly rediscovered writings, Thomas appropriated

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<sup>886</sup> The most recent printed edition of this work is a 1967 reprint by Gregg Press, Farnborough, of the latest edition before that, viz. Johan Benedict Carpzov (ed.), *Raymundi Martini Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* (Leipzig: Heirs of Frederic Lanckis, 1687). I have used the latter, available as pdf-file by the link <https://doi.org/10.25365/digital-copy.1153>.

A new, critical edition within the series *Bibliotheca Philosophorum Medii Aevi Cataloniae* is announced in Göрге K. Hasselhoff and Alexander Fidora (eds.), *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei: Studies and Texts* (Exemplaria Scholastica: Textos i Estudis Medievals 8; Santa Coloma de Queralt: Obrador Edendum, 2017), 9. As I write this (October 2021), the volume has not appeared, and Prof. Hasselhoff has told me in a private mail that it will still take some time to finish it.

The *Studies and Texts* volume, as I will henceforward call it, contains many valuable and groundbreaking studies, to which I will refer in the following. Other useful analyses of the *Pugio* comprise the following: Ina Willi-Plein, “Der Pugio Fidei” des Raymond Martini als ein exemplarischer Versuch kirchlicher Auseinandersetzung mit dem Judentum,” in Ina Willi-Plein and Thomas Willi (eds.), *Glaubensdolch und Messiasbeweis: Die Begegnung von Judentum, Christentum und Islam im 13. Jahrhundert in Spanien* (Forschungen zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 21–83; Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); 129–56; Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 115–36; Schreckenberg III: 290–307.

Aristotelian arguments in laying a solid basis of rational theology also underpinning those parts of Christian theology that were “above” reason, but not in conflict with it.

Thomas wrote his books in the 1250ies and 1260ies, Martí wrote his in the 1260ies and 1270ies, and in Part I of the *Pugio*, he quotes extensively from Thomas, first and foremost his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, but also other of his books. Some of the quotations are explicitly said to be taken from him, others are unattributed.<sup>887</sup> Like Thomas, Martí was familiar with the great Arabic-Muslim commentators on Aristotle – but unlike Thomas, Martí had some mastery of Arabic. He was therefore probably in a better position, linguistically, to tackle the many challenges from the Muslim Aristotelian philosophers.<sup>888</sup>

Scholars have often remarked that “Against Muslims and Jews” in the *Pugio*’s title does not match the book’s contents, because the two main parts, II and III, are only concerned with the Jews. But could it be that Martí, first and foremost, had Part I in mind when he put *Adversus Mauros* before (*Adversus*) *Judaeos* in the *Pugio*’s title?

*Second Part:*<sup>889</sup>

Chapters 1–9: Scriptural proof that the Messiah has come, and that he was Jesus. The latter point is proved from several biblical testimonies containing veiled or explicit chronological information.

Chapter 10: The same point proved from rabbinic texts.

*Third Part:*

First *Distinctio*: Proof that the Messiah is divine and God triune.

Second *Distinctio*: Anthropology, aiming at proving the necessity of the Son’s incarnation.<sup>890</sup>

Third *Distinctio*: Jesus the Messiah’s work of redemption.

Chapters 1–2: The Messiah’s nature.

Chapters 3–4: His sending and mission as the Redeemer.

Chapters 5–10: His origin and incarnation.

Chapters 11–15: The prophecies of a new law fulfilled in the Christian sacraments.

<sup>887</sup> The most recent and detailed study is by Ann Giletti, “Early Witness: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Peter of Tarentaise in Ramon Martí’s *Pugio fidei* (c. 1278),” in *Studies and Texts*, 121–56.

<sup>888</sup> Ibn Rushd or Averroes (1126–1198), the great Almohad philosopher and theologian, master commentator on Aristotle, is mentioned by name in *Pugio* I.25. Martí does not call him Averroes (his Latinized name), but Aben-Rost, much closer to his Arabic name. Ibn Rushd presented an Aristotle that in many ways challenged Jewish and Christian theology on fundamental questions – some of which loom large in the *Pugio*’s Part One. On Ibn Rushd, see Dominique Urvoy, *Ibn Rushd (Averroes)* (trans. Olivia Stewart; London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>889</sup> I here follow the analysis in Willi-Plein, “Der ‘Pugio Fidei’ des Raymund Martini,” 38–39.

<sup>890</sup> Martí is here clearly dependent on an Anselmian tradition, as set forth in Anselm’s *Cur Deus homo?*

Chapters 16–19: The completion of the Messiah’s task: Suffering, death,  
resurrection, ascension to heaven.

Chapter 20: The new covenant and the new covenant people.

Chapter 21–23: The status of the old covenant people.<sup>891</sup>

After this brief overview, some further analysis of important aspects of the work is in place.

(1) Martí makes a significant statement about the *Pugio*’s purpose already in the important Preface (*Proœmium*) of his book. In closing the Preface, he says the following: “[May the book bring] glory and honor to God, confirmation and defense of our faith to the believers, and true and useful conversion to the infidels.”<sup>892</sup> It goes without saying that those who could read the book with full understanding was a rather narrow group, primarily those of Martí’s Dominican colleagues who had gained some basic competence in reading the Hebrew alphabet – some of them, perhaps, in the Dominican *Studium Hebraicum* in Barcelona.

How the book was intended to be used by these people in their preaching and teaching among the Jews, comes to light in the following quote from the Preface of the *Capistrum*, clearly pointing forward to the *Pugio*: “The best would be that this treatise [be written] not only in Latin, but also in Hebrew, and that one have the knowledge of *reading* Hebrew, even if he cannot understand it.”<sup>893</sup> This clearly indicates that the purpose of the Hebrew quotes (or Aramaic, or Arabic in Hebrew characters) was the following: “In this way, the wide and spacious way of subterfuge is precluded to the false-speaking Jews. Hardly will they be able to say *that [the text] is not thus among them*.”<sup>894</sup> For the Christian reader, Martí’s own translations in Latin would help the reader understand the Hebrew text, but for the Jewish listener, the correctness of the Latin could be pointed out by showing him the written page of Martí’s book, or the preacher *reading* the Hebrew text out loud. Briefly put, in the *Pugio* Martí *writes* for Christian preachers so that they may *preach* more effectively among the Jews. The ideal reader was a Christian fully competent in Latin, with knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet – in other words: some of his fellow missionaries to the Jews, be they

<sup>891</sup> The Third Part in general, and especially the third *Distinctio*, is loosely organized according to a creed-like scheme, the same scheme Martí followed in his *Explanation of the Apostles’ Creed* many years earlier.

<sup>892</sup> Syds Wiersma’s translation in Gorge K Hasselhoff and Syds Wiersma, “The Preface to the *Pugio fidei*,” in *Studies and Texts*, 11–21, here at 21.

<sup>893</sup> *Capistrum Judaeorum* I: 56, translation according to Ryan Szpiech, “Ramon Martí’s New Testament Citations in Hebrew: A Transcription and Further Observations,” in *Studies and Texts*, 157–73, here at 167, slightly adapted.

<sup>894</sup> *Pugio Fidei*, Proœmium § 10 (Carpzov, 4), trans. Szpiech, “Ramon Martí’s New Testament Citations,” 163. This quote refers primarily to Martí’s biblical quotations in Hebrew and his over-literal Latin translations (see the quotation from the *Pugio*’s Preface § 10; next page) but expresses well his general confidence in Hebrew as such when it comes to getting a hearing among the Jews.

Dominicans or Franciscans. It is such ideal readers Martí on occasion addresses directly with admonitions like “*animadvertite, quæso, Lector, quod...*” (I urge you, reader, to carefully note that...).<sup>895</sup>

The authority and effectiveness of the Hebrew language in everything that has with the Jews to do, is emphasized more than once in the *Pugio*. In the Preface, Martí is somewhat apologetic *vis-à-vis* Christian readers when he explains why he does not follow the Septuagint or Jerome’s Vulgate in his Latin renderings of Old Testament quotes:

In bringing forth the authority of the text, whenever the Hebrew text will be taken up, I will not follow the Septuagint or any other [translation]. What will seem even more presumptuous, I will not revere Jerome [the Vulgate] in this, nor will I avoid the improper use, within tolerable limits, of the Latin language, so that, as often as possible, I will translate the truth, word for word, of those [passages] found in the Hebrew.<sup>896</sup>

In other words: Martí will translate so faithfully the very wording of the Hebrew Bible that it sometimes results in bad Latin. Quite clearly, Martí thought that basing his argument on the Jewish texts in their original language, not on Christian translations of them (be they his own, as in the *Capistrum*), would carry much more authority among the Jews. He seems to have had a good perception of how intimately *supreme authority* was related to *the holy tongue*, Hebrew, for the Jews.

Martí’s conviction of the effectiveness of using Hebrew in approaching the Jews is perhaps most strikingly demonstrated on his own translations of selected *New Testament* verses into Hebrew. He even rendered an important statement about the Trinity in the Athanasian Creed in Hebrew.<sup>897</sup> In the latter case, he was able to show that Hebrew *Ab* (Father), *ben* (Son), *we-ruah qadosh* (and The Holy Spirit) comprised 12 Hebrew characters. And the more complete statement “The Father [is] God, the Son [is] God, [and] The Holy Spirit [is] God. Even so, [there are] not three Gods, but God is one”<sup>898</sup> can be shown to contain 42 characters when translated to Hebrew. How could this be an accident when the Talmud had said that God’s four-letter name JHWH entailed a twelve-letter name and a forty-

<sup>895</sup> This example found at III.3.11.13, Carpzov, 780.

<sup>896</sup> *Pugio Fidei*, Proœmium §10 (Carpzov, 4), trans. Szpiech, “Ramon Martí’s New Testament Citations,” 162–63.

<sup>897</sup> See for this theme in general Szpiech, “Ramon Martí’s New Testament Citations.”

<sup>898</sup> Lines 15 and 16 of the Athanasian Creed; Latin: *Deus pater, deus filius, deus spiritus sanctus. Et tamen non tres dii sed unus est deus.*

two-letter name!<sup>899</sup> In this way, even a classic statement of Christian trinitarianism – when rendered in the biblical language – could be shown to agree with sayings in the Talmud. In a striking way, this example demonstrates the immense power and authority that Martí accorded arguments based on the original language of the Bible. Confronting Jews, even authoritative Christian texts originally written in Greek or Latin gained in argumentative value when reformulated in Hebrew.<sup>900</sup>

(2) The immense learning of Martí, his mastery of Jewish sources in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic (in this language also the Qur'an and other Muslim texts), has rightly impressed scholars.<sup>901</sup> Some of Martí's rabbinic quotes are not to be found in the preserved and edited rabbinic corpus of writings. Some scholars accused him of having forged these "quotations" himself, but after Saul Lieberman's argument to the contrary, it seems most scholars now accept them as authentic, taken from sources contemporary with Martí but now lost.<sup>902</sup> In general, I think Chazan well summarizes the present-day picture that emerges when one compares Martí with his predecessor Paul:

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<sup>899</sup> *b. Kiddushin* 71a: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am not called as I am written: I am written with Yod He [YH(WH)], but I am read, Alef Daleth [AD(oNaY)]. Our Rabbis taught: At first [God's] twelvelettered Name [perhaps YHWH said three times in the blessing of Aaron, Num 6:24–26?] used to be entrusted to all people. When unruly men increased, it was confided to the pious of the priesthood, and these 'swallowed it' [pronounced it indistinctly] during the chanting of their brother priests. It was taught, R. Tarfon said: 'I once ascended the dais [platform of priests' blessing] after my mother's brother, and inclined my ear to the High Priest, and heard him swallowing the Name during the chanting of his brother priests. Rab Judah said in Rab's name: The forty-two lettered Name is entrusted only to him who is pious, meek, middle-aged, free from bad temper, sober, and not insistent on his rights. And he who knows it, is heedful thereof, and observes it in purity, is beloved above and popular below, feared by man, and inherits two worlds, this world and the future world. [The Soncino translation quoted here has the following note on these many-lettered names: "Maim[onides] in *Moreh (Guide of the Perplexed)* I.62 conjectures that these multilateral names, of which no trace is found, were perhaps composed of several other divine names; also that not only the names were communicated, but their real meanings too."'] One could say, perhaps, that Maimonides here played the whole question of these multiletted names into the hands of Martí, who not only gave the 12-lettered and the 42-lettered names a trinitarian interpretation but proceeded to give both of them a Christological interpretation as well. See *Pugio Fidei* III.3.4.6 (Carpzov, 691–92) and Szpiech's useful comments, "Ramon Martí's New Testament Citations," 164–67.

<sup>900</sup> For this point, see also Ryan Szpiech, "The Aura of an Alphabet: Interpreting the Hebrew Gospels in Ramon Martí's *Dagger of Faith* (1278)," *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* (2014): 334–363.

<sup>901</sup> For a recent, comprehensive review, see Philippe Bobichon, "Quotations, Translations, and Uses of Jewish Texts in Ramon Martí's *Pugio fidei*," in *The Late Medieval Hebrew Book in the Western Mediterranean: Hebrew Manuscripts and Incunabula in Context* (Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval 65; ed. Javier del Barco; Leiden: Brill, 2015), 266–93.

<sup>902</sup> Saul Lieberman, *Shkiin: A Few Words on Some Jewish Legends, Customs, and Literary Sources Found in Karaite and Christian Works (Including an Index of the Jewish Books Cited in 'Pugio Fidei' of Raymund Martini)* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Bamberger and Wahrmann, 1939), 43–98; idem, "Raymund Martini and His Alleged Forgeries," *Historia Judaica* 5 (1943): 87–102. Among those supporting Lieberman are Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 135, Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 117, and Görge K. Hasselhoff, "Iudei moderni in the *Pugio fidei*. With an Edition of Texts quoted from Jonah ibn Janah, David Kimḥi, Rabbi Raḥmon, and Moses Naḥmanides," in *Studies and Texts*, 175–208.



[T]he overall impression of massive compilation of authentic rabbinic materials [in the *Pugio*] cannot be denied. What is more, in a work so committed to scrupulous translation, there would be little point in fabricating texts the Jews could readily dismiss as inauthentic. Indeed, the stance of mocking superciliousness adopted by Nahmanides toward Friar Paul disappears among Jews aware of the new knowledge amassed by Friar Ramon.<sup>903</sup>

When quoting rabbinic texts, Martí is not satisfied with quoting them in the original Hebrew or Aramaic and translating them literally into Latin.<sup>904</sup> In many cases he also notes how these texts were interpreted by “modern” Jewish scholars.<sup>905</sup> Also in these quotations from Medieval and even contemporary Jewish authorities – rendered in Hebrew and often with reliable Latin translations – Martí displays a Jewish learning that is impressive.

(3) All of this has led some scholars to assume that Martí came from a Jewish *converso* family and had a Jewish education, or that he was a first-generation *converso* himself. This latter assumption was implied when another Spanish convert, Paul of Burgos (Jewish name: Solomon ha-Levi; 1351 – 1435), in a debate with a Jewish opponent quoted “Ramon, *your*

<sup>903</sup> Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 117.

<sup>904</sup> According to Bobichon, the *Pugio* contains 225 quotations from the Targums *Onqelos* and *Jonathan*; 475 from different midrashim, of which 150 from *Genesis Rabbah* and 143 from *Psalms Rabbah*; 261 from *Mishnah/Talmud*; 15 from *Seder Olam*; see Bobichon, “Quotations, Translations, and Uses of Jewish Texts,” 271.

<sup>905</sup> According to Hasselhoff, “*Iudei moderni*,” Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (acronym Rashi, 1040–1105) is quoted more than 330 times. “These quotations are taken from all parts of Rashi’s huge oeuvre, i.e., from most parts of his Bible commentaries as well as from his commentaries to the Babylonian Talmud. The latter references are incorporated into quotations of the Talmud as if they were part of that rabbinical text,” p. 176. David Kimhi (1160–1235) is quoted 54 times. “In almost all cases the Kimhi quotations are used to explain Hebrew words or expressions which are introduced before by Ramon Martí in favor of his argument” (p. 177). Abraham ibn Ezra (ca. 1090–ca. 1165) is quoted 40 times. See Yosi Israeli, “Abraham ibn Ezra in the *Pugio fidei*: Compilations, Variations, and Interpretations,” in *Studies and Texts*, 209–222, and the Appendix to this article by Görg K. Hasselhoff, pp. 223–240. Maimonides’ (1135–1204) *Mishneh Tora* is quoted 6 times; his *Guide of the Perplexed* is quoted or mentioned 15 times (I here take these numbers from Bobichon, “Quotations, Translations, and Uses of Jewish Texts,” whose numbers are generally a little low.) Martí quotes his contemporary Nahmanides four times, see Appendix 4 in Hasselhoff, “*Iudaei moderni*,” p. 208. Saadia Gaon (882–942 and Jonah ibn Janah (985/90–1055) are mentioned a few times, being quoted through intermediate sources. A mysterious figure is the so-called Rabbi Rahmon, who is quoted altogether 17 times, some of the quotes being quite extensive. See Hasselhoff, “*Iudaei moderni*,” 178 (comment) and 199–206 (edition of the quotes). Hasselhoff has the following to say about his identity: “Whether [the] author [of the quotes] is a certain thirteenth-century Cabbalist called ‘Rachumai’, as proposed by Leopold Zunz and Adolf Neubauer, cannot be decided [...],” 178 note 22. Could it be that this rabbi was a contemporary Spanish rabbi who left behind a commentary on Scripture that was later not copied or edited, but was known to Martí or someone in his research team? The quotes seem to have been written by a follower of Rashi, according to Hasselhoff, 178. They were authored by a Jewish scholar, not a Christian forger.

Rabbi, in his *Pugio*.<sup>906</sup> Since then, this theory has been repeated every now and then, but again, Saul Lieberman succeeded in turning the tide by the same observations that made him deny that Martí had forged some of his non-verifiable quotations. Lieberman showed that Martí often did not quote directly from the sources, but took his quotations from intermediate sources, viz. compilations of texts as they were found in the primary sources in the thirteenth century. He concluded that Martí did not possess that familiarity with the primary sources that one would expect from someone being schooled in rabbinica from his childhood or in his younger years.<sup>907</sup>

In recent years, however, Philippe Bobichon has renewed the theory that Martí was in fact a *converso*. This is based on a detailed examination of the Paris manuscript *Bibliothèque de Sainte-Geneviève Ms. I.405*, which Bobichon holds to be written by Martí himself.<sup>908</sup> In many ways, Bobichon is out to prove exactly that familiarity with the Jewish texts in Martí that Lieberman had denied him. Bobichon is certain that he has succeeded. “The scribe of this manuscript is also the author of the text, and he was of Jewish origin. This conclusion is no hypothesis, but a certainty founded on the perfectly coherent totality of objective facts established by the examination of the manuscript.”<sup>909</sup>

The first of these claims, that the *Geneviève* manuscript was in fact written by Martí himself or by another under his constant supervision, is strengthened by the other contributors to the *Studies and Texts* volume, and I find their arguments convincing.<sup>910</sup>

Bobichon’s second claim, that Martí was a Jewish convert to Christianity, is not approved by the other contributors of the *Studies and Texts* volume. They seem rather inclined to endorse the view of Lieberman: Martí often seems to quote intermediary sources – compilations produced for him by co-workers – rather than directly from the Talmud and the

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<sup>906</sup> Latin: *Raimundus Rab. tuus in suo pugione*. Quoted here from Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, 129–30, note 2. Cohen theorizes that Paul of Burgos may here depend on a source earlier than him, viz. Petrus Marsilius’ *Chronicae* in which Ramon is said to be “*magnus Rabinus in Hebraeo*.” This, according to Cohen, may mean nothing more than that Martí was a great master of Hebrew, which, undoubtedly, he was.

<sup>907</sup> Lieberman, *Shkiin*, 2 and 43–45 (this note taken from Cohen, op. cit., 130).

<sup>908</sup> Bobichon, “Le manuscrit Latin 1405 de la Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève (Paris), autographe et œuvre d’un converti,” in *Studies and Texts*, 39–101.

<sup>909</sup> Bobichon, “Le manuscrit Latin,” 100, my English.

<sup>910</sup> See Hasselhoff, “The Projected Edition of Ramon Martí’s *Pugio fidei*: A Survey and a Stemma,” in *Studies and Texts*, 23–38: “It is a great fortune that Ramon Martí’s autograph of the *Pugio fidei* has survived (Paris, Bibliothèque de Ste Geneviève, Ms 1.405 = G)” (p. 24). Especially impressive are the detailed observations made by Ann Giletti, “Early Witness: Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great and Peter of Tarentaise in Ramon Martí’s *Pugio fidei* (c. 1278),” in *Studies and Texts*, 121–56: The writer of the manuscript adds important quotes in the margin of the manuscript with clear directions (to future copyists) of exactly where in the text they are to be inserted. See her article, pp. 121 and 123–26.

Midrashim. For example, Yosi Yisraeli says, based on his detailed study of Martí's quotations from Abraham ibn Ezra:

It is my impression that the method of compilation applied in the *Pugio*, which sometimes reached a high level of sophistication, attests not only to a strong command of Ibn Ezra's texts, but also to a great deal of preparation and planning. It would be hard to imagine that an author could weave, on the spot, elegant and thematically coherent passages from elements scattered across a long text. The possibility that as part of these preparations, Hebrew drafts of the polemical sources were made becomes even more plausible as we consider the strong evidence of interpolations made into the texts of Ibn Ezra. These deviations, written in Hebrew, attest to the existence of other intermediary Hebrew texts that included the quotations later copied into the Sainte Geneviève manuscript. If the author of the manuscript had read and copied directly from Ibn Ezra's commentaries, we would not have had before us this handful of interpolations, additions, and paraphrases in the Hebrew texts. Moreover, the spelling variation in Ibn Ezra's name makes it likely that different hands were involved in drafting those Hebrew texts.<sup>911</sup>

The same point of view is advocated in the contributions of Gorge K. Hasselhoff and Syds Wiersma.<sup>912</sup> This means that Martí was not alone in collecting the enormous amount of quotation material contained in the *Pugio*. It also means that there is no decisive proof of his Jewish origin in this quotation material as such. It can probably not be decisively disproved, but this is no valid proof for the opposite. One may also venture the guess that some in Martí's group of co-workers could well be Jewish converts.

This theory of a group of experts supplying Martí with at least a solid part of his quotation material does not in the least reduce Martí's own achievement. He was no doubt the great architect behind the massive construction called the *Pugio*, and the one who penned the final text – perhaps being preserved as he wrote it in the Sainte Geneviève manuscript – with supplementary notes in the margins and all.<sup>913</sup>

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<sup>911</sup> Yisraeli, "Abraham ibn Ezra in the *Pugio fidei*," 222.

<sup>912</sup> Hasselhoff, "Iudaei moderni," 176; Syds Wiersma, "Weapons Against the Jews: Motives and Objectives of the Preface of the *Pugio fidei*," in *Studies and Texts*, 103–119, here at 115.

<sup>913</sup> It is the great merit of Bobichon to have shown this in great detail in "Le manuscript Latin," in Hasselhoff and Fidora, *Ramon Martí's Pugio Fidei*, 39–101.

(4) The greatness of Martí as an architect of argument against the very real challenge presented by Nahmanides in his *Vikuah* is highlighted, also in the *Pugio*, when we consider how he counters two of the fundamental objections raised by Nahmanides at the Barcelona disputation.

(A) The first was raised before the disputation proper: How could Paul even imagine proving the Messiahship of Jesus by texts written centuries after Jesus by rabbis who did not believe in his Messiahship?<sup>914</sup> Paul brushed this aside as irrelevant, thereby involuntarily admitting that this was a point to which he had no ready answer. In the *Pugio*, this is a point that Martí addresses already in his Preface:

[The supreme authorities quoted in the *Pugio* are the Law and the Prophets, in fact, the entire Old Testament, but] second, certain traditions, which I found in the Talmud and Midrashim – that is, traditions and glosses [interpretations] of the ancient Jews –, which I gladly raised up like pearls out of an enormous dunghill. With the help of God, I shall translate them into Latin and adduce and insert them at their proper places, insofar as shall seem wise to me. These traditions, which they [the Jews] call *torah shebbe-‘al peh* – oral law –, they believe and state that God gave to Moses along with the Law on Mount Sinai. Then Moses, they say, transmitted them to his disciple Joshua, Joshua to his successors, and so on, until they were committed to writing by the ancient rabbis.<sup>915</sup> [This is obviously absurd if applied to the Talmud and the Midrashim in their entirety, since so much nonsense is contained in them.] Certain [traditions], however, which savor of the truth and in every way smell and represent the doctrine of the Prophets and the holy Fathers,<sup>916</sup> wondrously and incredibly bespeak the Christian faith too, as will become obvious in this little [!] book. They destroy and confound the perfidy of modern Jews, and I do not think that one should doubt that they managed their way successively from Moses and the Prophets and the other holy Fathers to those who recorded them [...] <sup>917</sup> For a wise man never despises a precious stone, even if it might be found in the head of a dragon or a toad [...] Finally, what would be more joyous for a Christian than if he could most easily twist the sword

<sup>914</sup> See passage 8 in the *Vikuah*, p. 230 above.

<sup>915</sup> Cf. *The Mishnah*, tractate *Aboth*: “Moses received the [Oral] Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders [*ha-zeqanim*, Josh 24:31], and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue” (I.1; trans. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford: OUP, 1933, 446).

<sup>916</sup> The use of “holy Fathers” here may be inspired by the title of the *Mishnah* tractate Martí is quoting freely from: *Pirke Aboth*. A literal translation would be *chapters* of the Fathers, or more freely: sayings of the Fathers.

<sup>917</sup> I believe this idea lies behind passage C in the Hebrew report on the Paris disputation (pp. 105–106 above). If so, we get here a glimpse of Martí advising Paul.

[*gladium*] of his enemy from his hand and then cut off the head of the infidel with his own blade, or just like Judith butcher [the infidel] with his own stolen dagger [*pugio*]?<sup>918</sup>

Again, one notices a light note of apology *vis-à-vis* the Christian reader: Why invest so much energy in traversing the enormous “sea of the Talmud” and the Midrashim to pick up some rare scraps of some value to the Christian cause? Why not rather condemn this literature wholesale, as they had done in the great book-fire at Paris in 1242?

In this passage, Martí is a pioneer in developing an historical theory about two types of texts in the rabbinic corpus. One type derives from early rabbis that faithfully preserved traditions from Moses and the prophets. These “holy Fathers” did so until the coming of Jesus (cf. Matt 11:13/Luke 16:16).<sup>919</sup> The second type – comprising the vast majority of rabbinic texts – only reflects the absurd fancies of the later rabbis.

(B) The second of Nahmanides’ basic counterarguments against Paul’s quoting of biblical texts and rabbinic haggadot allegedly proving the Messiah’s having come already, was that none of these, taken literally, matched Jesus’ coming chronologically.

For example, at Barcelona Paul began his proof of the Messiah having come already by quoting Gen 49:10: The kingdom should not be taken away from Judah [the Jews] until the coming of the Messiah. Since the kingdom had been taken away from the Jews many centuries before Paul and Nahmanides met to discuss it, the Messiah must undoubtedly have come. Nahmanides countered that even if one accepted the traditional Jewish interpretation (that the Exilarchs and Patriarchs of Israel continued the Davidic kingdom spoken of in that verse, an interpretation Nahmanides rejected), Jesus was born four centuries before the cessation of the kingdom of David’s successors.<sup>920</sup>

Likewise, when Paul quoted the rabbinic haggadah concerning the Messiah’s birth on the same day as the Temple was destroyed, this could not refer to Jesus because he was born 73 years before the destruction of the Temple according to the Christian chronology.<sup>921</sup>

<sup>918</sup> *Pugio fidei*, Prooemium, V–IX; Latin text critically edited by Hasselhoff in Hasselhoff and Syds Wiersma, “The Preface to the *Pugio fidei*,” in *Studies and Texts*, 11–21; passages V–IX of the Prooemium on pp. 14–16; English translation by Wiersma on the same pages.

<sup>919</sup> These sayings of Jesus concerning a succession of prophets until John the Baptist matches Martí’s ideas to a high degree, but according to Carpzov’s index of Scriptural references in the *Pugio*, he does not quote them. In the Paris Disputation, passage C, however (above, p. 305–106), Paul seems to hint at these sayings in his argument that prophecy did not end with the fall of the first Temple, but towards the end of the second. I suspect that we can discern Martí as a backstage adviser to Paul here.

<sup>920</sup> Passages 11–14 in the *Vikuah*.

<sup>921</sup> See passages 19–22 in the *Vikuah*.

Martí takes up the first point by showing that according to the Jewish Targums Genesis 49:10 spoke about two things lasting until the coming of the Messiah: first, the “scepter,” *shevet*, meaning political power, and then the “ruler’s staff,” *mehokek*, meaning scribe or legislator. Taken together, this meant that political power would be invested in Judah until the Messiah would come and take it over. Martí now introduces a midrashic interpretation of Genesis 49:10:

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah” – this is the Chamber of the Hewn Stone, which was given as part of the portion of Judah, as is said: “He rejected the clan of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim. He did choose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which he loved” (Ps 78:67–68) – the mount which excels in Torah. It is further said: “The Lord loves the gates of Zion” (Ps 87:2) – gates which excel in the law. “Nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet” – these are the inhabitants of Jabez who guard the laws of Israel in the Great Sanhedrin which sits in the Chamber of Hewn Stones, in the portion of Judah, as it is said: “And these are the clans of scribes living at Jabez” (1 Chron 2:55). What then is the meaning of “the scepter shall not depart from Judah?” It is to teach that the Sanhedrin was only given power to judge capital cases so long as it was located in the Chamber of Hewn Stones. Since it was exiled from there elsewhere, capital cases have been annulled, as is said: “You shall carry out the verdict that is announced to you from that place the Lord chose” (Deut 17:10). “Until Shiloh comes” – this means the Messiah.”<sup>922</sup>

Martí takes the last sentence as meaning that when the Great Sanhedrin is dislocated from the Chamber of Hewn Stone on the Temple Mount, the Messiah will come. The decisive question is therefore: When did this dislocation take place? Again, the answer is found in a rabbinical haggadah: “The rabbis taught: ‘Forty years prior to the destruction of the Temple, capital cases were abolished’” (y. *Sanhedrin* 1b). Martí adds a much longer haggadah, detailing what cases were ended with the move of the Great Sanhedrin from the Chamber of Hewn Stones to the village Hanut forty years before the destruction of the Temple. The answer: only capital cases, no other (b. *Sanhedrin* 41a).<sup>923</sup>

<sup>922</sup> Translation according to Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 121. As Chazan remarks, Martí says this midrash is found in *Genesis Rabbah*, but is not found there in extant manuscripts. This may be an example of Martí using an intermediate source comprising midrashim no longer extant.

<sup>923</sup> *Pugio* II.4.4–6 (Carpzov, 313–315).

What Martí has accomplished here, is removing Nahmanides' objections against Paul at Barcelona: By combining three rabbinical texts, he has shown that the rabbis interpreted Genesis 49:10 as saying that forty years prior to the destruction of the (second) Temple, that is around 30 C.E., the Messiah would come and put an end to Judah's rule according to this biblical prophecy. "The reasoning is far more rigorous than Friar Paul's, and the date of forty years prior to the destruction of the Second Temple coincides nicely with the actual chronology of the life and death of Jesus."<sup>924</sup>

At Barcelona, Paul had brought in the haggadah concerning the cow that lowed twice, the first time signifying the fall of the Temple, the second time the birth of the Messiah on the same day.<sup>925</sup> This was proof that the early rabbis were convinced that the Messiah had already come. Nahmanides retorted that, first, he did not believe this haggadah to be literally true, and second, even if accepted as true, it could not apply to Jesus; he was born 73 years before the fall of the Temple.

In his *Pugio*, Martí takes a completely different approach. He places the haggadah about the lowing cow among the many absurd haggadot that abound in the rabbinic corpus. He quotes more haggadot that claim the birth of the Messiah having taken place on the day of the Temple's fall, and scornfully places them in the same category.<sup>926</sup> In this way, he effectively circumvents Nahmanides' discussion about the nature of such haggadot; and his claim that, if taken literally they cannot refer to Jesus, becomes irrelevant.

Martí takes the same approach concerning the haggadah about the Messiah sitting at the gates of Rome, which Paul had adduced at Barcelona as proving the Messiah had come already.<sup>927</sup> And he adds, again, another haggadah speaking of the coming of the Messiah, as being equally meaningless.<sup>928</sup>

He further argues that the ancient Jews obviously did not think that the Messiah was born the day the Temple was destroyed. If they did, how come many believed Bar Kokhba was the Messiah? The rabbinic sayings that really announced the Messiah's coming forty

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<sup>924</sup> Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 122. I would also like to add that while Nahmanides had admitted that the talmudic rabbis indeed took the "scepter" and "rod" of Gen 49:10 as referring to some specific *halakic* authority conferred on the Ethnarchs and Exilarchs, and that this authority remained for more than 400 years after Jesus, Martí succeeded in finding a similar rabbinic saying conferring an equally specific halakic authority to the Great Sanhedrin assembled in the Chamber of Hewn Stones. One could say that he set one halakic interpretation of the "scepter" and "rod" against the halakic interpretation mentioned by Nahmanides. He thus avoided Nahmanides' argument that Paul was ignorant in the field of halakha.

<sup>925</sup> See passages 19–24 in the *Vikuah*.

<sup>926</sup> *Pugio* II.6.1–4 (Carpzov, 348–51).

<sup>927</sup> *Pugio* II.6.4 (Carpzov, 351).

<sup>928</sup> *Pugio* II.6.5 (Carpzov, 352).

years before the fall of the Temple, on the other hand, were true, but were discarded by the Jews.

Instead of such useless haggadot, Martí introduces new haggadot not mentioned by Paul at Barcelona. In Martí's view, these haggadot say that the Messiah must be born in the time when Rome attains world-wide dominance. This happened during the reign of Emperor Augustus, the exact time of Jesus' birth. Again, such haggadot were true, but was not understood by the Jews, or willfully set aside.<sup>929</sup>

The one such haggadah that Martí makes the most of, is the wellknown saying from "the house of Elijah" (*b. Sanhedrin* 98a):<sup>930</sup>

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation;<sup>931</sup> two thousand years the Torah flourished;<sup>932</sup> and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era,<sup>933</sup> but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost.<sup>934</sup>

Martí notes that in the talmudic parallel to this passage, *b. Avodah Zara* 9a, the last clause in the *Sanhedrin* quote above ("but through...") is replaced by the following: "But because of our extensive sins, the number of years has diverged by 714."<sup>935</sup> Martí concludes that the divergence of the two clauses indicates they are both later additions, and that the original haggadah just posited the coming of the Messiah in 240 C.E. But then, how explain that Jesus came as Messiah 210 years earlier than that? Martí here brings in a rabbinic saying, based on Isaiah 60:22 ("I am the Lord, *in its time* I will *make haste*"). Rabbi Joshua ben Levi contrasted "in its time" with "make haste": if they are worthy – God will make haste; if not, he will let it happen at the set term. In other words, God may make haste and let the Messiah come *earlier* than the set term, but not later.<sup>936</sup> Martí concludes: There is an authentic tradition in the

<sup>929</sup> *Pugio* II.10.4–6 (Carpzov, 396–97).

<sup>930</sup> Quoted here from the digitally available version of the Epstein / Soncino translation. The explanatory footnotes are those of this translation.

<sup>931</sup> "I.e., no Torah. It is a tradition that Abraham was fifty-two years old when he began to convert men to the worship of the true God; from Adam until then, two thousand years elapsed."

<sup>932</sup> "I.e., from Abraham's fifty-second year until one hundred and seventy-two years after the destruction of the second Temple [240 C.E., my addition]."

<sup>933</sup> "I.e., Messiah will come within that period."

<sup>934</sup> "He should have come at the beginning of the last two thousand years [240 C.E.]; the delay is due to our sins."

<sup>935</sup> This precise number of 714 years of delay is missing in the extant manuscripts of the Talmud but was perhaps to be found in some copy at Martí's time. It would place the Messiah's coming at 240 + 714 = 954 C.E. – very likely a Medieval addition. For another example of Jewish calculations placing the Messiah's coming in the ninth or tenth centuries, see p. 64, note 163 above (the year 867 C.E.).

<sup>936</sup> Referring to the quote from *b. Sanhedrin* 98a above.



Talmud that the Messiah should come 240 C.E. at the latest, but that God was free to let him come earlier. Before 240 there is no other Messiah candidate than Jesus that can be seriously considered. He, however, made all the promises concerning the Messiah come true.<sup>937</sup>

(C) This last point had been the weightiest objection brought forward by Nahmanides at Barcelona: Jesus had fulfilled none of the most important prophecies concerning the days of the Messiah. For example, the prophet Isaiah had said: “[In the days of the Messiah, the Gentiles] shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isa 2:4). After Jesus, there was not any trace of this universal peace; rather, “the entire world has been full of violence and robbery. [Indeed], the Christians spill more blood than the rest of the nations...”<sup>938</sup>

At Barcelona, Paul had brushed this aside as irrelevant; in other words, he had not answered this objection. Nahmanides’ point was raised anew by the Jewish sage at Paris: “[M]ost importantly, know and acknowledge that the signs of the Messiah have not appeared!”<sup>939</sup> At this point, the Franciscan Master had stepped in for Paul and asked which signs the sage was hinting at. After a brief discussion concerning Isaiah 11:6 (to be taken literally or not?), the following exchange took place:

*The Sage:* See and understand that in the days since Jesus there has been great and terrible wars; how could he be the Messiah? Where is the peace described in Isaiah 2:4? Since the days of Jesus people have continued to kill each other.

*The Master of the Franciscans:* This verse refers to the peace during the ten last years prior to the birth of Jesus.<sup>940</sup>

*The Sage:* Do you seriously think that the prophet uttered such a long ranging prophecy about a peace of such short duration?<sup>941</sup>

<sup>937</sup> *Pugio* II.10.2 (Carpzov, 395–96).

<sup>938</sup> *Vikuah* passage 49, trans. Chavel.

<sup>939</sup> See above, Paris Disputation, passage G3, p. 310.

<sup>940</sup> Shatzmiller in his note ad loc. refers to the Spaniard Paulus Orosius (Paulo Orosio), a contemporary of Augustine, as the source of this idea. Following a request of Augustine, he wrote the first comprehensive Christian world history, propounding the thesis that whenever Christianity progressed, Pax romana also thrived, and universal peace ensued. As a sign of this, in the last years before Jesus was born there was universal peace, and it was this peace the angels celebrated in Luke 2:14: “And on earth peace among those whom God favors.” See also the more extensive note 32 in Shatzmiller’s “Introduction,” p. 25.

<sup>941</sup> See above, Paris Disputation, passage H, p. 310.

I suppose most modern readers, Jewish and Christian, would consider the argument of the Franciscan Master a rather lame one, and the final response of the Jewish sage as being quite to the point.

Had Martí anything better on offer in the *Pugio*? To my mind, not really. Whether or not he realized that from the Jewish perspective this question was the most important and decisive one in the entire debate between Jews and Christians, he approached it as one among others. And he tackled it by several strategies, mainly of a linguistic nature. For example, in the saying that the nations should “not anymore” (heb. *lo od*) learn war (Isa 2:4), the term *lo od* did often mean “not at that time”, or “not for a period of time.” This paves the way for Martí’s elaboration of the same idea that the Master of the Franciscans at Paris had held against the Jewish sage: The universal peace in Isaiah 2:4 was in fact realized for a period around the birth of Jesus. Martí, however, extends the period:

In the time of our Lord Jesus Christ the saying was fulfilled that “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” For during the whole of his lifetime, and long before it, as well as forty years after his death, there was no moment of war...<sup>942</sup>

Martí is also not shy of applying the prophecy’s peace to the period of the Christian Roman Empire, founded by Constantine. The Jews are blind on purpose when they fail to recognize this!

Having emphasized the great progress in argumentative preciseness from Paul at Barcelona to Martí in his *Pugio*, I find little progress concerning this, the most important objection of the Jews: We can see no signs that the Days of the Messiah have come! But what I have presented so far, is not all Martí had to say with relevance for this theme, and I shall have more to say on it when we have acquainted ourselves with some of Martí’s thoughts concerning two important topics that he handles in the final part of the *Pugio*, viz. (1) whether the Jews are right in observing all commandments of the Torah according to their literal meaning (point D below), and (2) the reason why the Jewish hope of redemption for Israel has not come true after the Messiah’s coming (point E).

(D) It comes as no surprise that Martí shared the common Christian conviction that with the coming of the Messiah, parts of the Mosaic Torah had served their purpose, and were no

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<sup>942</sup> *Pugio* II.12.16 (Carpzov 434–36); here at 436, translation mine.

longer to be observed according to the letter. What is new in the *Pugio*, is the great effort invested in finding rabbinic texts which seemed to express the same view.

As far as biblical sayings are concerned, Jeremiah 31:31–34 was a favorite testimony for the idea of a new Law, different from the old, among Christians right from the beginning. In Hebrews 8:1–10:18 there is a long midrash-like exposition of the Jeremiah prophecy which is quoted in the beginning (8:8–12) and at the end (10:16–17) of the passage. The gist of this text is that Christ as the heavenly High Priest has brought the final and ultimate atoning sacrifice: his own blood. This puts an end to all sacrifices of (animal) blood brought by the priests of the old covenant.<sup>943</sup>

Another text in great favor among Christian theologians was Jeremiah 16:14–15:

Days are surely coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, “As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of Egypt,” but “As the LORD lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them. For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors.”<sup>944</sup>

When combined with Isaiah 43:18–19, “*Do not remember* the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing...,” Jeremiah 16:14–15 could be taken to mean that the custom enjoined in Exodus 12:14 (and 12:24) of *remembering* the salvation from Egyptian slavery on the Passover night should *not* be considered an eternal (*olam*) commandment. In the Days of the Messiah, it would be a *new* exodus that was celebrated, not the one from Egypt. The same argument was applied with regard to the other Jewish festivals.

The text in Exodus, however, uses exactly this word, *olam*, to characterize the ordinance of the festival in remembrance of the exodus from Egypt. How should one resolve this difficulty?

This is exactly the problem addressed by Martí in the *Pugio*.<sup>945</sup> He presents, again, a linguistic argument. The word *olam* need not mean eternal, as the Jews claim it does in

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<sup>943</sup> Justin Martyr (ca. 160) makes much out of this text along the same line as Hebrews but adding that while the Law of Moses only applied to the Jewish people, the new Law of Christ applies to all human beings (*Dial.* 11.2–12.2), adding Isa 2:3, 51:4–5, and 55:3–5, as supporting testimonies for the universality of the new law (“light of the nations.”) He often returns to Jeremiah’s prophecy later in his *Dialogue*, see 24.1; 34.1; 43.1; 67.9; 118:2. After him, this testimony may be called a classic, quoted again and again (see the volumes of *Biblia Patristica* for references in the Church Fathers).

<sup>944</sup> According to the *Biblia Patristica* I, Irenaeus was the first to quote this text, but he applied it to the gathering of all who believed in Jesus into the earthly Millennium (*Adv. Haer.* V.34.1).

<sup>945</sup> See *Pugio* III.3.11.9–13 (Carpzov, 776–82).

Exodus 12, but rather “for the ages,” i.e., for a set period of time. In proof of this, he quotes the exegesis of *olam* by respected Jewish exegetes like Rashi (on 1 Kings 1:22, Deut 15:17 [for this text also *b. Kiddushin* and David Kimhi], and Num 19:21). In other words, the commandment in Exodus 12 (remembering the first exodus is an *olam* ordinance) does not contradict the prophecy of *new things* being remembered (Isaiah 43:18–19) in its stead in the new covenant. The same applies to all the other ritual commandments that are said to be *olam*.

As rabbinic authority for this interpretation of *olam*, Martí quotes David Kimhi.<sup>946</sup> He is even able to quote a passage from the Jerusalem Talmud supporting his interpretation as a whole:

Israel will no longer recall the exodus from Egypt in the future, during the days of the Messiah. What is the reason for this? “Assuredly a time is coming – declares the Lord – when it shall no more be said: ‘As the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt,’ but rather ‘As the Lord lives, who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel from the northland and from all the lands to which I have banished them’ (*y. Berakhot* 11b).<sup>947</sup>

With this and a multitude of supporting arguments Martí reestablishes the traditional Christian understanding of the basic importance of Jeremiah’s prophecy of a new covenant: if new covenant, then also new law!

This seems targeted very precisely towards the contrary argument of the Jewish sage at the Paris disputation: You have not observed that in this prophecy (Jer 31:33) it is only the covenant that is renewed, not the law (above, p. 314). In the *Capistrum*’s treatment of the same prophecy, I cannot find the same point emphasized (*Ratio* 3.23, Robles Sierra I:122). This could indicate that Martí on this point sharpened his argument after the Paris disputation so as to answer the Paris rabbi’s objection.

(E) It is true that in the biblical prophecies, salvation is for Israel as well as for the nations. So why were the prophecies fulfilled for the nations only? Because Israel rejected their Messiah. Again, this was the traditional Christian answer. Martí’s new approach is to make the rabbis say exactly the same thing. The rabbis in fact saw a real problem in explaining why the second exile should be so much longer than the first, Babylonian, one. A passage in *b. Yoma*

<sup>946</sup> *Pugio* III.3.11.11 (Carpzov, 778).

<sup>947</sup> *Pugio* III.3.11.13 (Carpzov, 781). Translation from Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 131.

9b discusses this problem, and states that while the sins that led to the first exile were idolatry, fornication, and murder; the one sin, more serious still, that led to the second exile, was pointless hatred (*sin'at hinam*). Martí is in no doubt about what the rabbis meant by this: The pointless hatred was the hatred that led them to kill their Messiah! Therefore, their present exile will last until they repent of their sin and recognize their Messiah as being Jesus – which only a remnant of them will do.<sup>948</sup>

This takes me to my last and final point: How are we to evaluate the progress from Paul to Martí in fine-tuning the Dominican argument from rabbinic dicta for the truth of Christian faith in Jesus as the Messiah?

In choosing and interpreting sayings from all parts of the rabbinic corpus of writings, it would be impossible to accuse Martí of amateurism the way Nahmanides did with Paul. Martí's rabbinic scholarship is impeccable. His arguments are meticulously worked out.<sup>949</sup>

On the other hand, the main fault found by modern scholars in Paul's rabbinical arguments at Barcelona – their “abstractness” – is to a considerable degree present in Martí's *Pugio* as well. Like Paul at Barcelona, Martí also seems to think that the question of whether Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies or not is a purely exegetical question. It can be answered by a correct interpretation of the relevant Scriptural *and* rabbinic texts.

For the Jews, the decisive test of a Messiah candidate was one and one only: Are we now really living under the circumstances that characterize “the Days of the Messiah”? One crucial feature of these days should be that Israel was no longer oppressed by Gentile powers, and that they should be masters in their own land. If the Christian debaters did not address this point head on, everything else they said was considered irrelevant. Nahmanides said as much at Barcelona, the Jewish sage at Paris made the same point.<sup>950</sup> At Barcelona, no Christian answer was given. At Paris, an answer was attempted, but a quite lame one.

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<sup>948</sup> *Pugio* III.3.21.6, (Carpzov, 902–903). I cannot but quote Chazan here: “This is not the most impressive of Friar Raymond's arguments, ... [but] it does show us the basic system at work once again. ... In making his case for the abandonment of the Jewish people by their God, he continues to utilize the rabbinic sources on which his entire prior case had been constructed” (*Daggers of Faith*, 134–35). It is interesting to compare Martí's treatment of the issue with Alfonsi's above, pp. 121–26 and 132–33.

<sup>949</sup> Let me add here that the Dominican passion for Jewish learning did not cease with Martí. In 1297 there is on record that Jaime II granted the Jew Yom Tov tax-exemption for as long as he served the Dominicans in Jativa (province of Valencia) as teacher of Hebrew! See Baer, *Die Juden im Christlichen Spanien, Erster Teil: Urkunden und Regesten*, Vol. I: *Aragonien und Navarra* (Veröffentlichungen der Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, Historische Sektion 4; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1929), doc. 141, p. 157.

<sup>950</sup> As had many Jewish debaters before them. I have earlier quoted Trypho saying the same thing to Justin in the second century. I here add an example from the twelfth century: We hear the bishop Odo of Tournai (then Northern France, now Belgium) discuss with the Jew Leo. The debate begins like this: “Leo: Tell me, bishop, what benefit did the coming of your Christ confer upon the world? Odo: Tell me, Jew, what benefit do you

Martí improved somewhat the answer concerning Isaiah 2:4 given at Paris but did not come to terms with the prophecy in its literal meaning. His rabbinic support for the standard Christian explanation – the Jews having themselves to blame for their non-participation in the fulfilment of this prophecy – was far from waterproof.

An important question had been agreed upon to be debated at Barcelona as well as at Paris: “Whether the Jews still possess the true law, or whether the Christians practice it.”<sup>951</sup> But in neither of the disputations did this question make it to the table. For the Jews, this put them at a considerable disadvantage because to them, their Jewish lifestyle according to the Law given at Sinai was their very identity. It was this that characterized them; it was this that expressed their Jewishness. And it was here that their main problem with the Christians lay. Trypho had said to Justin:

This is what we are most puzzled about, that you who claim to be pious and believe yourselves to be different from the other [Gentiles] do not segregate yourselves from them, nor do you observe a manner of life different from that of the Gentiles, for you do not keep the feasts or Sabbaths, nor do you practice the rite of circumcision. You place your hope in a crucified man, and still expect to receive favor from God when you disregard his commandments.<sup>952</sup>

In the last debate to be treated in this volume, the debate on Majorca 1286, the question of Christian non-observance of the Law was the first question raised – by the Jews, since they were the ones to initiate that debate. At Barcelona 1263, Nahmanides had stated that for him the question of the Messiah was of less importance, because observing the Law under the obstacles against it by Christian rulers gained him greater merit than if he did the same under the Messiah. In other words, in neither of the two Dominican disputations had the question of

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believe that your messiah will bring, whom you believe is yet to come? Leo: Whatever we read in the prophets, namely that all kingdoms will be subject to us through him; that we will have perpetual peace under him; that we shall be gathered from all the kingdoms into Jerusalem; that Jerusalem will have the dominion over all kingdoms; and all other things which the prophets happily enumerate. Since we do not see all these things fulfilled in your Christ, we wonder what you expect from him?” (Odo of Tournai, *A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God*, translation by Irven M. Resnick in Resnick, *Odo of Tournai, On Original Sin and A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God: Two Theological Treatises Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (Middle Ages Series; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 85.

<sup>951</sup> Barcelona, *Vikuah*, passage 6; Paris: the fifth and last set theme: “The divine Messiah announced by the prophets should annul the entire Law of Moses and reject all those claiming to live by it” (above, p. 304).

<sup>952</sup> Justin, *Dialogue* 10.3; trans. according to Halton, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, 18.

the Law been broached as such. Martí, as we have seen, tried his best at establishing the Christian non-observance of the ritual commandments as being in accordance with rabbinic sayings about the days of the Messiah. This, of course, was quite a challenge for contemporary Jews and their rabbis. I submit these observations as an introduction to the next and last topic concerning the new Dominican missionary strategy: Just as Paul Christian was answered at Barcelona by Nahmanides, and at Paris by Abraham ben Samuel and other rabbis, Martí in turn was also answered (in writing) by a rabbi. Enter rabbi Salomo ibn Adret!

#### 8. Salomo ibn Adret Answers Ramon Martí<sup>953</sup>

Rabbi Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret (acronym Rashba, ca. 1235–1310) was a resident of Barcelona from his birth and served as the city’s rabbi from ca. 1260 until his death.<sup>954</sup> In many ways, he was a follower of his somewhat older colleague Nahmanides, and his standing with the Christian authorities of Aragon as well as within the Jewish community was second only to that of Nahmanides. When we consider that Ibn Adret highly likely attended the Disputation at Barcelona in 1263, and that Martí served as the head of the Dominican *Studium Hebraicum* in Barcelona from 1281 until his death ca. 1285, it would be surprising indeed if there were no contact between the two eminent scholars.

Positive evidence for this contact is not lacking. It is the merit of Jeremy Cohen to have brought this to light.<sup>955</sup> In Ramon Llull’s *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae* there is a passage speaking of a learned Christian preacher knowledgeable in Arabic who had tried to convert the Muslim king of Tunis. Later, this same preacher learned Hebrew and disputed many times with a distinguished rabbi in Barcelona. It is likely that Martí and Ibn Adret are the two persons referred to.<sup>956</sup>

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<sup>953</sup> For the following, see especially Thomas Willi, “Die ‘Perusche Aggadot’ des R. Salomo ben Adret,” in *Glaubensdolch und Messiasbeweis: Die Begegnung von Judentum, Christentum und Islam im 13. Jahrhundert in Spanien* (Forschungen zum jüdisch-christlichen Dialog 2; ed. Ina Willi-Plein and Thomas Willi; Neukirchenvluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 85–100; Jeremy Cohen, “The Christian Adversary of Solomon Ibn Adret,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 71 (1980): 48–55; idem, “A Jewish Response: Solomon ibn Adret,” in idem, *The Friars and the Jews*, 156–63; Robert Chazan, “Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret and His Responses to the *Pugio Fidei*,” in idem, *Daggers of Faith*, 137–58; Schreckenberg III: 342–44; Harvey J. Hames, “It Takes Three to Tango: Ramon Llull, Solomon ibn Adret and Alfonso of Valladolid Debate the Trinity,” *Medieval Encounters* 15 (2009): 199–224. I have had no direct access to the writings of Ibn Adret; in this section I rely exclusively on the summaries, quotations, and analyses of his writings that are presented in these studies.

<sup>954</sup> For his life and work, see Baer, *History* 1: 281–305.

<sup>955</sup> See his two studies referenced above.

<sup>956</sup> I should add, however, that in the most recent study of the question, Alexander Fidora again doubts the certainty of this conclusion, see his article “‘Ramon Martí in Context: The influence of the ‘Pugio Fidei’ on Ramon Llull, Arnau de Vilanova and Francesc Eiximenis,” *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 79 (2012): 373–97, here at 376–79. Fidora’s main objection is that Llull says that his anonymous missionary

This is confirmed by a closer study of Ibn Adret's renderings of Christian arguments from rabbinic literature, especially in his work *Perushe Aggadoth*.<sup>957</sup> A more complete version of the title would have been "*Explanations of haggadot* which Christian missionaries claim prove their cause." The work's main purpose is to counter the new Dominican missionary strategy of including rabbinic haggadot in their arsenal of "prooftexts". In more than one case, clear references to arguments in the *Pugio* are undeniable. Take, for example, Martí's "proof" from rabbinic sources showing that they interpreted Genesis 49:10 as prophesying that the "staff" (jurisdiction) of Judah would last until 40 years before the destruction of the Temple.<sup>958</sup> In the following quote from Ibn Adret I think the reference to Martí's exposition of Genesis 49:10 is beyond doubt. He reports that his Christian opponent explained the Genesis verse like this:

He [Jacob] said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes." This means the Messiah, as you [Jews] yourselves say and as the Targum explained: "[until] the Messiah comes." Behold you have not had governing authority nor royal power for many years, from the days of the destruction of the Second Temple. Indeed, you have exercised no authority from then till now. Moreover, *forty years prior to the destruction [of the (second) Temple], the Sanhedrin was exiled from its place*, as is indicated in the Talmud which you possess. This was a result of the sin which you sinned at that time [by killing Jesus], for it took place forty years prior to the destruction.<sup>959</sup>

The words in italics here cannot refer to any other Christian preacher or scholar than Martí. Ibn Adret may not have known Martí's exposition from reading the *Pugio*, but he could have heard Martí present it in one of their discussions. This seems to be indicated in another text in which Ibn Adret comments on the same Genesis text, viz. a responsum addressed to the Jewish community at Lérida.<sup>960</sup> The following quote is relevant:

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knew nothing about "natural philosophy" or "logic". This clearly does not match the *Pugio*'s first part. But Fidora does not think Lull ever read the *Pugio*, but only had secondhand information about it. And this undermines, in fact, his first argument.

<sup>957</sup> In the studies I have consulted, the edition of *Perushe Aggadoth* referred to is Joseph Perles, *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adrath: Sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Breslau: Schletter, 1863), Hebrew Section, 24–56. When quoting translated passages from this writing, I refer to its title and the page number in Perles' edition, Hebrew Section. I take these references, of course, from the references given by the translator.

<sup>958</sup> See pp. 314–15.

<sup>959</sup> *Perushe Aggadoth*, 55; trans. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 144–45.

<sup>960</sup> Ibn Adret is famous for the enormous number of *responsa* that he issued during his rabbinate, see Baer, *History* 1: 282–304. The current edition is still Rafael Halevi, *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rashba* (Piotrkow, 1883).



[This responsum is intended] to teach the Jews to respond to others truthfully and properly. It has seemed proper to me to set before you [these matters] in writing. For a respected figure who has visited you recently told me that one of the sages of the Gentiles spoke within [your] community on a day of assembly and filled [your] ears with his words. You asked that I provide you a response to his words. Therefore, I have seen fit to write down *that which one of their sages disputed with me with regard to these same issues* [how to interpret Gen 49:10] and indeed [with regard to] more than you heard [...]. *I shall set down for you briefly the essence of what our opponent said and the essence of [my] reply.*<sup>961</sup>

Again, I agree with Cohen and Chazan that the Christian sage with whom Ibn Adret discussed Genesis 49:10 was Martí, because the interpretation attributed to the Christian sage is so close to the one reported in the *Perushe Aggadot*. On the other hand, the Christian preacher challenging the community in *Lérida* need not have been the same man – was it perhaps Paul Christian or another Dominican preacher?

In Nahmanides' answers to Paul at Barcelona, the rabbi was not shy in giving rather derogatory characterizations of Paul's level of learning in rabbinics. In Ibn Adret, there is not anything similar, instead he indirectly recognizes that his Christian opponent is very learned, presenting Ibn Adret with real challenges as far as interpreting the Scriptures is concerned. In another writing, *Ma'amar al-Yishmael (A Word against the Muslim)*, Ibn Adret has the following to say:

Look at the Christians! They, who came earlier than the Arabs, [...] are our opponents with regard to faith, and they come after us scratching us to such a degree that they will not leave a single word of Scripture uninterpreted, so that they should not lack answers when asked.... There is no doubt that the Christians have much more learning in the Holy Books, i.e., the Torah, the Prophets, and the Scriptures, than the Arabs.<sup>962</sup>

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The responsum to Lérida is found in Halevi's volume as # 187, page 53. Translation of the relevant passage in Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 142–43.

<sup>961</sup> Chazan's translation, slightly adapted.

<sup>962</sup> Ibn Adret's *Ma'amar al Yishmael* is edited in Perles, *R. Salomo*, Beilage 1, 1–23. The translation above is my English version of Willi's German translation in Willi, "Die »Perusche Aggadot«, " 88.

Since the interpretation of Genesis 49:10 has occupied such a central position in nearly all the debates recorded in this volume, I believe it worthwhile to add to this dossier the interpretation of Ibn Adret. The two statements of it in the *Responsum* and the *Perushe* are not fully identical, but this may have to do with the fact that the *Perushe* manuscript breaks off before the exposition is finished. Ibn Adret's interpretation can be summarized as follows: (1) The saying "until" (Hebrew *ad*) in Genesis 49:10 (royal rule shall not depart from Judah *until* Shiloh, the Messiah, comes) does not mean that it will end with the Messiah; it rather means that with the Messiah's coming it will be consummated as an eternal kingdom. Since this has not happened, the Messiah has certainly not come. (2) If one were to retain the Christian interpretation (the Messiah's coming occurring at the suspension of Jewish rule), the Messiah must have come at the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Since Christians would have to admit this (according to their own interpretation of Jacob's prophecy), the prophecy cannot mean a continuous reign for Judah.

In general, these arguments are in line with Nahmanides' at Barcelona, but formulated in a new way by Ibn Adret.<sup>963</sup> Like Nahmanides, he leaves the traditional midrashic exegesis of Jacob's prophecy behind, and resorts to a *peshat* exegesis along the lines of his great master.

This is the only discussion of the topic "has the Messiah come?" in the *Perushe*, and it occurs, unfinished, at the point where the manuscript ends abruptly, probably due to physical damage.

Before this discussion of a Messianic prophecy, a seemingly quite different topic is discussed quite extensively: Are all the commandments of the law still to be observed according to their literal meaning, as the Jews hold, or are most of them not to be observed at all, because some of them were only meant as allegories of ethical principles, while others were only meant as prophetic types of realities acted out by the Messiah [Jesus] and later by his followers, as the Christians hold? But since Ibn Adret had in mind to write a comprehensive manual relevant for all types of debate between Jews and non-Jews about their religion, he made the following interesting statement in his introduction:

At the outset let me append an introduction, regarding understanding of the truth in its fullness. Peoples and cultures are divided into two groups regarding religious faith.

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<sup>963</sup> Both of Ibn Adret's points agree in substance with Nahmanides' argument at Barcelona, see his *Vikuah*, passages 12, 14 and 18.

One of these groups denies all scriptures. This is the group that includes some of those who philosophize, who announce with their nugatory views that there is nothing that stands beyond human inquiry. They add to this that they believe that anything which human enquiry cannot fathom cannot exist. Therefore, they deny that part of religion that has been transmitted through the prophets [...]. With this group we have no dialogue regarding exegesis of the Scriptures and their meaning.

The second group all acknowledge religious faith as given from the mouth of the Lord, may he be blessed, through his prophet [Moses]. This group includes the three peoples known to us, i.e., the Jews, the Muslims, and the Christians, and perhaps more. Indeed, these three acknowledge the religious faith of Moses our teacher, may he rest in peace, and all acknowledge that Moses represents the truth and that his Torah is truth.

However, one people among them [the Christians] divides the commandments into three categories. (1) One category [... they call] parables and metaphors [like not plowing with an ox and an ass and the commandments about unclean animals. They remove such commandments] from their simple sense and clothe them with distorted allegorical meanings. (2) The second category they preserve in their simple sense, but they set for them a prescribed time period, as in the case of the sacrifices and other similar commandments of the Torah. [They regard them as abolished when the reality prophesied by them is realized]. (3) The third category they leave without a fixed time but nonetheless introduce change, such as the Sabbath, circumcision, priestly garb, and so forth.<sup>964</sup>

Another group [the Muslims] takes all [the commandments] literally but establishes a set time [at which God by his own wish will] alter religious faith completely or in part through a prophet [Muhammad].

We the congregation of Israel take all the commandments in their literal sense, not as an allegory or a puzzle or for a limited time. Rather, the commandments in their totality are eternal [...] except for those which were commanded for a given time or for a given place or for a given circumstance.<sup>965</sup>

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<sup>964</sup> I take the meaning to be that with regard to these commandments, the Christians substituted Jewish observances with their own alternatives: Sabbath by Sunday, circumcision by baptism, priestly garb by other (Christian) priestly garb, etc.

<sup>965</sup> Perles, *R. Salomo*, 25–26; trans. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 140–41. Some of the explanatory insertions within square brackets are my own, as are the summary versions of Ibn Adret's longer text, also within square brackets.

Chazan remarks that this very tidy grouping of peoples as well as problems in main groups and subgroups has an unmistakable flavor of the scholastic method of handling subjects and problems in the late thirteenth century – above all in Thomas Aquinas' *Summae*. But, even more important, Martí used the very same method in his discussion of the different components of the divine law already in the *Capistrum's* seventh *Inquitia* and repeated it in the *Pugio*.

I also concur with Chazan's second remark, viz. that while Nahmanides at Barcelona was constrained to respond to his opponent's questions, Ibn Adret was under no such constraints. He was free to set his own agenda, and to spend ink on those questions that were most urgent from his Jewish point of view. To him, that was the question of the Torah's eternal validity – the validity of its commandments in their literal sense. In the detailed and very sophisticated arguments he puts forward against his Christian opponent, he does in fact, indirectly, pay his opponent considerable tribute as a worthy antagonist.<sup>966</sup>

In conclusion, I quote Chazan's evaluation of Martí's efforts to complete and refine the Dominican argument from rabbinic writings in their missionary approach to the Jews:

[T]his new argumentation was taken quite seriously [by contemporary rabbis]. In the writings of Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret, there is none of that bantering levity that we encountered in Rabbi Moses ben Nahman. The reason is clear: Friar Raymond [Martí] and his circle constituted a much more serious group of adversaries. Friar Raymond's more extensive knowledge of rabbinic literature and his better command of that literature resulted in a more serious set of Jewish responses, including argumentation that involved significant ingenuity in the use of textual proofs.<sup>967</sup>

## 9. The Official Disputations of the Thirteenth Century – Some General Comments

First, there were only two of them, the one in Barcelona 1263, and the one in Paris beginning in 1269. Some scholars would include the trial of the Talmud in Paris 1240 among the official disputations or debates, and it was, no doubt, an official event, and at least parts of it took place before an audience. But in reality, its format was an inquisitorial investigation, and it

<sup>966</sup> For the details, see Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, 147–58.

<sup>967</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

was only the Jewish spokesmen's skillful exploitation of the defendant's right to answer that made it look like a real debate. On the other hand, without the Paris trial of 1240, the two real disputations might not have taken place.

After the thirteenth century, we must wait some 140 plus years before the one and only follow-up of this category of events took place – in Spain, in Tortosa, in 1413–14. In 1240 it was a Jewish convert to Christianity, Nicholas Donin, who initiated the process; in 1263 and 1269 it was another Jewish convert who took this role, Paul Christian, and in the third case, at Tortosa, a third convert, Joshua Halorki alias Geronimo de Santa Fe (Jerome of the Holy Faith) was the leading spokesman for the Christian side.<sup>968</sup> This last disputation was the most spectacular one as far as participants are concerned: It was chaired by the Pope himself, surrounded by 70 Cardinals, archbishops and bishops, and with accommodations for nearly a thousand dignitaries of the papal court. On the Jewish side, the leaders of all the Jewish communities of Aragon and Catalonia were summoned to attend. Yet, for all its outward splendor, the Tortosa Disputation failed to achieve its intended purpose: a more or less complete mass conversion of the Jews. It took only 78 years before another “Endlösung” of the “Jewish problem” of Spain actually “solved” it: the final expulsion of 1492. That, naturally, also put an end to sumptuous official disputations. (In France, the only other scene of a great public disputation, this latter solution of lasting expulsion was chosen already in 1394.)<sup>969</sup>

Returning to the two thirteenth century disputations, I said above that the Paris trial of 1240 set the whole process moving that lead up to these debates. The real gamechanger behind all three events is what I have called the discovery of the Talmud, and the fact that this discovery took place at exactly the time it did. Let me briefly recapitulate some of the factors that were new in thirteenth century Europe.

We see a more dominant Papacy in a more centralized Church. Pope Gregory VII's doctrine about the king wielding his sword according to delegation of authority by the Pope, had now come closer to being a reality than ever before.

The problem of “heresy” became more acute in parallel with a stricter codification of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Here, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 heralded a change in ecclesiastical policy that was destined to have grave consequences for the Jews throughout the

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<sup>968</sup> For a brief but enlightening presentation and analysis of the Tortosa Disputation, see Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 82–94.

<sup>969</sup> After several temporal expulsions to benefit the royal coffers earlier in the century. See Simon R. Schwarzfuchs, “The Expulsion of the Jews from France (1306),” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57 (1967): 482–89.

rest of the century and beyond. Increasingly, Judaism as such was put in a category it had not been placed in before: that of heresy.

This was sinister in itself, but also had another repercussion: It meant supreme jurisdiction over the Jews was in part moved from the secular authorities to the Pope. As we have seen in Aragon: The Pope, through his elite troops, the Dominicans and Franciscans, was a greater threat to the Jews' traditional rights than the king of Aragon. The latter did his best to protect his Jews from these new threats, while at the same time he also did his best not to displease the Pope unnecessarily. It was a balance act of sorts.

The final step of placing Judaism as such in the category of heresy was taken in 1240, the year after Nicholas Donin informed the Pope about the clearly heretical sayings – about Jesus, his mother, his first disciples and all later generations of Christians – that were contained in the Talmud. It was now discovered that the Jews in fact had harbored in their midst a heretic of sorts: a book called the Talmud. Accordingly, an inquisitorial trial of this newly discovered heretic was staged in Paris in 1240, resulting in the verdict 'guilty of heresy.' Heretics were to be burnt; the Talmud was burnt.

This, however, put the Church in a quandary, since outlawing Judaism's founding document amounted to outlawing Judaism as such, in flagrant contradiction of age-old Church law and doctrine concerning the Jews. Jewish lobbyists were not slow in pointing this out. Perhaps – one cannot prove this – there were also other lobbyists around. As we have seen, in Spain, Ramon of Penyafort and his adepts – first and foremost the Jewish convert Paul Christian – may have joined the Jews in warning against destroying the Talmud completely. They had ideas about a completely new missionary approach *vis-à-vis* the Jews: Proving the Christian truth from the writings that were authoritative among those rejecting Christianity. In this case: proving Christian truth from the Talmud. Exterminating the Talmud would be counterproductive in the highest degree for this new strategy.

Whether or not Ramon and his circle had any part in this play, the Pope changed his mind in 1247 and put an end to burning the Talmud. Instead, the passages in it that made it a heretical book were to be deleted. This was a 'solution' of the heresy problem that was sustainable to a much higher degree, and it would not impede the new missionary approach *vis-à-vis* the Jews that the Dominicans were spearheading. As it later turned out, they found no contradiction between continuing the censorship policy alongside their new proving-Christianity-from-the-Talmud policy.

A final factor in the thirteenth-century tapestry should be added. As we have seen, both the Mendicant Orders wanted to win the heretics back to the Church by other means than

brute force. They firmly believed that presenting Church doctrine as a rationally convincing whole would prove more efficient in winning inner consent among the heretics than any use of force. Also, when it came to convincing people by appealing to authoritative writings recognized as such among the heretics, the same strategy applied. The supreme example would be the new Dominican proof-from-the-Talmud when approaching the Jews. It seems to me that the Dominican Friars, before the Barcelona Disputation, were so convinced of the efficiency of their new strategy that they sincerely believed that public disputes on a grand scale between the most learned on both sides would lead to mass conversions among the Jews. They were sincerely convinced that they had found rabbinic haggadot that, according to their plain sense, undoubtedly claimed that the Messiah had come within the first Christian century.

But as we have also seen, this approach of winning consent by rigorous argument from reason and recognized authorities was not the only method of the Mendicant Orders. Backed by the Pope, they had not wholly renounced all coercive measures. If rational argument failed, more coercive measures were always available. First, attendance at the preaching campaigns of the friars was, as a rule, compulsory. Second, lack of admission of defeat by the Jewish participants in disputations could have grave consequences, as we have seen in Nahmanides' case. In the Paris Disputation, this threatening aspect of the whole event was repeatedly pointed out by the Jewish spokesmen. Indeed, when one follows Paul Christian from Barcelona in the 1260ies to Paris around 1270, one observes a disturbing undertone of outright threats against his opponents as well as the Jews in the audience. He knows all too well that he is in a position of power, unlike his Jewish opponents and audience. To modern readers, at least, he does not come forth as a very likable man. And he has for all posterity done his part in cementing the picture of Jewish converts to Christianity as being the most dangerous enemies of their people.

No reports of conversion to Christianity exist for either of the two grand public disputations of the thirteenth century. If I am right in claiming that the Dominicans really expected mass conversions resulting from these events, they could hardly have regarded any of them as great successes.<sup>970</sup>

Ramon Martí's titanic effort to shore up all the weak spots in the Dominican proof-from-the-Talmud argument did not immediately bear fruit in new public disputations before a

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<sup>970</sup> I am not the only one to assume this, see, e.g., Baer, *History of the Jews* 2, 172: Commenting on the Pope's hope that the Tortosa Disputation of 1413–14 would result in the conversion of the Jews in Aragon, he says, "It is likely that this is what the Dominicans had in mind when, in the 1260's and 1270's, they launched their disputations and sermons against the Jews."

large audience. In fact, with Martí this argument had reached such a level of sophistication that only people with a high degree of learning had competence to understand and appreciate it. In Barcelona he found one such person with whom he could debate directly – rabbi Ibn Adret.

To what extent the armor in Martí's two great books was used in more informal, spontaneous, "private" discussions other than the one just mentioned, is difficult, if not to say impossible, to document. (I will return to one such case under the next heading, the private, non-official debates, see pp. 412–13.)

Alexander Fidora has studied Martí's *Wirkungsgeschichte* in three Catalan writers, Ramon Llull (1232–1316), Arnau de Vilanova (1240–1311), and Francesc Eiximenis (1327–1409).<sup>971</sup> The two first have often been mentioned as writers influenced by Martí, although Llull made no secret of his opinion that Martí was weak on philosophy. Fidora finds no trace of direct acquaintance or use of the *Pugio* in either of them. In the third, however, whom no scholar has studied for this question, Fidora finds several undisputable quotations from the *Pugio*, but, interestingly, Eiximenis was handicapped by not knowing Hebrew. He took over arguments from Martí that he did not fully understand because of this impediment.

We must wait until 1413–14 before we meet the third and final attempt to use a grandiose official disputation as a means of converting the Jews of Aragon to the Christian faith.<sup>972</sup> Again, a Jewish convert was the leading spokesperson for the Christian side. As a Jew he was named Joshua Halorki, had served as the pope's physician, and after his conversion to Christianity took the name Jerome of the Holy Faith. He made full use of Martí's *Pugio*, but in a setting that was full of direct or indirect threats, coercion, and intimidation, not to speak of argumentative lies – all intended to simply exhaust the Jewish participants. In this respect, and in this respect only, the arrangement was effective. After having repeated the same answers to the same questions many times over, the Jewish spokespersons tried to put an end to the farce by answering "We do not know," meaning that they had no more to add to the answers already given. It was, of course, taken as an admission of defeat.

Under such circumstances, it was no wonder that not only the spirits of the Jewish participants were worn down; morale among the Jews in general also reached a low point. Many may have felt that their religious leaders had failed in defending their faith. A

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<sup>971</sup> Alexander Fidora, "Ramon Martí in Context: The influence of the "Pugio Fidei" on Ramon Llull, Arnau de Vilanova and Francesc Eiximenis," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 79 (2012): 373–97.

<sup>972</sup> For an extensive report and analysis of the disputation, see Baer, *History of the Jews*, II:170–243; for a shorter but instructive summary, see Maccoby, *Judaism on Trial*, 82–101.



considerable number of Aragon's Jews now resigned themselves to their fate and asked for baptism. It was not arguments for the truth of Christianity that carried the day in this process, it was the Jews' feeling of being powerless victims of an all-powerful Church. Martí may have had noble intentions – trying to lead Jews to converting by inner conviction, created by hearing rational arguments. But in the only grand-scale disputation in which his arguments were presented, it was not these, but different means of brute coercion and exhaustion that led to the disputation's "success." The grandiose Disputation of Tortosa was, in fact, the saddest thinkable epilogue to the ambitious plans of a completely new and hopefully successful missionary strategy launched by Ramon of Penyafort's circle of Dominican scholars in the latter half of the thirteenth century.<sup>973</sup>

### *The Unofficial Debates among Jews and Christians*

When we turn from the few official disputations to the many "private" conversations and debates between Christian and Jews, it is as if we enter a completely different world. It is beyond the scope of this volume to trace the history of oral as well as literary debates between Jews and Christians from the beginning of Christianity and into the tenth century in Europe.<sup>974</sup> Suffice it to say that in the eleventh and twelfth centuries we meet in Europe a surge of Christian writings defending Christian faith against Jewish criticism. In the following, I comment briefly on just a few representative examples.

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<sup>973</sup> In the period before the thirteenth century there are only a few examples of reports on public disputations on a similar scale. For useful reviews, see Peter Browe, *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste* (Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae 8; Rome: Herder, 1942), here at pp. 55–94: "Die Streitreden." Heinz Schreckenberg, *Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.–11.Jh.)* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 23 Theologie, 172; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982), passim; Lawrence Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin)," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (eds. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 581–639. The most obvious parallel is the so-called *Dialogue of Gregentius Archbishop of Taphar with Herban a Jew* (Schreckenberg I:397–99; Lahey, 608–614).

<sup>974</sup> Several older and newer comprehensive reviews are of great value, e.g., Peter Browe, *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste* (see former note); Bernhard Blumenkranz, *Les auteurs Chrétiens latin du Moyen Age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme* (Études juives 4. Paris: Mouton & Co., 1963); idem., *Juifs et Chrétiens: Patristique et Moyen Age* (VCS 70; London: Variorum Reprints, 1977); Schreckenberg I (see former note); Gilbert Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au moyen âge* (Patrimoine: Judaïsme; Paris: Cerf, 1990. English version: *The Christian Polemic against the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Jody Gladding. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

### 1. A Survey of some Characteristic Examples<sup>975</sup>

Peter Damian (c. 1000 – 1072/73) in his *Antilogus contra Judaeos* (PL 145:41–58) says he was asked by a churchman named Honestus to provide him with good arguments in debates with Jews who challenged his Christian faith. Damian did what Honestus asked, but only reluctantly, because he said other tasks were more important. His reason for nevertheless supplying Honestus with the requested material, was that silence from the Christian side when Jews attacked the Christian faith, could lead to doubt among Christians and increased self-confidence among the Jews.<sup>976</sup>

Peter of Blois (c. 1130 – c. 1211) wrote a similar work, *Contra perfidiam Judaeorum* (1090ies) (PL 207:825–70). The work was allegedly written after a request from a Christian who complained that he was unable to answer tricky arguments against his own faith that were put forward by the Jews with whom he had much contact. Peter advised the man as far as possible to avoid such discussions, because the Jews were destined to remain resistant against the Christian faith until their final conversion after “the full number of the Gentiles” had been saved (Romans 11:25). Ever since Augustine this verse had been the theological justification for lack of missionary initiatives regarding the Jews. Nevertheless, also Peter of Blois acceded the request and wrote a booklet that became quite influential.<sup>977</sup>

An Anonymous (eleventh cent.), *Tractatus adversus Judaeum* says that he has written for simple people and in simple faith, not for the sake of dialectical disputations. Jews should not be able to mock Christian ignorance, saying “Choose someone from among you who will engage in a one-on-one battle with us.”<sup>978</sup>

Gilbert Crispin<sup>979</sup> (c. 1055 – 1117) wrote a very influential *Disputatio Judei et Christiani* which “enjoyed a popularity out of all proportion to Gilbert’s other writings.”<sup>980</sup>

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<sup>975</sup> The most comprehensive review is still, I believe, Schreckenberg II. For very instructive analyses and comments, see David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages, in idem, *Prosecution, Polemic and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 177–198. There is also much relevant material in Anna Sapir Abulafia’s collection of general and special studies of this period, *Christians and Jews in Dispute: Disputational Literature and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)* (VCS 621; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1998). In Jewish literature from the same periode one finds the same phenomenon documented from the other side, see Schreckenberg II:9, table of contents, “V. Jüdische Stimmen zum Christentum und zur Situation der Juden im christlichen Mittelalter;” and Ram Ben-Shalom, “Between Official and Private Dispute: The Case of Christian Spain and Provence in the Late Middle Ages,” *AJS Review* 27 (2003), 23–72. Although Ben-Shalom mostly treats material from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he occasionally also comments on earlier material (e.g., pp. 47–52), and in general his comments on the different types of debates, ranging from public to the semi-public to strictly private, are of relevance for the material discussed by me in this chapter as well.

<sup>976</sup> Berger, “Mission to the Jews,” 182; Schreckenberg I:552–53.

<sup>977</sup> Berger, 182–83, see also Schreckenberg II:368–77 with a full review of the booklet’s argument.

<sup>978</sup> Berger, 183–84; quotation from PL 213:749, Berger’s trans.

<sup>979</sup> I have presented him briefly apropos Alfonsi’s *Dialogue*, see above, p. 149–50.

Not only was this work quoted and used as source by other anti-Jewish polemicists,<sup>981</sup> but even the Jewish polemicist Jacob ben Reuben translated parts of it into Hebrew in his anti-Christian work *Milhamot Ha-Shem* (*The Wars of the LORD*), written in Provence in 1170.<sup>982</sup>

Crispin begins his book by saying that some time ago a Jewish merchant active in Westminster, London, had visited him there for business purposes. This Jew, however, had taken the opportunity of presenting Gilbert with some Jewish arguments against crucial points in Christian doctrine. He was obviously well trained in Jewish learning, having been raised in Mainz. Crispin lets the reader understand that most Christians would have been unable to meet these arguments, therefore he has written down the Jew's thrusts and his own parries. There is little if any counterattack against Judaism in Crispin's book, he is satisfied to ward off the Jewish arguments against Christianity. The tone of the discussion is tempered and at times friendly and conciliatory. As very often when a debate was begun on Jewish initiative, the first theme discussed was the eternal validity of all the commandments in the Torah, not just some of them, as claimed by Christians.<sup>983</sup> Apart from that, they discussed the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine was clearly unacceptable for the Jew, who could only accept Jesus as a prophet, fully human and not God. He could not be the Messiah, however, since the universal peace promised in Isaiah 2:3 had never been seen. And God becoming man was an impossibility, both on rational grounds and on scriptural ones. Gilbert here counters with rational arguments from Anselm of Canterbury's *Cur Deus homo*, and with scriptural testimonies drawn from the traditional Christian arsenal.<sup>984</sup>

Scholars differ somewhat concerning how close Crispin's text reflects an oral debate, but those I have consulted, seem to agree that there is no doubt that in some form or other, the written text is based on one or several encounters with Jews in which Crispin had the

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<sup>980</sup> Anna Sapir Abulafia and G.R. Evans in their edition of Gilbert's works, *The Works of Gilbert Crispin Abbot of Westminster* (London: The British Academy/The Oxford University Press, 1986), xxvii. Their edition of the Latin text of the *Disputatio* is found on pp. 8–53. For a good German survey of its arguments, see Schreckenberg II:60–64.

<sup>981</sup> See Sapir Abulafia and Evans, *Works of Gilbert Crispin*, xxvii.

<sup>982</sup> See David Berger, "Gilbert Crispin, Alan of Lille, and Jacob ben Reuben: A Study in the Transmission of Medieval Polemic," in idem, *Prosecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Judaism and Jewish Life; Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2010), 227–44; here at 229–44.

<sup>983</sup> As I remarked above, pp. 340–41, when Jews began a debate with Christians, it was almost always the case that they began with this question; for them the most important.

<sup>984</sup> See Anna Sapir Abulafia, "Gilbert Crispin's Disputations: An Exercise in Hermeneutics," Essay VII in Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute: Disputational Literature and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)* (VCS 621; Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1998); and her essay VIII in the same volume, "An Attempt by Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster, at Rational Argument in the Jewish-Christian Debate," first published in *Studia Monastica* 26, Barcelona 1984, 55–74.

opportunity of sharpening the well-worn Christian counterarguments against their attacks, and that he finally perfected this in his book.<sup>985</sup>

The examples above could be multiplied by several others, but the general feature of them all is that the Jews, when encountering Christians for different purposes in everyday life, often took the opportunity to challenge Christians concerning points in their faith that seemed irrational or unbiblical from the Jewish point of view. As Berger points out, this seems to have happened more frequently during the eleventh and twelfth century, and he explains this by an increased Jewish confidence in this period that their faith was rational, over against the irrationality of Christian dogmas, especially the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of the Messiah.

Much of what was said above apropos Alfonsi and Ibn Daud concerning the role of rationalism, arguments *sola ratione* to bolster religious convictions originally based upon authoritative scriptures, is relevant in this context as well. The introduction of rational (mostly Aristotelian) arguments in theology proper, the doctrine of God, was an obvious hallmark of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and took place more or less in tandem among Christian and Jewish scholars. One notices an increased self-confidence on both sides that *their* brand of rational theology was superior to that of the other side. In the occasional, not infrequent, encounters between Jewish and Christian scholars, and even laypeople on both sides, one notices in these centuries something new, something Berger describes like this: “Christians ... faced a genuine, vigorous challenge from a proud and assertive Jewish community.”<sup>986</sup>

The salient points in what I have said regarding the “private” debates recorded and/or literarily embellished in writings from the eleventh-twelfth centuries can be stated like follows: (1) The debates were often begun by the Jewish debaters. They had much self-confidence and were eager to demonstrate that though they socially and politically were the underdogs in Christian society, their religion was superior to that of Christians. (2) These debates had no explicit missionary purpose; the debaters were satisfied when the superiority of their own religion had been proved. This goes for both sides. Even on the Christian side, converting the Jewish antagonist to Christianity may have lingered as a positive side-effect but was not the main motivation of the debater(s). (3) Some of the debaters were no doubt

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<sup>985</sup> See, first and foremost, Anna Sapir Abulafia’s extensive argument in her article “The *ars disputandi* of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster (1085–1117),” in *Ad fontes: Opstellingen aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. C. van de Kieft* (ed. C.M. Cappon et al.; Amsterdam: 1984), 139–152 (esp. pp. 141 and 151); reprinted as essay VI in Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute*. She is seconded by Berger, “Mission to the Jews,” 185 and Schreckenberg II:58–59.

<sup>986</sup> Berger, “Mission to the Jews,” 181. For a very instructive review of religious polemic, its background and *Sitz im Leben* during the period 1050–1150, see Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*. London: Routledge, 1995.

learned, but not always. Quite often laypeople had oral debates with representatives of the other camp, and having failed to respond adequately, asked for help in the form of written arguments from a more learned member of their own side. (4) In Crispin's case, the Jew with whom he had discussions was a merchant. Merchants were travelling people, and by profession they were good presenters and salesmen. They depended for their livelihood on their skills as communicators. It would be strange if not at least some of them found joy in using these skills in marketing their religion as well; not necessarily for converting anyone to their own religion, but for the pure joy of winning a discussion. Even in a giant scholar of Nahmanides' format, the satisfaction, not to say the pride, of having stood his ground well in the Barcelona Disputation is unmistakable, and so is the king's enjoyment of the debate as such, regardless of which side "won". (5) Nearly all the debates of this period took place in an environment in which such debates were warned against by religious authorities on both sides. Such debates should only take place between top-rate scholars. On the Jewish side, participants should know the rabbinic corpus and its normative interpretations of biblical halakah and haggadah. On the Christian side, one should know the official interpretations of the normative doctors of the Church.

After this review of the European scene in general, I will end with some notes on an African debate, taking place in the harbor of Ceuta in Morocco in 1179. When commenting on the Englishman Gilbert Crispin's debate with a Jewish merchant from Mainz, I briefly noted that meeting travelling merchants as debaters of their different religions should be no surprise. The debate in Ceuta is another example of this.

The anonymous writing containing what appears to be an eyewitness account of what happened, has only survived in one manuscript, and has remained unedited and unstudied until Ora Limor in 1994 made an excellent edition of it with introduction and copious notes.<sup>987</sup>

I shall have more to say about the Ceuta debate when commenting on the Majorca debate 1286 below; here I am satisfied in supplying some context relevant for understanding why the Ceuta debate of the twelfth century is both similar to and different from the European debates. First: The Christian debater is, once again, a merchant, this time an Italian from Genova. Unlike the mostly anonymous laypeople among the Christians who asked Christian

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<sup>987</sup> Ora Limor, *Die Disputationen zu Ceuta (1179) und Majorca (1286): Zwei antijüdische Schriften aus dem mittelalterlichen Genua* (Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 15; Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1994), Latin text pp. 137–166.

scholars to supply them with arguments to better stand their ground in arguments with Jews, the Christian debater at Ceuta is fully named and is a very able and self-confident debater himself, although he expressly calls himself a layman and a merchant.<sup>988</sup>

His name is Guglielmo Alfachino, and he is by no means a fictional person, but a well-documented one. Ora Limor has traced him in official documents by the public *notarius* of Genova from 1158 to 1205. These documents tell the story of Guglielmo's different visits to Ceuta, Sicily, Sardinia, Bougie (now in Algeria), "the Syrias," and Constantinople; even one to the Holy Land. But it seems Ceuta was his favorite place for business purposes. For no other destination are more visits recorded than for this port.<sup>989</sup> For 1179, the year of the debate there, as much as six contracts are recorded home in Genova. In Ceuta there was a Genovese as well as a Jewish *funduq* (quarter), inside which non-Muslims were allowed to follow their own religious practices and laws. Outside these quarters, the whole of Ceuta was under a very strict and suppressing Almohad regime at that time.

The antagonist of Guglielmo was a "very wise Jew, called Mo Abraham." Limor proposes that "Mo" is a corruption of "Moses."<sup>990</sup> Nothing more is known about him, but that he, too, was a merchant, is likely. The debate begins very abruptly by Abraham asking Guglielmo: "You say that the Messiah has come and was circumcised. So why are Christians not circumcised?"<sup>991</sup> Again, we see the Jew taking the initiative and beginning the discussion. In what follows, Guglielmo first explains that when the Messiah came, he made clear that for circumcised people as well as for uncircumcised, the essential thing is the inner circumcision of the heart. The carnal rite was only temporary and meant for Jewish men only; the inner circumcision conferred by the water of baptism is for both genders and universally offered. From this they go on to discuss the virgin birth and other "classics" of the Christian/Jewish debates. Guglielmo used arguments taken from Augustine, Jerome, and frequently Isidore of Seville. While Guglielmo was not an educated scholar, he was a lettered man, well read in the Latin Bible as well as the most famous Church Fathers. On a few occasions he introduces biblical texts that cannot be found in *adversus Iudaeos* literature prior to him, the most important being Proverbs 30:18–19 on which he comments extensively.<sup>992</sup>

In the end, Abraham declares himself convinced by Guglielmo's final argument (the traditional Christian one for the Messiah having come, Genesis 49:10) and asks for baptism.

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<sup>988</sup> Limor is right to emphasize this: the skilled Christian debater being a layman "is one of the unique features of this text" (*Die Disputationen*, 3: "einer der originellen Züge dieser Text").

<sup>989</sup> See *Die Disputationen*, 6, note 12.

<sup>990</sup> *Die Disputationen*, 3.

<sup>991</sup> Latin text, *Die Disputationen*, 137, my translation.

<sup>992</sup> *Die Disputationen*, 160–64. This exposition recurs, often *verbatim*, in the Majorca disputation.

Guglielmo says two presbyters in the local Church are ready for the occasion, but Abraham points out the obvious fact that under Almohad rule, this would put all involved under the threat of capital punishment. However, since a Genovese ship bound for Jerusalem is now at bay in Ceuta, Abraham proposes that he enter this ship with his closest relatives, and then, going to the Holy Land, he can be baptized in the river Jordan on the very same spot where Jesus himself was baptized. And just as Abraham wanted, so it came to pass.

Having pointed out similarities as well as differences regarding the European debates compared with this African one, I think the most important difference is yet to be noted: While the European ones are not of an expressly missionary character, rather being defensive, to ward off Jewish attacks, this is not the case with the debate in Ceuta. It is with good reason Ora Limor speaks of the Genovese merchants as “missionary merchants.” This is even more pronounced in the next merchant from Genova that we shall meet as an eager missionary in the debate on Majorca a little more than hundred years later, Inghetto Contardo.

## 2. Merchant Inghetto Contardo of Genova Debates Jewish Colleagues at Majorca 1286<sup>993</sup>

Before I turn to a paraphrase of the written account of the Majorca disputation, with some comments interjected in the main text and also in the footnotes, I will briefly present some relevant data concerning its place, time, and participants.

As we have seen already, Jaime I took control of Majorca in 1230, as part of his project to create a maritime “empire” in the Mediterranean, beginning from Barcelona on the mainland.<sup>994</sup> With the king’s Mediterranean conquests, Barcelona became a main trading center well connected by sea with Genova in Italy, Sicily in the southeast, Bougie on the

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<sup>993</sup> Our only source for this disputation is the Latin writing *Disputatio contra judeos*, masterfully edited by Ora Limor, *The Disputation of Majorca 1286: A Critical Edition and Introduction* (Hebrew, English summary of the Introduction) (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Publications of the School of Graduate Studies, The Hebrew University, 1985); and again in Limor, *Die Disputationen zu Ceuta (1179) und Majorca (1286): Zwei antijüdische Schriften aus dem mittelalterlichen Genua* (Monumenta Germaniae Historica 15; Munich: MHG, 1994), 169–300. I refer to the latter with page number(s) when quoting or paraphrasing the text. There is a helpful French translation, and another edition of the Latin text, with informative Introduction and notes in Gilbert Dahan, *Inghetto Contardo, DISPVTATIO CONTRA IVDEOS Controverse avec les juifs: Introduction, édition critique et traduction* (Auteurs latins du moyen âge; Paris: Les belles lettres, 1993). See also Limor’s two instructive articles, “Missionary Merchants: Three Medieval Anti-Jewish Works from Genova,” *Journal of Medieval History* 17 (1991), 35–51; “Polemical Varieties: Religious Disputations in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Spain,” *Iberia Judaica* 2 (2010), 55–79.

<sup>994</sup> See Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, “The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire 1229–1327,” *The English Historical Review, Supplement* 8 (1975), iii–iv and 1–54. Reprinted as Essay II in Hillgarth, *Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages: Studies in Political and Intellectual History* (VCS 764; Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003); and Yom Tov Assis, “The Jews of Barcelona in Maritime Trade with the East,” in *The Jew in Medieval Iberia 1100–1500* (ed. Jonathan Ray; Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), 180–226.

North African Coast, now Algeria, and Ceuta in Morocco. In the middle of this rough circle of coastal hubs of trade we find Majorca, then the name of the island as well as the city (that since the seventeenth century has been called Palma). On Majorca, traders, and seafaring merchants of all three faiths became the economically dominating factor, while Jewish landowners also were a significant element. The city of Majorca was as important to Christian merchants from Genova as it was to Jewish merchants from Barcelona. Jaime I had granted the Jews on Majorca several privileges, none of them being recalled by his son and successor as king of Majorca, Jaime II (1276–1311).<sup>995</sup>

One of the privileges throws interesting light on the challenges and problems that came with three-faith *convivencia* – in this case on Majorca. Jewish landowners on the island, employing Muslim slaves to till their fields, had complained to the king that Christian proselytizing among these slaves resulted in loss of manpower when the slaves became Christians, because in that case they could no longer serve a Jewish master. In 1252 the king responded with an order that Muslim slaves who were baptized at any other time than Easter, Whitsunday, or Christmas should pay a big sum of money to the local royal bailiff [administrator]. In 1269 the king added that if a Muslim slave entered a church and requested baptism, he should be made to wait several days in the church before receiving the sacrament. The purpose of this delay was probably to allow the person to reconsider, or to negotiate with his master. A slave who defied these obstacles and was in fact baptized, was not to be set free, but became crown property – in other words: his status as slave was not changed.<sup>996</sup>

Also, ecclesiastical law could contain clauses that prevented conversions primarily motivated by material or other advantages. In this case, however, the motive behind the king's order was not religious at all. He, as a Christian king, was out to help the Jews keep their Muslim slaves from converting to Christianity! As Christians, they would become useless to their Jewish masters, and since Jewish landowners were crucial to the king's reconquest program, the political and economic interests of the Jews coincided with those of the king. This is one concrete example of a general trend that can be observed all through the history of the Jews and other religious minorities: How kings of the dominant religion treated religious minorities, depended in very large measure on how useful, not to say indispensable, the minorities were for the king. This constant backdrop for *convivencia* should never be

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<sup>995</sup> For this and the following, see Jocelyn Nigel Hillgarth, "Sources for the History of the Jews of Majorca," Essay XII in Hillgarth, *Spain and the Mediterranean in the Later Middle Ages: Studies in Political and Intellectual History* (VCS 764; Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).

<sup>996</sup> Baer, *History* I: 141–42.



forgotten. In the period which now concerns us, the Jews of Majorca probably felt they were living well protected by the Aragonese kings.

As has been shown, we meet Jews in the role of landowners as well as merchants on Majorca, and it is from the latter group as well as from the group of Christian merchants that the participants as well as the audience of the disputation on Majorca come. In other words, what we miss in the Majorca disputation is the participation of religious experts, learned theologians or rabbis. True, one of the Jewish spokesmen is called Master, another Rabbi, but their performance in the debate does not indicate top-rate learning. None of the Jewish participants was even near the status and prestige of someone like Nachmanides 23 years earlier in Barcelona.<sup>997</sup> Everything indicates that the Jewish participants and audience belonged to the community of merchants on the island. And it is expressly stated that at least some of them came from Barcelona. So, this is a debate between Jewish merchants from Catalonia and a Christian merchant from Italy.

This “lay” character of the whole event is what Ora Limor finds so interesting and fascinating about the Majorca event, and I agree fully.<sup>998</sup> Merchants, trained negotiators and born communicators, engaged in religious questions in a more down to earth and lively way than learned experts in official positions. “Arguments easy to understand, a graphic and vivid narrative with keen observations of many details of life typical of a harbor city, the measured tone of the debate itself – not to be taken for granted in a polemical work like this, – all of this makes the disputation on Majorca pleasantly different from other works in its genre.”<sup>999</sup> As we shall see, Inghetto Contardo’s status as a non-expert in theology, being only a Christian merchant, a layman, is something he capitalizes upon several times during the debate.

Who was he? Ora Limor has traced him, his dealings, and his family – three generations and more – in surprising detail, based upon the protocols of the public *notarii* of Genova.<sup>1000</sup> He belonged to one of the most prominent families in the city; several of his nearest relatives had offices in the Church and in the city’s administrative apparatus. On one occasion, Inghetto was arrested for refusing to swear an oath of allegiance to the French king while serving as a Genovese consul in the French city of Nimes. This immediately became a top-level political conflict between the independent republic Genova on the one hand, and the

<sup>997</sup> See Dahan, *Inghetto Contardo*, 14–16.

<sup>998</sup> See Limor, “Missionary Merchants,” 49 and “Polemical Varieties,” 78–79.

<sup>999</sup> Limor, *Die Disputationen*, 29, my translation.

<sup>1000</sup> *Die Disputationen*, 19–27. These pages read almost like a dense and solidly documented personal biography and family history of a 13<sup>th</sup> cent. otherwise forgotten individual.

French king and his appointed officer in Nimes on the other. Since neither party gave in, the Republic of Genova closed its port for trade for the other part, a severe retaliation given the significance of the Genovese port for trade on the Mediterranean. To quote Limor, “from all this one may conclude that Inghetto belonged to the uppermost leadership of Genova, the trade aristocracy, whose words really counted in the city.”<sup>1001</sup>

One of his closest relatives, possibly his brother, was a cleric. Limor suggests that this could explain Inghetto’s remarkable familiarity with the Vulgate and its texts, and his considerable mastery of traditional anti-Jewish arguments of the Christian Fathers of the Early and the Medieval Church. One might also suggest that perhaps such a person was the ideal author of the written *Disputatio*. It is written in Latin, but not the polished Latin of trained scholars. Italian words often intrude, and the orthography and grammar of the Latin are not up to standard. With Limor, against Dahan, I assume Inghetto was not the author of the Latin text himself; it was rather written by some close associate, perhaps the mentioned cleric in his nearest family. I will return to this question in my comments on the written debate.

Inghetto was no doubt a more than averagely educated man; he could no doubt read and write. But for his knowledge of Jewish things, he repeatedly referred to his many discussions with Jews. In fact, not a little of what he knew about Jewish practices, points of view, and anti-Christian arguments, seems derived from direct oral contact with Jews.

This does not mean, however, that he was totally without Jewish knowledge gleaned from written Christian sources. In a category by itself I should mention the written report of the disputation of Ceuta in 1179 C.E. (see above). Some passages of the Majorca Disputation are lifted *verbatim* or almost so from this earlier dispute.

The Majorca disputation is more than three times longer than the Ceuta dispute and is the more interesting of the two. If one assumes that Inghetto in 1286 was well acquainted with the 1179 disputation of his Genovese colleague Guglielmo, and that the Majorca disputation was recorded in writing by someone close to Inghetto, present at the event, relying on his memory or notes jotted down during the dispute, if so, it stands to reason that he would also lean on the earlier writing whenever Inghetto during his debate had borrowed arguments from that work. This, I think, would most easily explain the shape of both works and also the near-identical passages in them.<sup>1002</sup>

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<sup>1001</sup> *Die Disputationen*, 22, my translation.

<sup>1002</sup> I here follow Limor, while Dahan seems to take for granted that Inghetto himself is the author of the Majorca *Disputation*. Dahan seems unaware of the Ceuta document.

Be that as it may; there is no doubt about the following: The Majorca disputation, taking place 23 years after the disputation at Barcelona, has an entirely different atmosphere than its more famous predecessor at Barcelona. The latter debate was known to, and is mentioned by, the Majorca disputants. But each party admits that they are unaware of its arguments. This is substantiated by the text itself: The new method of dispute used in Barcelona, viz. using passages from rabbinic literature to authenticate the Messiahship of Jesus, is entirely unknown to the Majorca disputants. Inghetto argues only from Scriptural quotes, which he interprets according to patristic or early medieval tradition, every now and then adding some new interpretations according to the same methods – possibly being original and his own. This also speaks for basic authenticity; not a later fiction by a learned theological author who was fully updated on the present state-of-the-art Jewish/Christian dialogue.

In my footnotes, I will have more to say on this and other relevant issues as I now proceed to summarize the Majorca disputation according to the written record of it.

The scenes of the debate, which took place during a few days in early May 1286, was first the *loggia* of the Genovese merchants in Majorca, then the home of the Jew Moses David, then the harbor of Majorca, then a walk on the road, then a spice shop, and finally the lodging of Inghetto Contardo.

Here is how the debate began and proceeded, according to the *Disputatio*.<sup>1003</sup>

#### A Paraphrase of the *Disputatio*

*Prelude* (scene: the Genovese *loggia* in the harbor, date: 1 May 1286)<sup>1004</sup>

Some Christian merchants are gathered in the Genovese *loggia* when a local Jew, only called “Rabbi”, and later simply “the Jew”, enters and taunts them, saying that they eat food prohibited in the Torah. The merchants have no answer but say that the Jew only dares to raise such questions in the absence of Inghetto Contardo. The Jew had on an earlier occasion debated with Inghetto and been defeated. Now Inghetto unexpectedly enters the scene, and the debate begins in earnest.

<sup>1003</sup> The subdivisions of the document by way of subheadings are my own, inspired by Limor’s remarks in her *Einleitung* pp. 13–14, but also by Dahan’s system of main divisions indicated by Roman numbers and subdivisions by Arabic numbers.

<sup>1004</sup> The precise date of the beginning of the debate, “the feast of the apostles Philip and James, viz. the first day of May,” is the only day explicitly given a date; the day’s memorial function for the two apostles also explicitly emphasized. All the other, succeeding days of debate are loosely dated by words like “the next Sunday,” “the Sunday after that,” etc. The real purpose of dating the first day so carefully, is only revealed towards the end of the story of Astruc Isaiah’s conversion, see below, pp. 399–400.

*I. The first discussion* (scene and date as above)

1. The first issue raised by the ‘Rabbi’ is why Christians eat food prohibited by the Law: one should not eat the meat of all animals that do not both ruminant and have cleft hoofs, birds with curved claws (= birds of prey), fish without fins and scales (Lev 11:2–19). Inghetto counters that in the beginning God gave the first humans permission to eat all food, except the fruits of the tree of knowledge, accordingly the prohibition against non-ruminating animals and those that do not have divided hoofs should be taken in a spiritual, not carnal sense. And likewise with the prohibition of birds of prey and ‘naked’ fish – all these are metaphors for different kinds of evil men. The point of the Law is: avoid such people and their vices. You Jews, for example, do not *ruminant* on the words of the Law and do not know how to *divide* between those parts of it that are to be taken literally and those that have a spiritual sense. A clear proof that scripture is sometimes to be taken in a non-literal sense is the allegory of the trees in Judges 9:8–15. This text is not about literal trees, but about the Israelites and their choice of Abimelech to be their king.

If biblical texts about inanimate trees are to be understood allegorically, how much more texts speaking about animals with mental capacities. For example, the verb ruminant has the allegorical sense of dividing, discerning.<sup>1005</sup> Animals ruminant in order to separate good nourishment from bad; in the same way human beings are to ruminant in order to separate good from bad.<sup>1006</sup> Inghetto allegorizes the other Leviticus rulings on clean and unclean animals in a similar way.<sup>1007</sup> The Jews, he says, take these rulings in a carnal and unspiritual way, therefore they are despised and enslaved by all other nations.

2. The Jew says that on the contrary, God declares his eternal love for Israel in Jeremiah 32:41–43 and Ezekiel 34:12–13 and promises them they will again be blissfully settled in their land. Inghetto counters that that Jeremiah as well as Ezekiel were clearly speaking to the

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<sup>1005</sup> Inghetto claims that this is so in the Hebrew language, while it is only true in biblical and Christian Latin.

<sup>1006</sup> Dahan (94–95, notes 9 and 10) points out that Inghetto seems to follow Raoul de Flay (latter half of 12<sup>th</sup> century), *In Leviticum* VIII.1 quite closely here. But Dahan did not compare the Majorca disputation report with the Ceuta disputation, and the latter is sufficient source to explain Inghetto’s argument. See Limor, *Die Disputationen*, 149 with note 62. Inghetto’s dependence on Raoul de Flay is therefore probably indirect, via the Ceuta report.

<sup>1007</sup> For details on possible sources, see Dahan 97–99, notes 11–13; and Limor 149–50, note 63. Here also the Ceuta report seems to be the immediate source. This tradition of allegorizing the Leviticus rulings on animals clean and unclean for food goes all the way back to the Jewish Greek writings of the *Epistle of Aristides* and Philo, echoed by many Christian writings, beginning with the *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. 130 C.E.) chapter 10. Several of Barnabas’ examples are remarkably close to Inghetto’s.

Jewish refugees of the Babylonian exile under Nebuchadnezzar, and of the restoration that took place under Ezra and Nehemiah. Therefore, the Jews of Inghetto's days have no right to appropriate such restoration prophecies to themselves. It was the Jews who returned from Babylon under Cyrus who resettled the land and rebuilt the temple. – The Jew concedes this point.<sup>1008</sup>

Inghetto now challenges the Jew to point out one prophecy in which a new restoration for the Jewish people is prophesied *after* the one under Cyrus. Implying that the Jew can find no such prophecy, Inghetto alludes to the source of living water for all peoples that is prophesied in Zechariah 13:1 and Ezekiel 47:1. This well of living water is no other than Jesus.

Comment: To a considerable degree, these two passages embody the basic argument of Inghetto, and he returns to this fundamental point repeatedly, sometimes referring to it as “the principle of the two ages.” All concrete prophecies speaking about a material restoration for Israel in the earthly land of Israel and the earthly city of Jerusalem, were fulfilled to the letter during the restoration after the Babylonian exile. All the prophecies speaking of a restoration of a spiritual nature, comprising not only Israel but all the Gentiles as well, have been gradually fulfilled, beginning with the messianic ministry of Jesus on this earth, and increasingly realized since his session at the right hand of the Father in heaven, to be finally fulfilled at his second coming. – At Barcelona, Nahmanides repeatedly said the prophecies about the Messiah's coming were fundamental to the whole debate, and the Christians should admit that none of the important promises for the days of the Messiah had been realized since the time of Jesus. Paul Christian's response had been of an exegetical nature, rather than historical. Inghetto, on the other hand, took an approach more tuned to the historical objection: all the prophecies that clearly talked about a restoration for the Jewish people on this earth had in fact been fulfilled already: in the restoration that took place under Cyrus, after the return from the Babylonian exile. They were not to be recycled for a second fulfilment of the same kind. One could say, perhaps, that Inghetto addressed the same fundamental point as was brought forward at Barcelona – has the Messiah come or not? – but with a different twist: Is there really a second restoration, as material and this-worldly as the first, to be expected for the Jews? If yes, Jesus was not the Messiah; if no, Jesus could well be the Messiah since the messianic restoration according to the prophecies should be of a different kind. It seems to me that Inghetto's approach here was his own, and that the Jewish antagonists were not as well prepared for it as they had been, for example, regarding the arguments brought forward by Paul Christian at the Barcelona and Paris disputations. In a way, Inghetto, by placing the historical question of fulfilled or not fulfilled prophecies at the very beginning, and as the most fundamental question, met the Jewish antagonists on their own ground.

The brief statement of Inghetto elicits a dramatic exchange of promises: The Jew says that if Inghetto can prove what he had said from indubitable prophecies, he will become a Christian and accept baptism. Inghetto answers in the same vein: If you can prove from a single prophecy that the Jews will rebuild Jerusalem, I will become a Jew and have myself circumcised!

It is as if the real disputation begins at this point, and the Jew asks who the arbiter should be so that a third part can declare the winner. Inghetto asks if a learned Jew in the

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<sup>1008</sup> This strategy of referring all “restoration” prophecies speaking of a *concrete, material restoration* to the restoration that took place after the end of the Babylonian exile, is fundamental in Inghetto's whole argument. Interestingly, Nahmanides followed the same strategy when discussing ‘the prince’ of Daniel 9:25: this was Zerubbabel, not the future Messiah (*Vikuah*, passages 59–61, and see my notes to these passages above).

neighborhood is available for this role, and the Jew says yes, we have here a learned Aragonese sage who is commonly regarded as the most learned Jew in all of Spain. Inghetto: Then he will be our arbiter. They agree that the Jew should lead them to this sage.

*II. The second discussion:* (scene: the house of Moses David, date: the same day)

*First theme: Zechariah's prophecy about the restoration of Jerusalem*

The sage's name was Moses David, claiming to be a descendant of King David. Arriving at his house, the Jew informs Moses David about Inghetto's promise to convert to Judaism if it can be proved that Scripture predicts a second, still future, restoration of Jerusalem by the Jews. Moses David, from now on called "The Master of the Jews" or simply "The Master", says: I will advise strongly against such a promise, since conversion to Judaism is punished by death. Inghetto: Don't worry about my death! If you can convince me that the Messiah has not yet come, I will become a Jew, because adhering to the truth and saving my soul are more important to me than my life.<sup>1009</sup> The Master: Don't say that. It is not through such exchanges of words that you become a Jew, or we become Christians. But I will clearly demonstrate for you what you ask for. – He then quotes Jeremiah 32:43: "They shall [again] possess fields in that land." The Jew (with whom Inghetto had debated formerly), says that this Scripture had already been debated, and Inghetto repeats that this and other restoration prophecies were said during the Babylonian exile and hence referred to the postexilic restoration of those times.

The Master, Moses David, now leaves the role of arbiter altogether and takes over the defense of the Jewish point of view. He quotes Zechariah 8:3–9, in which God promises a splendid future restoration of Jerusalem and a blissful peace there for his people. Zechariah being among the latest prophets, this must be about a still future restoration, not the one after the Babylonian exile. Inghetto counters that Zechariah was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah, and therefore prophesied before, not after the first restoration. This is clearly shown only a few verses after the text quoted by the Master, viz. in Zechariah 8:14–15. Here God says that he will restore Jerusalem "in these days", meaning in the days of the prophet

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<sup>1009</sup> It is of some interest to compare the rabbi's warning against converting to Judaism with the following passage in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Yebamot*: "Our Rabbis taught: If at the present time a man desires to become a proselyte [to Judaism], he is to be addressed as follows: 'What reason have you for desiring to become a proselyte; do you not know that Israel at the present time are persecuted and oppressed, despised, harassed and overcome by afflictions'? If he replies, 'I know and yet am unworthy [of the privilege of membership of Israel]', he is accepted forthwith, and is given instruction in some of the minor and some of the major commandments' (*b. Yebamot 47a*, Soncino translation). If Inghetto's Jewish antagonist had not warned him of the severe consequences of becoming a Jew, he would have disobeyed this talmudic law.

Zechariah. –The Jews present concede this point and say no more about it. But they ask for the discussion of Zechariah’s prophecies to be continued.

The Master: Zechariah affirms that on the last day a source of living water will be opened in Jerusalem, after which there will be no more prophecies (Zech 13:1–3; 14:8). Inghetto turns to his former interlocutor, the “rabbi”, and asks: Does it not seem to you that your Master now alluded to the very same passage I explained for you in the *loggia* earlier? If you are convinced that the source of living water is Christ [as I explained], keep your promise [of becoming a Christian]! – Inghetto now asks the Jews to hand him the book of the prophets [so that the exact wording of the passage in question, Zech 13:1–3, can be studied]. Inghetto reads Zechariah 13:1–6 and continues:<sup>1010</sup> There is not, and has never been, a living source in Jerusalem, accordingly, this text speaks about the Messiah – he is the life-giving source (of water).<sup>1011</sup> According to verse 1 in this prophecy, the source will be available for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem “for cleansing of the sinner and the menstruating woman” (*in ablucione peccatoris et menstruate*). This clearly points to the baptism for forgiveness of sins instituted by Jesus. Inghetto has an interesting comment here concerning why the text singles out women as receivers of the purifying water:

[Christ] is the true source for all those who purify themselves in him, namely those who undergo holy baptism. You Jews know well that *women are not circumcised*. Accordingly, it is and was necessary that something common to all, women as well as males, should be the means by which the whole human race was saved.<sup>1012</sup>

This is a very dense formulation of an argument for Christian baptism versus Jewish circumcision that is not all too often met with in Christian *adversus Ioudaeos* literature prior to Inghetto. Jewish circumcision, the Jewish prefiguration of baptism, was for males only; the Christian fulfilment of this Old Testament type, baptism, is for females as well as males. Zechariah’s prophecy of the menstruating woman being cleansed by purifying and life-giving water was a clear indication of this. In its wording, Inghetto’s argument echoes the

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<sup>1010</sup> Later in the debate, Inghetto clearly states that he does not understand Hebrew, so he requires the debate to be based on the Latin Bible. It is therefore difficult to understand the text at this point since the Jewish Bible being given Inghetto would be a Hebrew Bible that he could not read from. Dahan suggests that the text is somewhat elliptic at this point and should be expanded to read: [the Master] began to read and [Inghetto] said to the Jews... (Dahan, 114, note 25).

<sup>1011</sup> In Zech 13:1 the source is only said to be “opened”; the “living water” stems from Zech 14:8 and was alluded to by the Master in his paraphrase of the two prophecies earlier. Inghetto, like the Master, takes for granted that the two texts in Zechariah speak about the same source.

<sup>1012</sup> Limor, *Die Disputationen*, 186:5–9; Dahan, *Inghetto Contardo*, 117.

*Disputation at Ceuta* in part *verbatim* (italics in the quote above), but there, the scripture invoked for Christian baptism is not Zechariah 13:1, but Psalm 51:9.

The Jews continue the discussion of the Zechariah quote by referring to 13:5 and 3: “I am not a prophet ... and my parents curse me;” words said by the false prophets in admission of their deceit. These words, the Jews say, are applicable to the Franciscans and Dominicans, who preach and feign piety but in secret fornicate and steal. Not so, says Inghetto, these preachers do not call themselves prophets, but they call themselves sinners, addressing God in such words: “We, being sinners, beseech You: Hear us!” And if anyone appears and claims: “The Lord has said to me: ....,” learned and pious Christians will consider him a deranged and mad liar and will accord him no credence.

The Jews: You contradict yourself, because you call such sinners saintly people. One cannot be both. Inghetto: There is no contradiction, because precisely pious and saintly people will not boast about being such when they address God. Quite the contrary: The more saintly a person is, the more will he call himself a sinner before God. We see this during mass, when the celebrating priest says: “I, a sinner, confess to God, to all the holy ones, and to you, my brother, my sins.” And no saintly person will pretend to be a prophet but will rather be called a peasant who tills the field, the most humble of all occupations (like the prophet in Zechariah 13:5).

Inghetto continues: You Jews, learned and wise, tell me the truth about the following verse (Zech 13:6): “How come these wounds in the middle of your hands?” “I was wounded with these wounds in the house of those who loved me.”<sup>1013</sup> This clearly refers to Christ who descended to save his people Israel. The Jews, viz. the Pharisees and the Priests, crucified him, piercing his hands and feet with nails, and opening his side with a spear. This was also testified by David (in Psalm 22:17–18): “They pierced my hands and feet and counted all my bones.” Neither David nor Zechariah was ever wounded in this way. Accordingly, these prophecies were spoken as if by the person of the Messiah himself, that is, Jesus Christ, and were fulfilled on him. Likewise, the following applies to him (Zech 13:2): “I dispersed the names of the idols from the earth.” Christ made this happen. He and his apostles preached to the Gentiles and made them believers, so that they built churches after having destroyed their idols. In their churches they now adore the true God alone. True, some of the Gentiles [the Muslims] mix some poison into their nourishment – when addressing God, they say “*Allahu akbar* [which is true], *Mohammad rasul Allah* [M. is Allah’s messenger; not true],” but even

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<sup>1013</sup> The text here follows roughly the Vulgate, which is different from the Hebrew (where the chest rather than the hands is wounded).



so, they recognize that there is only one God, great and almighty. But I agree with you Jews: Mohammad was an impostor, not a prophet.

The Jews object that idolatry is not universally abandoned, in India there are still idolaters.<sup>1014</sup> Inghetto: True, I have also been told that idols still exist in India, but they stem from the Pagan period, and are no longer worshipped as deities, since the Indians now hail monotheism. And even though a few idolaters might remain, all idolatry will vanish when the Lord comes in judgement, Isaiah 2:20.

*Second theme: How can the sinner David's sayings about himself be prophecies applicable to a divine, sinless Messiah?*

Since Inghetto had used David's sayings in Psalm 22 as predictions of the Messiah, the Jews now pick him up on this point and ask: When David says in Psalm 22:7 that he is "a worm and not a human, scorned by men and despised by the people," he must clearly be speaking about himself during persecution; not – as you say – about the Messiah, who in his coming will suffer no one to have dominion over him. Inghetto: In saying "like a worm", the virginal conception of Messiah Jesus is intimated, since a worm is generated not from worm semen, but from humid earth.<sup>1015</sup> Jesus Christ was generated from Mary without male semen, just like the worm from humid earth, without a father's semen.

The Jews now bring in Psalm 22:2: "Far from (my) salvation are the words of my wrongdoing."<sup>1016</sup> How can a divine Messiah sin? Do you perhaps think that God can do everything? Inghetto: Everything is possible for God. The Jews: No, even God cannot do everything. Inghetto: Tell me what he cannot do.<sup>1017</sup> The Jews: Two things, he cannot sin, and he cannot create a second God besides himself.<sup>1018</sup> Inghetto: I still hold that God can do everything, but tell me: can a righteous person sin? The Jews: There was never a person so righteous that he never sinned. Inghetto: [From a logical point of view,] when a righteous

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<sup>1014</sup> Dahan comments that this does not seem a literary topic, but rather may originate from personal experience of Genovese traders visiting India. See Dahan, *Inghetto Contardo*, 124–25, note 37.

<sup>1015</sup> A widespread notion at the time, see Dahan, *Inghetto Contardo*, 126, note 41; and used as testimony of the virgin birth of Christ in commentaries on this verse since Augustin, Dahan, 127, note 42, Limor, *Die Disputationen*, 191–92, note 61.

<sup>1016</sup> This is the version of this verse found in the Septuagint and the Vulgate, in the Hebrew no mention of wrongdoing.

<sup>1017</sup> The intricate question of possible limits of God's omnipotence was a very live one in the High Middle Ages. One of the early treatments of the question was Peter Damian's *De divina omnipotentia*, 1067, Inghetto may have known his points of view, directly or indirectly. Damian was one of his medieval mentors, see Limor, 29; 32–33.

<sup>1018</sup> The Jews here make explicit their argument against Inghetto: The (Vulgate) text of Psalm 22:2 creates two unsolvable problems if spoken by a divine Messiah: (1) God can sin, and (2) there is a second divinity beside the Creator.

person sins, he is no longer righteous. [But you are right,] sin is foreign to God, and he who sins, is removed from God's presence, like the angels who sinned.<sup>1019</sup> The Jews: How, then, do you understand the Messiah's "words of my wrongdoing"?

Inghetto answers with the following very densely stated argument:

You know that God in the beginning, when he created man, said: "Let us make man as our *image* and *likeness*." You can here recognize that God is triune with regard to persons, when he says, "let us make." He uses the plural here and says: "as our image and likeness," which means (1) the image of the Father and the Holy Spirit. For truly, the (human) *soul*, being spirit, is the *image* of God. But (2) the *flesh* [of humans] is the *likeness* of the Son, for only the person of the Son assumed flesh. And it was *his* likeness [viz. man], who sinned, since it was Adam's gluttonous mouth that sinned when it ate the forbidden fruit. In that case, it was the *flesh* that sinned, the flesh being God's Son's likeness. It was because of this sin that the Son of God assumed our human nature and suffered when dying on the cross, in order to delete that sin, and to open the gate of the heavenly kingdom for all those who believe in him. It was for this reason the prophet Isaiah said: "O that you would tear open the heavens and descend" [Isa 64:1] to liberate us.<sup>1020</sup>

Comment: As Ora Limor remarks, this passage is without precedent in earlier Christian literature, and Dahan rightly says that Inghetto's formula, "the likeness of God's Son, man's flesh, sinned," stretches orthodoxy to its limits.<sup>1021</sup> It seems to me that Inghetto is alluding to Phil 2:6–7: Jesus Christ, being the image (*forma*) of God, appeared [on earth] as the likeness (*similitudo*) of men. Only, Inghetto inverts the relation between original and likeness. Men's flesh is the likeness of the flesh that the Son of God assumed.

This rather sophisticated passage does not look like something that Inghetto formulated at the top of his head during a live conversation, especially when one considers that the problem it addresses only arises in the Vulgate version of Psalm 22:2, not in the Hebrew. It would rather seem that a well-prepared answer to a problem in Psalm 22 – possibly detected by Inghetto himself when studying the Vulgate text – has been worked into the debate report at this point. It could suggest that the author of the text worked closely together with Inghetto while writing it, or that he had access to written notes from Inghetto. Very likely, we get a glimpse of Inghetto the original and creative interpreter in this passage.

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<sup>1019</sup> Inghetto does not explain the apparent contradiction here between his two statements: (1) God can do everything, and (2) God has nothing to do with sin. In general, his treatment of the omnipotence question has nothing of the sophistication already shown in Damian's treatise, and in several others after him. Damian's solution is basically that of Augustine: God can do all things, but evil is no thing, but rather lack of being. See the full treatment in Irven Michael Resnick, *Divine Power and Possibility in St. Peter Damian's De Divina Omnipotentia* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 31; Leiden: Brill 1992).

<sup>1020</sup> Limor, 193–94; Dahan 131; my translation.

<sup>1021</sup> Limor, 194, note 66; Dahan, 131, note 47.

In the text, the Jews did not comment on this last passage, but since Inghetto had referred to the virgin birth of Jesus in his exposition of Psalm 22, they now picked him up on this question.

*Third theme: The Virgin birth of Jesus*

The Jews: How can Isaiah 7:14, speaking about a young woman (*iuvencula*) giving birth to a son, apply to your Christ, when the prophecy clearly was addressed to king Achaz, being besieged by the Syrian king. As was said in the prophecy, the siege was lifted when a son was born to Achaz. Inghetto: Is it not true that the Hebrew word is *almah*, and that this means virgin, not young woman? The Jews confirm this.<sup>1022</sup>

Closely following patristic tradition, above all Jerome, Inghetto now argues that if Emmanuel was the son of Achaz, born after intercourse between the king and his wife, what was then the *sign* or *miracle*, either from heaven or hell, promised by the prophet (Isa 7:11)? An intact virgin giving birth, however, that is a sign and a miracle! Mary conceived not by human semen, but by the Holy Spirit. Even Moses knew this would happen. In Leviticus 12:2 he says: “A woman, if, having received semen, she bears a male child, shall be unclean for seven days...” The seemingly superfluous addition of “having received semen” was due to Moses knowing that *one* virgin, the mother of the Messiah, would bear without male semen. She would therefore also not be unclean.<sup>1023</sup> There is also another testimony concerning this in Isaiah 45:8. Here rain from heaven is said to make the earth open itself and bring forth her savior. This must be understood allegorically and happened when Mary brought forth the only one who is rightfully called the savior of the world.<sup>1024</sup>

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<sup>1022</sup> This is somewhat surprising, since the meaning of *almah* traditionally had been the very bone of contention between Jews and Christians. Jerome says the Jews insisted on *iuvencula* or *puella* being the correct translation, and then argues extensively for *virgo* being the right one. In his *Commentary on Isaiah* Jerome says that he has not been able to recall a single text in which ‘*almah* refers to a married woman. As far as he can tell, the exact meaning of ‘*almah* is a young virgin ready for marriage (she is not below or above this age). (*Comm. Isa.* III.7.14, CCSL 73:104). Inghetto seems to depend on Jerome or some other Christian mediating Jerome’s arguments and was not aware of any Jewish argument invalidating Jerome’s. In Alfonsi’s *Dialogue, Titulus 7*, the dependence upon Jerome is obvious, and no Jewish counterargument is reported. See on this above, pp. 143–144, and Skarsaune, “Jewish and Christian Interpretations of Messianic Texts in the Book of Isaiah as Jewish/Christian Dialogue – from Matthew to the Rabbis,” in *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok 77* (2012), 25–45; esp. 27–37.

<sup>1023</sup> The argument had become traditional in Inghetto’s time and was to be found in the *Glossa ordinaria* ad loc., see Dahan, 134, note 50. Dahan did not mention the close parallel to be found in the Disputation at Ceuta, which seems to underlie the whole passage on Lev 12:2. See Limor, 195–96 and notes.

<sup>1024</sup> This use of Isa 45:8 was also traditional since Jerome, see for medieval references Dahan, 134, note 51 and Limor, 196, note 76.

*Fourth theme: the divinity of the Messiah*

After this remarkably brief discussion about Isaiah 7:14, the Jews pose a new question: Where in Scripture is the Messiah said to be God? Inghetto: See Isaiah 9:6–7. Among the names of the Messiah we find Admirable Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Father of the World to Come, and among his accomplishments are peace without end, consolidation of David’s throne and reign from now on and eternally. So, does not this text call the Messiah God?

The Jews: The prophet does not say “God” but “Lord”. You Christians have received these writings from us, but you change them at will.

Inghetto: This accusation is false, and of no avail. If you study the text, you will see that none of the names mentioned in the text can be borne by a human, and none of the feats be accomplished by human agents.

Comment: Inghetto’s rendering of the Jewish objection concerning the name Mighty God (*deus fortis*) is unlikely as it stands. The Hebrew text reads *el gibbor*, and Mighty God is a fully acceptable Latin translation. There is no *adonaj*, Lord, in the Hebrew text, and the name of God, JHVH, read as *adonaj*, is nowhere present in Isa 9:5–6. The traditional Jewish objection (stated by Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Joseph Kara, David Kimhi, and lastly in the *Nizachon Vetus*) is that *the name* by which the “son” is called is in the singular, and therefore must be *one* only, viz. the last name: Prince of Peace. This suited Hezekiah, because in Isa 39:8 Hezekiah says “... there shall be peace and truth in my days”. The names before this are not names of the son, Hezekiah, but of *God*, who calls Hezekiah “Prince of Peace.”<sup>1025</sup> Probably Inghetto had heard of, but forgotten, the details of this Jewish counterargument. He is therefore “reconstructing” a shorter, but faulty and meaningless argument instead.<sup>1026</sup>

It is quite striking that Inghetto’s passage on Isa 9:5–6, and the preceding one on Isa 7:14, are quite summary and without the lively and extensive exchange back and forth that characterized the earlier parts of the text, in which Inghetto engaged in original and creative exegeses of biblical passages that, as far as we know, had not until then been much in use in Jewish/Christian controversy. It is as if these two last paragraphs were something Inghetto felt should not be left out, since they were standard themes in this kind of literature. But he seems less engaged here than elsewhere, and not very well informed about the real Jewish arguments in the matter, for example the fact that Jewish antagonists in general referred Isa 7,14 as well as Isa 9:5–6 to the birth of Achaz’s son Hezekiah.<sup>1027</sup> This character of his argument changes completely in the next, much longer paragraph. Here Inghetto returns to his usual eager polemical mode.

*Fifth theme: The prophecy in Isaiah 2:4 has not been fulfilled by Jesus*

The Jews: Is it not true that in the time of the Messiah “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into sickles, and nation shall not lift up sword against nation?” [Isa 2:4]. But now the whole world is full of wars, especially your country, Genova, being at war with Pisa. In fact, almost all kings and princes of the world are warring against each

<sup>1025</sup> See for the Jewish exegesis David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A critical edition of the NIZZAHON VETUS with an introduction, translation, and commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), translation p. 102, commentary p. 277.

<sup>1026</sup> For this explanation, see Dahan, 137, note 54.

<sup>1027</sup> For an extensive review of the Hezekiah theme through the Patristic period, beginning with Justin, see Skarsaune, “Jewish and Christian Interpretations,” 27–37.

other, the Roman Church not excepted. We doubt you can name one land or one province in the Christian world at peace with its neighbors. So, how can your Christ be the Messiah?

Inghetto: Among just people, there is always peace, among envious and jealous people always war. But tell me at which time the Messiah will reign. The Jews asks Inghetto to tell them what he thinks. He then quotes the entire passage Isaiah 2:2–5 (indicating that Micah says the same in Micah 4:1–5). According to Isaiah 2:2 and Micah 4:1, the Messiah will reign “at the end of days”, meaning from the Day of judgement onwards, Isaiah 2:4. This is even clearer in Isaiah 2:17–21. On that day, all people will recognize God’s son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the just ones will, in his name, go together with the sincere and pious Christians into the eternal world above, whereas idolaters and Jews, in the name of their gods, will descend to hell. Inghetto interprets the silence of the Jews on hearing this as tacit consent. He then compares this final fulfilment of the prophetic promises on the last day with the way merchants are satisfied when their dues are paid on the very last day of the term. As the merchant proverb goes: “*Fiat solutio infra mensem unum*” [Let payment take place within a month].

The Jews: How do you then understand the words about changing the weapons into peaceful gardening tools, and each man sitting under his vine or fig tree, having no fear of enemies [Mic 4:3–4]? Inghetto answers by spiritualizing the concrete terms of the prophecy, paraphrasing the tree allegory in Judges 9:10–13 as a biblical justification for such an allegorical interpretation.<sup>1028</sup>

*Sixth theme: How to interpret Solomon’s allegory in Proverbs 30:18–20*

Without any transitional remarks, the Jews now introduce Proverbs 30:18–20 as the next theme of discussion.<sup>1029</sup> In this text Solomon speaks of four things that are difficult to understand: the flying of an eagle, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the ocean, [and the way of a man with a girl]. In v. 20 it seems the girl in question is “an adulteress.” The Jews ask if this is not what Solomon did in fact say.<sup>1030</sup>

<sup>1028</sup> Inghetto had used this allegory as scriptural justification for allegorical interpretations once before, see above p. 360. He was probably inspired to do this by the *Ceuta Disputation*, where Guglielmo uses Judges 9:7–15 for the same purpose (Limor, *Die Disputationen*, 160).

<sup>1029</sup> The mystery of this sudden change of topic is solved by observing that in the *Ceuta Disputation* we have the same transition from Judg 9:7–15 to Prov 30:18–20, and that Inghetto in the following detailed interpretation follows the *Ceuta Disputation* nearly *verbatim*. In Limor’s edition, *Ceuta Disputation* pp. 160–64 corresponds to *Majorca Disputation* pp. 202–207.

<sup>1030</sup> According to Limor (160, note 123), Prov 30:18–20 is not found in Christian *Adversus Iudaeos* literature before the *Ceuta Disputation*.

Comment: As said in note 1029 above, the clue to this passage is to be found in the *Ceuta Disputation*. Here the Jewish opponent asks: Even the wise Solomon was at a loss to bring out the deep allegorical meaning of (1) the flight of an eagle in the sky; (2) the way of a serpent on the rock; (3) the way of a ship on the ocean; and (4) the way of a man with a girl (Prov 30:18–19). And last, but not least: In Prov 30:20 the woman is said to be an adulteress since she once did something sordid, nevertheless she says: “I never did anything wrong.” How resolve this contradiction in Scripture? The Jew says that if the Christians volunteer to explain this text, he will gladly listen. The point seems to be that after having heard Guglielmo successfully interpret one biblical text as allegory (Judg 9:7–15), the Jewish discussion partner is curious to know how, by the same technique, he can solve those riddles in nature that Solomon could not, and on top of that, explain an apparent contradiction in Scripture (Prov 30:18–20). The theme here is the question of the legitimate use of allegorical exegesis, but the Christian spokesman cunningly takes the opportunity of introducing another Christological exposition. Inghetto in the *Majorca Disputation* follows his *Vorlage* so closely here that the Ceuta version often illuminates Inghetto’s somewhat shortened version (see, e.g., note 1031 below).

Inghetto: (1) The way of the serpent on the rock: Formerly, the Devil had many ways open for him in the world, and he misled all humans into worship of idols. But Messiah Christ came, born of Virgin Mary, “truth springing forth from the earth” [Psalm 85:12] as prophesied by David.<sup>1031</sup> The many ways of the Devil now were substituted by the one way on the solid rock, which is Christ. Because of his firmness he is rightly called *petra*, rock.<sup>1032</sup> The many ways of the Devil and the one way of Christ now remain side by side, so that all human beings can be tested as to which way they choose.

(2) The way of the ship on the ocean: A ship on the ocean has no clearly marked way to follow; God is the only guide to lead it to the good port. This means that good people, remaining in God’s service until their end, will reach eternal blessedness. Similarly, God will also guide those who were formerly ignorant of his way, to a good port, viz. eternal life. And if you ask about the ships that are shipwrecked, I say that they correspond to people who believe for a while, but then later, in temptation, loose their faith and turn away from it.<sup>1033</sup> They despair during the tempestuous storms, not daring to hope for more quiet waters so that they can reach the good port at last.

At this point the Jews, somewhat surprisingly, commend Inghetto’s exegetical skills, and say it has been a pleasure to follow his exposition. They also wonder from which source he has drawn this knowledge. But regrettably, they now have to leave, due to urgent matters at hand. ‘The Master’ says that being a doctor, he has some patients to look after. Inghetto says he feels sure that the Master has really been convinced of the truth by the discussion so far and

<sup>1031</sup> Inghetto shortens his *Vorlage* somewhat here. Guglielmo answers a Jewish question concerning how “the earth” could possibly mean Mary, by quoting Isa 45:8: Rain from heaven is said to make the earth “open itself and bring forth the Savior.” Inghetto already quoted this ad Isa 7:14, at the end of theme 3 above.

<sup>1032</sup> Very likely an allusion to 1 Cor 10:4.

<sup>1033</sup> See, e.g., Matt 13:5–6.

exhorts him to skip the material gains to be acquired by medicine of the flesh, and instead devote himself to the medicine of souls. But the Master says he can already hear bells calling for Vesper, which means he has no time to lose in waiting on his patients. And Inghetto will still be around, so there is every possibility that they can meet another day and continue their interesting discussion. It is then agreed that they will meet again on the coming Sunday, and the assembly is adjourned.

At this point, the text continues with the following interesting remark:

However, since the soul of the reader could profit by hearing and understanding the rest (of the exposition), viz. that which concerns the flight of the eagle and the adulterous woman, the above mentioned Inghetto has wanted to make an exposition of the whole question, so that, if anyone should be interrogated hereafter, he should know the truth and give a clear answer.<sup>1034</sup>

Comment: Two points should be made here. First, Inghetto himself seems to have overseen the writing of the text. According to the narrative, this last part of the exposition was not presented to the Jews by Inghetto. Instead, he wanted it included in the written account of the dispute. Secondly, the whole account of the Majorca disputation serves an important purpose: to equip the readers with knowledge of how they can answer Jews in similar confrontations they might have in the future. It lies near to hand to assume that these readers would in large measure be people like Inghetto: merchants and others who travelled because of their occupations. The book would not have a wide readership back in Genova, because there were few if any local Jews there and hence few occasions for discussions similar to this in Majorca. Accordingly, what we have in the following passages, is Inghetto, via his ghostwriter, presenting the rest of the exposition of Prov 30:18–20 that he is lifting from the pages of the *Ceuta Disputation*, only here and there tightening it up, and adding a few strokes of his own.

(3) The flight of the eagle: As everyone knows, the eagle flies higher than any other bird, so high, in fact, that the rays from the sun make its wings burn. The flight of the eagle stands for decent and pious persons who, for the love of the heavenly homeland, leave the world and distribute all that they own to the poor, hide or live in forests or in caves in order to serve God in a worthy manner. Here they live a solitary life, so as to elevate their souls in God's service. Their souls fly higher than those of other people because they have opened themselves to God more than others. In this they are like eagles and their wings. Just as the wings of eagles are enflamed by the sun, in a similar way the spirits of these pious humans, so eager for purity of heart, are enflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. – This eulogy of monastic life is interesting, coming from a busy merchant!

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<sup>1034</sup> Latin text: Limor, 205:6–10. My translation.

(4) The adulterous woman: She stands for the Church. The Church is the assembly of (Gentile) believers, just as the Synagogue is the assembly of the Jews. Before Christ, the assembly of the Gentiles worshipped idols which they had made and placed in their temples, they were therefore rightly called unbelievers and, because of their idolatry, adulterers. But when Christ came, the Gentiles turned away from their idolatry and became an assembly of believers, taking Christ as their husband. This was prophesied by Solomon, who has the bride say: “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth...” (Song of Songs 1:2–3; 1:15; 2:2). After the Church took Christ for her husband, she can rightly say that she is without sin, so as to make Solomon’s prophecy [in Prov 30:20] come true. As an adulteress, she was polluted, but as Christ’s bride, she was purified and made beautiful by him. This was also prophesied by David (Psalm 45:8 and 12).

Comment: As was pointed out above, these two passages are lifted *verbatim* from the *Ceuta Disputation*, it is therefore with reference to this document, not to Inghetto’s, that Dahan’s comment applies: “This interpretation of the adulterous woman [Prov 30:20] is not to be found elsewhere, it seems.”<sup>1035</sup> When the author of Inghetto’s Disputation resumes his narrative, it reads like this: “Every reader who has understood and kept this exposition in his heart will know how to answer clearly and adequately. But let us return to what happened.” As noted earlier: The author went out of his way to advertise the immense instructive value of the full exposition of Prov 30:18–20 that he has now quoted from the *Ceuta Disputation*, again making clear that this last half of it Inghetto was unable to present at the Majorca dispute. It seems to me that the author is following two strategies: first, giving an authentic report on what was presented orally during the dispute, and second, writing all of it for instructive purposes: Let the reader learn how to dispute convincingly with Jews. Close collaboration between Inghetto himself and the author is indicated by this.

A last point: The way Inghetto, as well as his ghostwriter, wanted the report of the Majorca disputation to function as an instruction manual for other Christian merchants debating with Jewish colleagues, *in the same way Inghetto himself had used the report on the Ceuta disputation*. I suppose there is no reason why Inghetto should in any way feel embarrassed by someone pointing out his dependence on the Ceuta disputation. I suppose he would have said: In the same way as I used that one, you should use mine.

*Third discussion* (scene: the house of a prominent Jew, date: the Sunday after 1 May)

*First theme: The important hermeneutical principle of the two periods exemplified*

“When the [first] Sunday [after 1 May] arrived, Inghetto and the Jews we have spoken of, and several other Jews, convened again in the house of some prominent Jew, containing a large library.”<sup>1036</sup>

The Jews again ask Inghetto to prove to them, from the Prophets, not the New Testament, that the Messiah has already come. Inghetto: I have already done so, not from one, but from all the prophets. The Jews: If you prove it from one, you have proved it from all.

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<sup>1035</sup> Dahan, 152, note 67.

<sup>1036</sup> Latin text: Limor, 207, my translation.



Inghetto: Let us begin with the first, Isaiah, and the first prophecy in his book. Take his book and read from the beginning.

The Jews now read Isaiah 1:2–4, in which God complains that though he raised the Israelites as his children, they have revolted against him and left him. The Jews: What is your comment on these verses? Inghetto: Only listen to what the prophet says! If it were not for your stiff necks, you would understand clearly from this prophecy that the Messiah has come. The Jews: No way, the prophecy says nothing about the Messiah, but only says that our fathers sinned. Inghetto: Carefully notice the following verse: “I have nourished and brought up children, but afterwards they despised me” (Isa 1:2). This happened with Christ: Did not your fathers despise him when he taught in your synagogues and made signs and miracles? The Samaritans and the publicans received him, recognized him, and believed in him, fulfilling a prophecy by David: The Idumeans despised me, but the foreigners have become my friends (Psalm 108:10, Vulgate text, loosely paraphrased). The Jews point out the irrelevance of this Psalm quote since it speaks about David’s situation when he fled from Saul. So, let us stick to Isaiah!

Inghetto, however, is not satisfied with giving up the David prophecy, since its interpretation concerns an important hermeneutical principle: David is not speaking about himself in the Psalms, he is speaking about Christ. For example, when David says in Psalm 69:22 that “they gave me gall for food and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar for drinking,” this never happened to David, but it happened with Christ. Further, David says, “the man with whom I lived in peace, in whom I confided and who ate my bread – he has betrayed me greatly” (Psalm 41:10). David was never betrayed by a close disciple with whom he shared bread, but Jesus was. The Jews: Don’t evade by byways! Let us return to Isaiah. Inghetto: Granted, but it is legitimate to let testimonies be substantiated by other testimonies.

The Jews: Granted, but tell us how you take Isaiah 1:7: “Your land is deserted, and your cities burnt by fire.” This is said about Nebuchadnezzar’s destruction of the Holy City (and not about a future Messiah). Inghetto: When someone wants to conquer a high tower in this world, does he not first conquer the entrance to the castle, then pass through the gate of the tower, and once inside, ascend stair by stair until he reaches the top? The Jews: Yes, but what if anything has this to do with the Messiah? Inghetto, undisturbed by the objection: If, on the contrary, someone wants to assault the tower from the outside, jumping from hole to hole on the outside wall, he learns nothing about the tower, not about its interior, nor its exterior, because he moves as rapid as an arrow.

The Jews still do not see the point of this parable (which is: how to approach a biblical prophecy) and threaten to leave the discussion unless Inghetto answers their question. The prophet said nothing whatsoever about towers and castles! “These are words coming from a man who evades the truth and seeks refuge in fables.”

Inghetto: I do no such thing, but you do. When you began reading the prophecy of Isaiah, you did not understand its words, and the words that followed what you read, you skipped.<sup>1037</sup> You want to tackle the text from the outside, as if climbing the wall of a tower jumping from hole to hole. Instead, you should carefully read the part you jumped over, Isaiah 1:5–9. The prophet here says, “Why do you *still* seek *more* beatings, by adding sin to sin?” (1:5). The prophet here presupposes a beating of the past, Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem. He now continues with the present, he speaks of present and future sins, and a beating following upon them. That, clearly, is not the “beating” under Nebuchadnezzar. And before him, Jerusalem was never destroyed. Is it not so? The Jews: Yes, true. Nevertheless, how could the prophet speak about the future and not the present? If, as you say, the prophet was talking about the second captivity, in which we now find ourselves, should he not then also have mentioned the first, the one imposed upon us by Nebuchadnezzar?

Inghetto: If I prove that the captivity which the prophet spoke about was the present captivity and not that under Nebuchadnezzar, what would you say? The Jews: We would never admit it unless we wanted to lie. Inghetto: Consider the prophet Isaiah. He visited king Hezekiah at the time when the king of Babylonia had sent him books and gifts, and Hezekiah proudly showed the prophet all the treasures of his treasury. What did Isaiah say? According to 2 Kings 20:14–18 [quoted in full] the prophet warned the king that all these treasures would be taken to Babylon by their king, and all Hezekiah’s sons would be eunuchs in the royal palace of Babylon. *This* prophecy explicitly refers to the Babylonian king and the captivity under him. But in the first part of Isaiah’s book nothing is said about Babylon. Isaiah 1:7 speaks about *your* land being exploited by foreigners. Is not this a description of your present situation (rather than that of the Babylonian exile)?

Indeed, you are now “left like a booth of leaves in a vineyard, like a shed in a cucumber field” (Isa 1:8), you bring forth no good fruit, you are always the serfs of all nations. As the booth of leaves in the vineyard brings forth no fruit, only keeps itself upright by support of dead or green wood or anything available – in the same way you now live fruitless among Christians, Saracens, Tartars, and others. Just as the booth of leaves withers and becomes dry, so do you, you cannot increase. Your seed “is like a shed in a cucumber

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<sup>1037</sup> Having read Isa 1:2–4, they went directly to 1:7.

field;” it may be adorned with flowers, but they bear no fruit. Your hope in a coming Messiah is vain, like a flower not producing fruit, like dry hay on a roof. As Isa 1:9 says, you have become like Sodom and Gomorrah as far as strength is concerned. Those of you, who have survived, are a testimony to the truth of our faith.<sup>1038</sup> Your captivity under Nebuchadnezzar lasted only 70 years (Jer 25:12), because of your worshipping the golden calf;<sup>1039</sup> the present one will last indefinitely because your fathers crucified the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Inghetto delivers his last and concluding blow in the discussion of first passages of the Book of Isaiah by quoting in full the devastating critique of the sacrifices, the festivals, and the prayers that the Israelites offer their God (Isa 1:11–15). They are all one great abomination.

O Jews, open by faith the eyes of your hearts. Look closely, hear, and understand that all this has happened to you, and that your New Moons and your festivals are observed to no effect. What is your answer to this? For sure, you cannot contradict. But he who keeps silent, agrees, and that is the case with you.<sup>1040</sup>

The Jews now quote Isaiah 7:14, which is thus discussed for the second time. Inghetto repeats his basic argument that no sign is present if the prophecy simply speaks of Ahaz’s son [Hezekiah] being born the natural way after intercourse between the king and his wife. And the text of the prophecy speaks about an *almah* giving birth, and the correct interpretation is virgin.<sup>1041</sup>

But some new aspects are added this time, compared with the first, much briefer exposition. In this case, too, Inghetto brings in his viewpoint of the importance of distinguishing the different periods of time. The Babylonian captivity under Nebuchadnezzar happened because of the Golden Calf episode, but the second captivity, which has lasted 1240 years, must have happened because of a much greater sin.<sup>1042</sup> Which? The Jews say that they

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<sup>1038</sup> Inghetto here hints at the Augustinian doctrine that God has protected Israel from extinction so that their miserable position *vis-a-vis* the Christians, predicted in the Old and New testaments, should serve as permanent proof of the truth of the Christian bible, hence of Christianity. For a brilliant analysis of this aspect of Augustine’s theology of the Jews, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: a Christian defense of Jews and Judaism: with a new postscript* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press 2010), 316–31.

<sup>1039</sup> No such connection between the Babylonian exile and the golden calf incident is made in the biblical text, only idolatry in general is said to have caused it, e.g., in Jeremiah.

<sup>1040</sup> Latin text, Limor, 216: 13–17, my translation.

<sup>1041</sup> See above, p. 367.

<sup>1042</sup> Subtracting 1240 from 1286 gives us 46 C.E. as the year when the second exile began. Inghetto may have remembered the figure 1240 from some other context; in Jewish tradition, 68 C.E. is regarded as being the date of the fall of the Temple and the beginning of the second exile. He repeats on a second occasion (see below) 1240

have already answered this question but will say no more about it because under Christian overlords they are not at liberty to speak their minds on this issue.<sup>1043</sup>

The Jews, however, not satisfied with Inghetto's argument concerning "virgin" and supernatural sign, still insist that Achaz and his son are at stake. Inghetto therefore adds some new arguments.

(1) In a follow-up on his argument concerning the importance of recognizing the periods of salvation history, he expatiates upon the abundant fruits of the birth, life, and work of Mary's son Jesus, the world's savior. The Gentiles did not know about Isaiah's prophecy, but they easily recognized the good effects of the deeds of Mary's son: they rejoiced by learning that he had come as the savior of all those who believed in him. By getting to know him, they also learned about the only virgin in history who bore a son without intercourse. They did not know the prophecy, but they knew its fulfilment. Mary, of David's seed, gave birth to Jesus Christ. In this way, what God said to David, came true: "The offspring from your body shall be installed on my throne" (Psalm 132:11).<sup>1044</sup>

(2) The Jews say this referred to David's son Solomon. Inghetto: How could Solomon sit on God's throne, when he became an idolater towards the end of his life? And the Lord's throne is not on earth. As was said by David in another place: "The highest heaven is the Lord's, the earth, however, he gave to the sons of men" (Psalm 115:16). Unimpressed, the Jews quote more sayings about Solomon in the Psalms: God, give your judgement to the king and your justice to the son of the king (Psalm 72:2). The kings of Tarshish and the Isles will offer him presents, and the kings of the Arabs and Saba will bring him gifts (Psalm 72:10). The Jews insist that this should be understood literally, and they point to 1 Kings 10 as reporting in detail how this happened.

Inghetto: All of this I know well, e.g., that the Queen of the South visited Solomon (1 Kings 10). But you are trying to fly without wings; you prefer the shell of the nut and throw away what it contains. Therefore, you are in error and your sins take away your understanding.

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as being the time elapsed since the Jews killed Jesus. See Limor, 218, note 135; and Dahan, 171, note 81. And see my next note.

<sup>1043</sup> At the Paris Disputation, 1270, the Jewish spokesman clearly indicated that the question of Jewish guilt for Jesus being killed was such a sensitive question that he would not discuss it in public; it would only have filled the Christian audience with uncontrollable rage. At the Majorca debate, some 16 years later, this is the first time that the Jews refer unfavorably to their situation under Christian government. We shall see one more example shortly. For the rest of the debate, they seem to have assumed they had great freedom of speech. – By the way, the 1240 years since the death of Jesus would have been entirely correct in the Paris disputation, 1270!

<sup>1044</sup> In the Hebrew text, as well as in the Vulgate, it says "your throne", this would invalidate Inghetto's argument. He probably follows a variant reading known in other *adversus iudaeos* works of the time, e.g., Peter Damiani. See Limor, 220, note 139.

Tell me, what does David mean in Psalm 72:2? God's judgement and his righteousness were never given to any purely human king, but only to God's own Son, who is God. You see the same in what follows (Psalm 72:2–3): "You will judge your people in justice and your poor in righteousness. The mountains will yield peace for the people, and the hills righteousness" (Psalm 72:2–3). And further: "[The King] will give the poor of his people their right, he will save their children and humble their calumniator. He lives while the sun endures, before the moon, from generation to generation. He is like rain falling on a field in autumn, like misty rain that waters the earth. Righteousness will shine forth in his time, and peace in abundance for as long as the moon shines. He will reign from sea to sea" (Psalm 72:4–8). Solomon did not accomplish these things, only Jesus Christ can save human beings, only *his* name was before the sun and moon and will remain always.<sup>1045</sup>

The Jews again say that Solomon did in fact reign from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Again, Inghetto invokes his doctrine of the two ages: If sayings of Jewish supremacy, exemplified by Solomon, are still valid for the present age, then why are you, Master, a captive and an enslaved like the other Jews? This is so, despite what you claimed a while ago: that you are of the same family as Saint Mary, viz. that of Solomon's son (David).

The Jews: But in his time, Solomon exercised dominion, as is said in the same Psalm: "Before him the kings prostrate, and his enemies kiss the ground. The kings of Tarshish and the Isles offer him presents, and the kings of the Arabs and Saba bring him gifts" (Psalm 72:9–10). Inghetto: This was realized not for Solomon, but for Christ, when the magi worshipped him and offered him their gifts: gold, incense, and myrrh. The Jews: This is what you and all Christians say, and you should not bring into the discussion anything from the New Testament, because we do not believe anything in it.

Inghetto: I have every right to report how prophecies in the Prophets were fulfilled by Christ. Parts of the story about the magi are contained in your own books, especially Herod's killing of the innocent infants!<sup>1046</sup> Such a terrible mass murder just because of one baby has never been heard of, except in this case, where the baby born was not any baby, but the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and therefore rightfully feared by Herod. David was right to

<sup>1045</sup> An interesting detail here is that Inghetto says Solomon could not save a single soul (*anima*), saving souls is the work of God. In the text of the Psalm there are no souls, but for the Christian Inghetto the verb *save* and the noun *salvation*, necessarily imply souls as the objects of salvation.

<sup>1046</sup> The German bishop Raban Maurus (died 856 C.E.) says that Josephus related how Herod ordered a massacre on Jewish leaders when he died (*Jewish War* I.659–60). Raban adds that this was very near in time to Herod's murder of the innocent children, so that both killings earned him his own death. Later, prior to Inghetto, Raban's addition about the murder of the innocents was misunderstood as part of Josephus' text. This is the case e.g., in Peter Comestor (died 1178), *Historia Scholastica*. For reference and further details, see Dahan, 178–79, note 88.

say: “All kings of the earth adore him, all the nations of the earth are subservient to him, for he shall deliver the poor from the hands of the powerful” (Psalm 72:11–12) – all of which Christ accomplished.

The Jews: we are amazed that you so blatantly can contradict yourself! You have admitted that many peoples, e.g., the Saracens and the Tartars, do not worship Christ.

Inghetto: Nevertheless, I affirm what I said: He reigns from sea to sea and all the nations of the earth are subservient – that is: *subjected* – to him. Everything is subjected to God, and God’s Son is God.

Comment: At this point, the long excursus on Psalm 72 apropos Isa 7:14 is ended, and a new theme is introduced, the divinity of Christ. This sequence corresponds to the one on Day 1, second discussion: *theme 3* (Isa 7:14) followed by *theme 4* (on the divinity of the Messiah, Isa 9:5). In what follows, I will therefore omit some repetitions of the arguments of Day 1 and focus on the new arguments introduced in what follows.

### *Second theme: the divinity of the Messiah*

One of the Jews, called “Rabbi” by the others: What you said is true for him who is of God, but not for him who is from men. Inghetto: According to his divinity, Jesus is God; according to his humanity he is a human being. “Christ” is a Greek name, in Hebrew it is “Messiah,” in Latin “Savior” [*salvator*].<sup>1047</sup> Only God is a Savior.

Another Jew, the ‘Grand Master’, said: Where have you found that the Messiah should be God? When the Messiah comes, he will be a man like you and me, but he will have great power and he will liberate us from all serfdom and bring us back to Jerusalem and make all other nations subject to us. Inghetto: Jewish domination is as likely as hares riding upon lions and piercing them with their spurs! The Jews: It is not allowed for us to discuss this issue in public.<sup>1048</sup> But answer the question we posed you: where (in Scripture) do you find a divine Messiah? Inghetto: If I repeat my former argument to this effect, and make you admit that the Messiah is God, will you then believe in him? The Jews: Yes, provided you deliver what you have promised.

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<sup>1047</sup> Inghetto is no linguist: the Latin translation would be *Unctus*, but in the Latin church the meaning of *Christus*, a mere transliteration of Greek *Christos*, “Anointed,” had long been forgotten. *Christus* was considered a proper name, not a title.

<sup>1048</sup> This is the second time the Jews signal that they do not feel free to speak their minds. This time, the all-too-sensitive question concerns the idea of Jewish dominance over Christians. At Barcelona, Nahmanides also avoided speaking of this issue in public, *Vikuah*, passage 42.

Inghetto: Hear what David says: “They will see the God of gods in Zion” (Psalm 84:8). And Isaiah says: “All flesh shall see God’s Savior” (Isa 52:10 as rendered in Luke 3:6).<sup>1049</sup>

What follows next, is a much-expanded version of the argument from Isa 9:5–6 already presented on Day 1. This time, Inghetto emphasizes that the Messiah’s name Mighty God implies that he will never die, unlike some other kings who had died recently.<sup>1050</sup> Even these mighty kings and warriors had died, and where are they now?<sup>1051</sup>

In contrast, the Messiah is called Wonderful Counsellor and Father of the Coming World – which human being could be called this? You who are masters and teachers in the synagogues, please do not deceive yourself, and in any case do not deceive those that trust your teaching, because God will hold you responsible for their souls!

The Jews now revert to Isa 7:16 (assuming it speaks about the same child as Isa 9:5): “Before the child knows how to choose the good and reject what is evil, the land that you (king Achaz) detest will be taken away from the two kings (who rule it) before their eyes.” This happened in fact for Achaz, before his son (Hezekiah) grew up, his enemies had been subdued.

Inghetto: Tell me, in which human being has this power ever been found, always to choose the right and reject evil? Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor Moses, nor David, nor any other prophet always made the right choices. There was hardly a greater saint than David, but even he sinned, no wiser man than Solomon, but he sinned, no more courageous man than Samson, but he sinned. The virtue to be sinless is found in God alone, and in his Son, the saint of saints, who is Christ. Of him, Daniel says: “The saint of saints was anointed” (Daniel 9:24).

*Third theme: Why are there no absolutely clear prophecies pointing to Jesus being the Messiah?*

The Jews: Explain to us for which reason the prophets did not say clearly: *Christ, Mary’s son*, will come. He will be the Savior of all human beings, he will come at such and such a time,

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<sup>1049</sup> Inghetto’s argument is that taken together, the two quotes make clear that the “God of gods” to be seen in Zion is not God the Father, but God’s saving Son (*salutaris dei*).

<sup>1050</sup> In 1285, the year before the debate took place, Charles d’Anjou (French king of Naples and Sicily), Philippe III Hardi (king of France), and Pedro III, king of Aragon, all died.

<sup>1051</sup> For the merchants assembled in Palma, all these kings had been overlords of important trade ports, and for most of the Jews present, coming from Aragon, Pedro III had been their own king. Again, we observe Inghetto’s keen awareness of contemporary context relevant for his interlocutors.

get baptized, – all of this in such a way that no soul need be troubled, but everyone would understand and know at which time he would come, so that no one would have any doubt about him. Inghetto: All this was in fact clearly predicted. If I succeed in showing you at which time the Messiah was predicted to come, and that he did in fact come at that time; that he should be baptized, and in fact was; that he should be put to death, and was; and that those who denied him did not belong to his people, and that all of this was announced and written as clearly as possible by the prophets, – if I succeed in showing all this, will you then believe in him? The Jews: We don't know these things. But this we know for certain: No prophet ever told the day of his coming.

Inghetto therefore begins with the latter question. But he prefaces a rather long introduction. He says: Wrath impedes the soul and sins suppress the mind and the understanding. Therefore, in order to know and understand the day of salvation and of the Messiah's coming, remove wrath from your hearts and repent of your sins. The Jews: We do in fact ardently want to know that day. But even if all the priests, all the Minor Friars and the Preachers and all the other Christian teachers and learned men were united in one place, they could not explain this. How can you, a merchant, think yourself capable of doing it? You deceive yourself. But of course, you can speak shameless nonsense more freely than the Preaching Friars and the Minor Friars, whose business it is to discuss and deliberate these matters.

In fact, we can inform you that during the reign of our Lord James, the good King of Aragon, grandfather of our present king Alphonse, there took place in Girona a discussion between, on the one hand, the Preaching Friars and the Minor Friars, and also a former Jew, Friar Paul, together with other Christians, very knowledgeable, and also experts in the Law, – and on the other hand some of our Jewish brethren. How that turned out, ask those who were present. Then you will learn whether the Christian side had any advantage from it or not.<sup>1052</sup>

Inghetto: I have not heard a word about this but am eager to have a copy of a written translation of the discussion. The Jews confirm that they have such a document, and that they have distributed it throughout the world. Inghetto: In that case, why haven't you made use of the arguments in this document in our present debate, since I understood from your words that the Christian side lost in that debate? But I refuse to believe it, since Friar Paul took part in

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<sup>1052</sup> A very interesting and near contemporary report on how the Barcelona disputation was evaluated among the Aragonese Jews, and also among some of the Christians! (Girona probably mentioned since Nahmanides was its rabbi, and because of the references to an earlier debate there between Nahmanides and Paul Christian in the *Vikuah*, passages 104 and 105).



the dispute. The Jews: It would not be appropriate for us to discuss such difficult matters since you would not understand them.<sup>1053</sup>

Inghetto: So far, I have obtained no response to some of the arguments I have proposed against you. If what you have said were true, you should have had answers ready to all my questions! But look here, you are the losers, you have been unable to oppose me, if you are willing to admit the truth! In fact, I believe nothing of what you just told me. Don't take offense by my saying so. You blush because you have been defeated and beaten by a simple layman, a merchant. What would you have done if your opponent were a specialist in Holy Scripture?

The Jews: You cannot remove the truth of our account by your words. But now, answer our objections, and having done so, you will know whether we have been conquered or beaten. Inghetto: If I succeed in explaining my understanding of these things as plainly as one explains whether there be a stone or a stick in someone's hand, will you then declare yourself conquered and accept baptism? The Jews: Yes, in that case we would accept baptism instantly. Inghetto: I would like you to say a prayer that can be said by Jews as well as Christians or Saracens, without transgressing their own laws. The Jews: Which prayer is this? We are all ears! Inghetto: The prayer is this:

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, O God, You who have created everything visible and invisible, to whom all things are subject, men and beasts, the birds of heaven and the fish of the ocean, we beg You, our God and Lord, that You deign to grant us Your holy grace so that we know and learn the way of truth and salvation and are able to follow it, for the salvation of our souls. Amen.<sup>1054</sup>

The Jews present find this prayer holy and just, except the more considerate senior Master, who says: Under no circumstances will I say this prayer. If I do, it will appear that I entertain some doubt about my own religion, which is definitely not the case. Inghetto repeats that he can see no reason why the Jews should refuse to accept a better way if he shows them one. The Jews: These words only waste our time. You should rather answer our questions, and in that way lead us to baptism and act as our sponsor. Inghetto: I will do so, even though I know you will not keep your word, just like your Master, who did not keep his word about

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<sup>1053</sup> Perhaps a thinly veiled admission of their incompetence in discussing rabbinic writings.

<sup>1054</sup> Latin text, Limor 232:19–233:3, my translation. The insertion of this prayer here is interesting as a first indication that Inghetto – as a missionary – had some standard procedures for leading Jews towards conversion and baptism. We shall see more of this later.

converting if he could not defend his interpretation of the source in Jerusalem (see above, pp. 361 and 363).

After these introductory soundings, the real debate about “the days of the Messiah” – when did or will they arrive? – finally begins. Inghetto’s first testimony from Scripture is a classic one, used and re-used since Justin Martyr first used it in his *First Apology* as well as in his *Dialogue with Trypho*: Genesis 49:10. Inghetto renders the text according to the Vulgate (which is very close to the Septuagint):

The scepter shall not be removed from Judah  
nor a prince [*dux*] from his loins –  
until the designated envoy<sup>1055</sup> comes.  
He is the one for whom the Gentiles wait.

Inghetto asks: Does it not seem to you, that the day of the Messiah’s coming is clearly set forth in this text? The royal succession of the house of David should last until the coming of the Messiah, then cease. Can you point to any king among you since the passion of Christ? The Jews: Then why did he not come during the seventy years of the Babylonian exile; we had no (royal) scepter and no reigning king then?<sup>1056</sup> Inghetto: Yes, you had at that time, but you do not have them now. For were there not several prophets at that time, who day by day guided you by the word of God, and after them more prophets until the time of Jesus? But after him there have been no more prophets.<sup>1057</sup>

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<sup>1055</sup> *Qui mittendus est*, one of the many ways one can translate the three Hebrew consonants *Sh-l-h*: (1) The placename *Shiloh* (some of the rabbis), (2) *Shiloh* being one of the names of the Messiah (some other rabbis), (3) *Shælo’* = *Asher lo’*, either “He to whom it [the Kingdom of the Messiah] belongs” (Targum Onqelos and part of the Septuagint tradition, *hoo apokeitai*, “for whom it has been reserved”), (4) *Shælo’* meaning “That which is reserved for him [the Messiah]” (so the majority of Septuagint manuscripts, *ta apokeimena autoo*). For a full review, see Posnanski, *Shiloh*, 20–26. The Christian reading *mittendus* (one that is to be sent) seems inspired from John 9:7, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which means Sent).” The evangelist here takes Greek ΣΙΛΩΑΜ to render Hebrew *Shiloach*, the last consonant being taken as π (ch as in German *ach*) instead of η (h). The verb *shalach* can mean “send out,” and although the form *shiloach* is not an ordinary passive form (it should have been *shaluach*) it could still be taken to be such a form, “[one who is] sent”, inspired from Isa 8:6, resulting in the later Latin *qui mittendus est*, which became the standard translation in the Christian Latin tradition. See Posnanski, 48–49 and Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i–xii)* (The Anchor Bible; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 372–73.

<sup>1056</sup> The first to refer to this Jewish objection – that the royal succession came to an end long before Jesus – was Justin Martyr: “[You say that]... your race did not always have a prophet or king from the beginning until the time when Jesus Christ was born and suffered” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 52.3, translation according to Halton, 79).

<sup>1057</sup> Again, this argument is in essence stated already by Justin: “Since you also had a continuous succession of prophets down to John (...), there never ceased to be a prophet in your midst who was lord and leader and ruler of your people. Indeed, even your kings were appointed and anointed by the spirit in these prophets” (*Dialogue* 52.3, translation according to Halton, 79).

The Jew who was called Rabbi: Why do you not interpret “Judah” here as “the one who has confessed,” as in the saying of Jeremiah (23:6), “In those days Judah will be saved, and Israel shall dwell in their houses without fear.” You said in the ship at the Port of Pi<sup>1058</sup> that “Judah” in our language meant “he who has confessed,” and that is quite correct.<sup>1059</sup> Why should one not also here take Judah as meaning the same?

Comment: The exact meaning and relevance of this is hard to grasp at first glance. How is this etymological comment regarding the name “Judah” of any relevance for understanding Genesis 49:10? Some help can be gained from the parallel passage in the Ceuta disputation.<sup>1060</sup> Here, too, the same etymological explanation of the name Judah – and thereafter the name “Israel,” – is given: Guglielmo: “You know, Jew, that in your language “Judah” is taken to mean “one who has confessed.” And on the day of judgement all those who have confessed shall be saved.”<sup>1061</sup>

As shown by the context prior to this passage, the object of “confess” for Guglielmo is Jesus as Messiah. The wider context of the passage is a discussion about the duration of the reign of the true Messiah. Guglielmo argues that his reign is without end, that is, eternal, and that this reign is the one in which men are now living. The Jew counters by asking how he then interprets Jeremiah 23:6, according to which (only) *Judah* and *Israel* are to be saved. It is in answer to this question *apropos Jer 23:6* that the explanation of the name Judah is set forth by Guglielmo. The big question is: salvation in the present and final age, is that for the Jews or for believers [in Jesus] in general, be they Jewish or Gentile? In order to drive home this point, Guglielmo also proves that “Israel” in this text does not have an ethnic meaning, the Jewish people, but should be taken to mean what “Israel” *means*, “a man who sees God.”<sup>1062</sup> “Everyone who desires to see God and do his works and observe his commandments, are rightly called Israel.”<sup>1063</sup>

This, I think, explains the sequence and the argument in the *Majorca Disputation*. Inghetto knows this Christian interpretation of Jeremiah 23:6, in fact, he quotes it almost verbatim from the Ceuta disputation. He also knows that it could be problematic for his use of Genesis 49:10 if this interpretation of “Judah” (a name of Christian believers) be applied to Judah in that text. Genesis 49:10 could then easily be taken to mean that the reign would not be taken away from believers in Jesus (“Judah”) until the coming of the Jewish Messiah, which would reestablish the reign of the Jewish people and end that of the Christians. This explains why the Jewish Rabbi is so eager to bring in the Christian interpretation of Judah and Israel in Jer 23:6 a propos Genesis 49:10.

Inghetto answers the Rabbi: If you want to apply the interpretation of Judah as “one who has confessed” to “Judah” in Genesis 49:10, you are welcome to do so. But it does not mean that the “Judah” here spoken of are the Christians. “You know very well that at the time [of

<sup>1058</sup> According to Limor a smaller but not insignificant port at the southern coast of Majorca, Limor 235, note 192. This clearly indicates that this was not the first time Inghetto and this Jew were debating, and this accords well with the saying at the very beginning of the *Disputatio*: the Christian merchants say to the Jewish “rabbi” who had challenged them with a tricky question about Christian non-observance of the Mosaic law: “O Rabbi, you come here and speak about your Law only because you have seen that Inghetto is not present. Had he been, you would not have dared speak these words, for we have seen you discuss with him on another occasion, and you could not contradict him nor hold your ground against him,” Latin text in Limor 170, lines 4–8, English translation mine. These two scattered remarks, separated from each other by 65 textpages in Limor’s edition, and confirming each other in a quite inconspicuous way, seem to me good arguments for the basic authenticity of the whole *Majorca Disputatio*.

<sup>1059</sup> In Genesis 29:35 as well as 49:8 the name *Yehudah* is indeed interpreted as derived from the verb *y-d-h* II, which can mean “confess,” though more often means “praise.” See Jerome, *Liber interpretationis* (CCSL 72: 67): *Juda laudatio sive confessio*, cp. Limor, 146, note 49.

<sup>1060</sup> Limor, 145–46.

<sup>1061</sup> Latin text, Limor, 146:17–20, my translation.

<sup>1062</sup> For this etymology, see Gen 32:28; 32:30, and Jerome, *Liber interpretationis* (CCSL 72:139): *Israel vir videns deum*, cp. Limor, 146, note 50.

<sup>1063</sup> Latin text, Limor, 146:23–25, my translation.

Jacob's prophecy] no one confessed the God of heaven except the Jews, so you are in fact conquered by your own argument." The truth, however, is that Jacob in this text speaks of his own carnal son, Judah, exactly as he speaks of his other carnal sons in Genesis 49. This you cannot deny, Jews!

After this excursus on the right interpretation of "Judah" in Genesis 49, Inghetto now reverts to his enumeration of biblical prophecies for the coming of the Messiah: Moses, your Lawgiver, prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15–19 that the Messiah would come as one of your own brethren, and that everyone not listening to him would be rooted out from God's people.<sup>1064</sup> David prophesied the Messiah's birth in Psalm 2:7: "You are my son, today I have begotten you." Please do not argue that this was not a prophecy because the verb is in the perfect tense. For God, the present, the past, and the future are always present, time does not count for him. The Jews: True, but when the Messiah comes, we will get back all that we have lost.

Inghetto: I can, however, show to you from Daniel 9:24–27 the exact time of the Messiah's coming. The Jews now ask how Inghetto understands the seventy weeks spoken about in this prophecy. Inghetto: exactly as you understand them, each week comprises seven years. The Jews: True, but what has this to do with the Messiah's coming? Inghetto: Daniel received his vision at the end of the first two weeks, for fourteen years had elapsed since Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Jerusalem when Darius began his reign and Daniel had his vision (Daniel 9:1).<sup>1065</sup> The Jews confirm that this is correct and exact. Inghetto: From Daniel's vision until the time of the rebuilding of Jerusalem under Ananias and Esdras there is another eight weeks, that is 56 years. If you subtract eight from 70, you get 62. Sixty-two weeks, 434 years, after the rebuilding of Jerusalem the passion of the Messiah was to occur, according to your own books.<sup>1066</sup>

The Jews, talking Hebrew, discussed among themselves about the time and the number of years, and finally agreed that Inghetto had it right. Inghetto: If so, he who does not believe in Jesus Christ does not belong to his people, Daniel 9:26: "After 62 weeks, the Christ will be exterminated, and the people who deny him will no longer be his people." The Jews:

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<sup>1064</sup> Inghetto quotes the shortened version of this text found in Peter's speech, Acts 3:22–23.

<sup>1065</sup> Inghetto proves this by way of a sophisticated and detailed combination of data concerning the duration of Nebuchadnezzar's and Balthazar's reigns. Recourse to a written source is certain, different Christian calculations of the seventy weeks coming to their end in the passion of Jesus have been presented since Tertullian's first in *Adversus Iudaeos* VIII.7–18. See for the patristic period Reinhard Bodenmann, *Naissance d'une Exégèse: Daniel dans l'Église ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (BGBE 28; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Paul Siebeck) 1986), 329–70. For medieval references, see Limor, 238, note 197 and Dahan, 198, note 109.

<sup>1066</sup> Ora Limor assumes that this refers to talmudic passages in which the destruction of the Temple is said to be the terminus of the seventy weeks, Limor, 238, note 199.

How do you understand these words, “the people who deny him will no longer be his people?”<sup>1067</sup> Inghetto: [Jesus] Christ was put to death 62 weeks after the rebuilding of Jerusalem; hence he was the Messiah and you those who put him to death – your question has been answered, prepare yourselves for baptism!

The Jews: The prophet did not say that the Messiah should be killed (*occidetur* – as in the Vulgate), but that he would be cut down (*truncabitur* – Hebrew *jikkaret*). Inghetto: So, what? He who is cut down is killed. The Jews: Daniel is not speaking about the Messiah, but the Temple, which was destroyed by the Romans. Inghetto: In that case, how could the prophet say, “the people who deny him will no longer be his people?” And how could the Temple be called The Holy of Holies? The Temple was built by human hands, of stones, wood, and other materials, and you will make masonry and wood into the Holy of Holies? Was ever a temple anointed? And don’t you know that your language has the same genders as our Latin: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Temple is neuter, not masculine. – The Jews, somewhat surprisingly, agree.<sup>1068</sup> Inghetto now concludes in a triumphant way: You are now completely conquered. It is already 1240 years or more since the time when Christ came, precisely at the predicted date. Jesus came as the Christ, about this there can be no doubt.

Utterly bewildered, the Jews now deliberate among themselves about what to answer. They agree on the following: We do not consider Daniel a prophet, he was only an interpreter of dreams.<sup>1069</sup> Inghetto, of course, is not impressed by this strategy. He accuses the Jews of being Samaritans.<sup>1070</sup> It is blasphemous not to recognize Daniel as a prophet, and indirectly to accuse the angel (who revealed the prophecy to Daniel) of lying. This desperate line of argument really betrays that the Jews know the truth very well: according to this prophecy in Daniel, Jesus was in fact the promised Messiah, savior of those who have set their hope in him, having by his holy blood redeemed the human race.

David has said this in many prophecies: “In your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit, redeem me, O Lord, God of Truth” (Psalm 31:6). “Truly, God shall redeem my soul from the power of hell when he receives me” (Psalm 49:16). David has also clearly predicted the passion of Christ in Psalm 22, just like Matthew recorded: “*Eli, eli, lamma sabachtani,*”

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<sup>1067</sup> In the text, it appears that the Jews only ask about the interpretation of these words. As Limor and Dahan point out, the real objection might have been that these words (contained in the Vulgate) have no counterpart in the Hebrew text. Limor, 239, note 201; Dahan, 202, note 112.

<sup>1068</sup> There is no neuter in Hebrew.

<sup>1069</sup> Daniel was not counted among the Prophets in the Jewish canon, but as part of the third part of the canon, the Scriptures. Some of the talmudic sages reckoned Daniel as a great sage, but not as a prophet in the strict sense. But none of this served to diminish the trustworthiness of the book’s prophetic oracles. See Dahan, 34–35.

<sup>1070</sup> Probably because Inghetto or the author presupposed that the Samaritans only recognized the Torah as authoritative.

which in Latin is “God, my God, heed me: why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 22:2, Matthew 27:46), likewise how the passers-by shook their head and blasphemed Jesus (Psalm 22:8; Matthew 27:39), and how his hands and feet were pierced, and how they cast lots about his clothes (Psalm 22:17.19; Matthew 27:35), and how water flowed from him (Psalm 22:15) and all the rest.<sup>1071</sup>

Apparently, the Jews had no answer ready for this. Instead, they somewhat abruptly raise a new question: Where [in Scripture] have you found that the Messiah should be baptized? This theme was no part of the traditional *adversus iudaeos* arguments. It is therefore probable that the author of the Majorca disputation here portrays the Jews as cunningly asking Inghetto about something he would be unprepared to answer.

Inghetto’s supreme mastery of Scripture is in this way made all the more brilliant: Not only does he have a clear testimony from Psalm 51 ready, predicting the Messiah’s baptism in water (v. 9); he is even able to interpret the whole Psalm as one connected messianic prophecy, fulfilled point by point by Jesus. In verse 3, David, Adam’s son, asks to have his sins blotted out, this points to Christian baptism. In verses 4–7 this short prayer is expanded, all of it answered by Christian baptism. When David says, “I have sinned against you [God] alone” (v. 6), he is speaking in the person of Adam; when he adds “my mother conceived me in sin” (v. 7), he is speaking about Eve’s sin. When, finally, he speaks about inner truth and hidden wisdom revealed in verse 8, this clearly refers to baptism. Baptism was not revealed at David’s time but was known to him by a revelation of God’s Spirit. He therefore could describe it in these clear words, verse 9: “Cleanse me, O Lord, with hyssop, so I become clean, wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.” This the Christian priest does in baptism, when he baptizes in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Messiah Jesus also baptizes with the Holy Spirit, as John the Baptizer said (Mark 1:8/John 1:26). This corresponds exactly to Psalm 51:10–11, in which David asks God to “turn your face away from my sins,” and in this way fill his heart with joy. When Christ was baptized, this took place in all the souls of the pious Jewish ancestors. Also in this way Psalm 51:10 was fulfilled: the humiliated bones [of the fathers] were overfilled with joy. From the moment of Christ’s baptism, they knew that their redemption was soon coming. In this way the discord between the human race and God, because of Adam’s sin, was ended – finally and completely when Christ died on the cross. The angels announced this at Christ’s birth, Luke 2:14.

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<sup>1071</sup> Blood and water flowing from the spear wound in Jesus’ side is not mentioned in Matthew, only in John 19:34.

The Jews: We do not recognize this text. We have asked you not to quote the New Testament. Inghetto: I cannot point out the fulfilment of prophecies without referring to the reports on their fulfilment, and these are found in the New Testament. The Jews now require that Inghetto continues his reading of Psalm 51, and if any prophecy occurs in it, that was not fulfilled by Jesus, he cannot be the Messiah. – This very clearly brings out the argumentative strategy of the Jews: Christians were usually wont to take isolated sayings in the biblical texts as being Messianic prophecies, but could they do the same with the whole context in which these sayings were found?

Inghetto assures his opponents that everything the Messiah was predicted to do, all this Jesus Christ had in fact done. After having shown from verses in Psalm 85 that the angels' words about universal peace (Luke 2:14) agree with David's prophecies, Inghetto, at the request of the Jews, returns to the remaining part of Psalm 51. In v. 12, "create in me a pure heart and reestablish a right spirit in my intestines" means "let my sinning cease," this began when Christ was conceived in the Virgin's womb. She was of David's seed, therefore David continued: "Do not reject me away from your face, and do not take away from me your spirit," verse 13. This came true when that happened which was promised to David: "I shall seat on my throne the fruit of your belly" (Psalm 132:11). Like Adam in Paradise, David and his just successors had the same glory as Adam lost in his fall. Therefore, David said in Psalm 51:14: "Make me strong [again] by your princely Spirit."

The Jews: Read on, see what you find! Inghetto reads on, and not unexpectedly finds more of the same. In verse 15 he reads about instructing the unjust and converting the impious – that is what is happening: the Christians used to be sinning Gentiles, most of them, and now they have mended their ways and converted, so that both verses, 15 and 16, are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Having read verse 16 ("Deliver me from all blood that I have shed, God; God, you are the originator of my salvation...), Inghetto focusses on the double *Deus* in the text, and makes an excursus here on the Trinity.

He takes the first *Deus* to point to the Father, the second to the Son. In another text, David explicitly teaches the Trinity: "Power belongs to God [the Father], and to You, O Lord [the Son of God] belongs mercy, because You [Holy Spirit] repay everyone according to his deeds" (Psalm 62:12–13). David likewise implies the divinity of the Son in saying: "The Lord said to My Lord: Be seated at my right ..." (Psalm 110:1). The Jews object: It was the priests who sang this Psalm, not David himself, therefore, for a priest, it meant that God said to

David, the latter also being the priest's lord.<sup>1072</sup> Inghetto: Your learning is truly amazing! Do you not see that this Psalm was written by David, not by the priests, and that it says, "the Lord said to my Lord," not "to our Lord?" Also, David was never seated at the right hand of God. Furthermore, the Psalm continues: "I [God] begat you from the womb before the Morning Star" (Psalm 110:3, Septuagint and Vulgate). The Jews: We know that you Christians read it this way, but there is no "I begat you" in our text. Inghetto: How could God ever say to David, "You were in the beginning" [*tecum principium*]. Would you dare to say that "in the beginning" [of creation, Genesis 1:1], David was "in the middle of the splendor of the saints?" (Psalm 110:3). O Jews, do not tarry anymore, convert and admit that the Messiah has come!

The Jews, aware that Inghetto had now left the main track of the discussion, require of him that he returns to the exposition of Psalm 51, and stops evading the difficulties of this text by taking refuge in other texts.<sup>1073</sup> Inghetto: I could wish I had the wisdom to make such evasions, but I don't, and David did not have it either. The Jews: That was not what we meant, but please revert to the theme of baptism, which you have taken David's psalm (51) to be all about. Inghetto: Where were we? The Jews: We have put a mark on "Deliver me from all blood that I have shed" (Psalm 51:16). Inghetto: And what do you want to say about it? The Jews: You should read out loud what comes after it, and hear you own mouth condemn your view. Inghetto: I will indeed read the Psalm through right to the end. He then reads Psalm 51:17–21. The Jews: Thanks to God, you have judged yourself. Inghetto: In what exactly did I condemn myself? You think you have detected a speck in my eye but are not aware of the log in your own. The Jews: David said: "... so that the walls of Jerusalem be built" (Psalm 51:20), and "they will bring calves as sacrifices upon your altar" (Psalm 51:21). You see, everything you have said is negated by this one word.<sup>1074</sup> The Jews now burst into jubilant celebration of their victory, saying with great smiles: Answer! Answer us!

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<sup>1072</sup> At this point, it seems that some of the Jews present had heard of Nahmanides' take on this question at the Barcelona disputation, see *Vikuah* passage 93 above.

<sup>1073</sup> This accusation is repeated often in the Majorca Disputation and echoes the same charge in the roughly contemporary *Nizzahon Vetus*, § 155: "Be diligent in the study of Torah in order to be able to answer a heretic and question him. When you speak to them, do not allow your antagonist to change the subject, for it is the usual method of the assertive and impatient Gentile to skip from one subject to another. He does not continue to stick to the point, for when he realizes his inability to verify his statements, he begins to discuss other matters. One who argues with them should be strong-willed by asking questions or giving responses that deal with the specific issue at hand and not permitting his antagonist to extricate himself from that issue until it has been completed. Then you will find the Gentile thoroughly embarrassed; indeed, he will be found to have denied their central dogmas..." (translation according to Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, 169).

<sup>1074</sup> In the *Nizzahon Vetus*, § 213, Psalm 51:21 is quoted as proof that after the rebuilding of Jerusalem (after the Babylonian exile), sacrifices of animals were legitimately resumed, and will also be brought when Jerusalem is rebuilt in the future. See Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate*, 207–8.



Inghetto feigns to be dumbfounded, excusing his lack of response by the lack of a question from the Jews. The Jews respond by stating explicitly the implied question: Tell us: does not this text prophesy that the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and that calves will [again] be sacrificed on the altar of the Lord?

Comment: This question, formally being the last one apropos Psalm 51, brings in a new theme, viz. the question of concrete versus spiritual sacrifices. Inghetto had briefly commented on this at the very beginning of the dispute. He now reverts to it, on a much broader basis. For Inghetto, this is the final masterstroke of his argument from Psalm 51. He prefaces it, however, with two excurses. The first treats once more his favorite theme of the two ages. The second is an exchange of words concerning the disputants and the discussion as such.

(1) Inghetto: Did David live before or after Nebuchadnezzar? The Jews: Before. Inghetto: If we take Psalm 51:20–21 in a literal sense, David could either speak of the restitution after the exile under Nebuchadnezzar, or after your present exile, but David in Psalm 51 indicated neither of these. He did, however, speak about the exile at the time of Nebuchadnezzar in another Psalm. In Psalm 106:37–48, David says that Israel first was justly punished by exile because of their worship of demonic gods who required of the Israelites that they sacrificed their sons and daughters. After this, however, the Israelites will be gathered from the nations, and will again worship the Lord with great joy (in the Temple). This clearly points to the first exile under Nebuchadnezzar, and the restitution following it, not the present one. But David spoke about your present exile in yet another Psalm: In Psalm 109:2–8 (quoted in full), he complains [in the person of the Messiah] that his people reject him and plan for his removal. In what follows in this Psalm, it becomes evident that the Messiah's rejecters will be punished. This all, clearly, refers to the present exile of the Jewish people. Isaiah also prophesied to the same effect: "When you extend your hands [in prayer], I will turn my eyes away from you, and when you multiply your prayers, I will not hear" (Isa 1:15). Again, David said the same: "He will count your prayer as sin" (Psalm 109:7). You had good reason to rejoice if you recognized the truth of this. Or do you still want more verses to be quoted? In them, you will only find more condemnations of yourselves.

(2) At this point, the discussion about biblical texts turns into a discussion about the discussion itself. The Jews: You could be a great preacher; you know which words to use and how to embellish them. So, tell us, by God: Have you been a Franciscan or a Dominican Friar, or are you a priest – and from where have you acquired all this that you are telling us?

Inghetto: I am not a priest and have never belonged to any religious order. I am a merchant. Everything that I know, I have learned from the Jews and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. In my life, I have had many discussions with the Jews, especially in Provence and in

Alexandria in Egypt, where I discussed with this famous Jew called “Angel”, whom the Jews of Syria called King of Jerusalem.<sup>1075</sup> I also discussed with this ‘Beloasem’ from Babylon.<sup>1076</sup> If he is still alive, he is the most learned of the Jews.

The Jews: If you ever spoke with this man, tell us what he said to you! Inghetto: He only said that if I were a non-believer or a heretic concerning the Christian faith, his words and those of other Jews would make me a believer or a faithful, because what one Jew said, the next would contradict – as you have done among yourselves today. The Jews: That is what the Franciscans and the Dominicans also do. If anyone sets forth an argument, the others will contradict him, each promoting his own ideas. They would find it oppressive if all the savants were of the same opinion.<sup>1077</sup> Inghetto: True, as far as our learned men in the orders and the priesthood are concerned, they do in fact speak and decide according to their very own ideas, but only when refuting an adversary or illustrating one of their theses. When it comes to Christ and the law, however, they all speak with one voice. The Jews: But we know that Saint Augustine as well as Saint Gregory, Saint Jerome, and Saint Ambrose have all commented the same bible, but they have not spoken with one voice. Inghetto: These holy men left us commentaries on Scripture that are meant for our personal edification. In everything concerning Christ, they speak with one voice. And they are rightly called holy, you should not condemn them as unholy by the Law of Moses, nor should you condemn any pious and respectful Christian. For only one thing separates us and you: our respective views on whether the Messiah has come or not. But we all, Jews and Christians, adore the same one God, creator of heaven and earth. Do you really think that a sincere Christian, living according to his law and faith, deserves to be condemned by your law? The Jews: Truly, no!<sup>1078</sup>

With this, the two insertions are ended, and the Jews want Inghetto back on track concerning Psalm 51:20–21: Tell us, do you believe that the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and calves be brought upon the altar (of the temple)? Inghetto: In Hebrew “Jerusalem” means “vision of peace,” right? The Jews confirm this. Inghetto: It is in this sense David uses the word Jerusalem in this verse. This peace came when Christ was born. And the “walls” serve for

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<sup>1075</sup> Limor’s comment seems very plausible: What Inghetto had in mind, was the Jewish leader in Jerusalem, an offspring of the family of the Babylonian *Exilarchs* (therefore an envoy or ‘angel’). This Exilarch family claimed Davidic descent, and their man in Jerusalem could therefore, in analogy to the Christian king of Jerusalem at that time, be called by Inghetto the Jewish King of Jerusalem. See Limor, 255, note 255.

<sup>1076</sup> Again, I find Limor’s suggestion plausible: Beloasem is not the name of the person, but of his calling: he is a *Baal-Hashem*, a master of the secret wisdom of the Kabbalah, comprising the secrets of God’s name. See Limor, same note as above.

<sup>1077</sup> I find this a rather amusing observation!

<sup>1078</sup> Another example of the basic civility in this debate.

stability and security. Each one who believes in Christ thus builds up the walls of Jerusalem, that is, has eternal peace in Christ and sees God. Isaiah confirms this: “His peace will have no end” (Isaiah 9:6). Our Holy Church is therefore justly called Jerusalem since it proclaims this peace. Its walls are the holy fathers and teachers who proclaimed peace to the people, as the holy Apostles did, too. Jesus Christ said to them: Love each other, just like I have loved you (John 15:12; 14:27 is also quoted). His teaching was always about peace, for he taught that one should pray for one’s persecutors. When the Holy Church proclaims peace during mass, this is the very vision of peace.

The Jews: And how do you explain the calves upon the altar? Inghetto: How do you interpret “calf” (*vitulus*) in Hebrew? The Jews: This word signify the son (*filius*) of the cow, or the kid or the lamb, or any spotless animal. Inghetto: You spoke well when you said “spotless.” But you did not speak correctly when you interpreted *vitulus* literally as “son of the cow” (*filius vaccae*), and also comprising kids and lambs, because the male offspring of the cow is properly called *manzus*.<sup>1079</sup> But a literal interpretation is out of place here, since in Hebrew the word for *vitulus* can mean “a spotless and pure sacrifice.”<sup>1080</sup> The Jews: You seem to think that you can lecture us about our own language, assuming that you know it better than we do! Absurd! Inghetto: And what will you look like, when I have demonstrated – and made you admit – the truth of my claim?

He continues: In Psalm 51:19 David says: “A sacrifice worthy of God is this: a broken spirit and a contrite heart. You, my God, will not despise a contrite and humbled heart.” It is of no use to fast daily, give all one’s belongings to the poor and do all good deeds, unless it all comes from a pure and nice heart. A poet once said it this way: “If the soul does not pray, the tongue works in vain.” In the same Psalm (51), David combined hyssop with the water of baptism: “Sprinkle me, Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be purified. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (v. 9). The utility of combining hyssop with water should not be unknown to you, Master, being a physician. As you know, hyssop purges the lungs, and the lungs protect the heart. Everything that protects the heart should be nice and pure like gold. Those

<sup>1079</sup> It seems Inghetto is here Latinizing the Italian word *manzo*, meaning young ox, see Limor, 259, note 267.

<sup>1080</sup> In my paraphrase, I have tried to make sense of Inghetto’s somewhat dense and elliptic argument here. Dahan correctly notes that Inghetto’s linguistics are “not satisfactory” (Dahan, 233, note 137). *Parim* in Hebrew means young oxen, plain and simple, as does *vitulus* in Latin. But in Hosea 14:3, which Inghetto invokes later, the Masoretic text says that the Israelites will sacrifice “the *parim* of our lips,” which the Vulgate and Inghetto render over-literally: *reddemus vitulos labiorum nostrorum*. (Modern scholars suspect a faulty vocalization; *p<sup>e</sup>rim* would give the meaning “fruit of our lips”, and in synonym parallelism we have “words”.) Not unreasonably, Inghetto takes this to mean that the word *vituli* in Hos 14:3 means a pure and spotless *spiritual* sacrifice, viz. words of sincere repentance, and he obviously anticipates this interpretation as valid for Psalm 51:21 as well. See further below.

who receive baptism with a pure heart will remain pure, nice, and whiter than snow. But baptism is of no use unless received by a pure heart and a pure spirit.

Inghetto continues by quoting, in turn, Psalm 51:18 (God does not want animal sacrifices), Isaiah 1:11 (God finds the sacrifices of animals disgusting), Psalm 40:7 (God does not desire burnt sacrifices or sin offerings), and concludes by, once again, quoting Psalm 51:21: God does not require burnt offerings, but only pure and perfect human hearts. “(Only) then will you [God] accept right sacrifices, offerings and burnt offerings. Only then will they put *vitulos* upon your altar.” Only they who live rightly and pray to God are able to bring God the true *vituli* that really please him: the pure spiritual sacrifices. In your own Hebrew, such sacrifices are called *veshel[em]*, right?<sup>1081</sup> The Rabbi said no, but the Master affirmed it. The Rabbi then said: If this is true, we have lost.

The Jews now rose to leave, but Inghetto appealed to the Rabbi: Allow me to demonstrate to you that *vitulus* (young ox) can stand for “pure sacrifice.” Hear what the prophet Hosea says in the last chapter of his book: “O Israel, turn to the Lord your God, for your iniquity has made you fall. Take words with you, let us convert to the Lord, let us bring him the *vitulos* of our lips” (Hos 14:3). Tell me, Rabbi, how can one speak of the “young oxen” of human lips? Is it not evident that *vituli* here stand for words of repentance, “take words with you”? Such words are a pure sacrifice to God. They come from a heart purified by a “*vitulus*, a pure sacrifice (of words).” Only such a sacrifice is pleasing to God. This is the truth, and even you, Rabbi, cannot deny it. The Rabbi: It is true, we have lost completely.

One of the masters said: It has been a pleasure discussing with you, and when it suits you, I would like to talk more with you at the place which you decide. But it should not contain more than four to six people. They decided to meet again on the following Sunday in a park, armed with their books.

[Having agreed on this,] Inghetto asked the Master: Tell me, what is the truth? He answered: The truth is that this piece of cloth is green, that one black, and another red, and yours is yellow; and this building is made of stones and wood.<sup>1082</sup> Inghetto responded: This is not the truth, but rather statements about human and changeable things. The Master: So, what is the truth? Inghetto: The (unchangeable) truth is the Word of God. This is the truth of truths,

<sup>1081</sup> Dahan cannot explain the *veshel* of the Latin text, 237, note 140. Limor, however, emends it and reads *veshelem*, which is found in Amos 5:22, Limor, 261, note 277. This text reads (Hebrew): “Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings (*veshelem*) of your fatted animals I will not look upon.” The similarity of this text with the others quoted by Inghetto probably shows that he is not taking the “Hebrew” word *veshel(em)* out of thin air, but also that he is transmitting information misunderstood and taken out of its original context.

<sup>1082</sup> In an amusing way, Inghetto portrays his Jewish antagonist as a merchant, concerned with practical questions like the quality, color (and no doubt price!) of clothes.

and no one can contradict it. The Master: You are right; nothing is true like God's Word. Inghetto: That is why David affirmed: "The Truth has vanished from the earth; Righteousness looks down from the high heaven" (Psalm 85:12). The Master: He said this about the prophets. Inghetto: David speaks about the Truth and about the Righteousness in the singular, not the plural. He speaks about One, not many; viz. about the one Prophet about whom Moses said: "God will rise up a prophet from among your brothers, everyone who will not listen to him, shall be exterminated from his people" (Deuteronomy 18:15 and 18). David and the other prophets were certainly speaking about this one prophet, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of all those who believe in him.

The Jew said: I am dumbfounded by your wisdom. I think that if all the priests of Majorca were assembled, they could not have said what you have said. You have answered all our objections in such an allegorical way that I was unable to contradict you.

Having said this, the remaining Jews said *Adieu* and left. But the leaders of the Jews of Majorca, having learned about this humiliating outcome of the discussion, and especially that the Jewish participants had claimed Daniel was not a prophet, took counsel together and decided that no Jew should from now on engage in any discussion with Inghetto. They even issued an anathema on every person not abiding by this decision. On the pretext of this order, those who had agreed to meet with Inghetto the coming Sunday did not show up.

*Fourth discussion. Inghetto debates with a new-comer, Astruc Isaiah*

*First act: Their first meeting* (scene: under open air somewhere outside the city. Date: unspecified day later in May)

Some days after the whole discussion seemed to have come to its end, but still in the month of May, a new figure entered the stage. His name was Astruc Isaiah; he came with his wife to Majorca. Both claimed Davidic descent, but from a side branch outside the Solomonic line. Astruc was a learned man, a recognized teacher in the synagogues, an expert in Hebrew, and a skilled writer.<sup>1083</sup>

Astruc visited the local synagogue in Majorca and found two Jews who were turning pages and reading in many books. They appeared confused, very sad and gloomy. When asked why, they said Astruc would be better off by not knowing the reason for their sadness.

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<sup>1083</sup> Astruc Isaiah has not been identified with any person in the literature or documents from that time, but his first name was especially frequent among Jews in the kingdom of Aragon. This could indicate that he came from the same Spanish background as the other Jews with whom Inghetto argued in Majorca.

Astruc, of course, became all the more curious, and offered his advice, whatever the reason for their gloom might be. They still warned him that if he knew, his heart would be filled with the same sadness as theirs were. Astruc still insisted they should tell him what bothered them. After this, they told him about Inghetto and the sad fact that no Jew on Majorca had been able to answer him, “not even our great Rabbi.” Inghetto had said that if they could prove to him from the Scriptures that the Jews were to rebuild Jerusalem, he would convert to Judaism and become a Jew.

This was a challenge Astruc could not let pass unanswered. “I will show him, as well as you, very clearly [that we are to rebuild Jerusalem], from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and many other prophets, even David.” When he began doing so, they immediately recognized that he said the same things with which they had already confronted Inghetto. They added that Inghetto had argued that all the quoted prophecies spoke about the rebuilding that took place after the exile in Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar. Astruc said to them: Have you asked him for what sin the Israelites were held captive by Pharaoh 450 years? They answered no, and Astruc said: Bring me to this man; I will defeat him in front of you. They made him aware of the prohibition against having any discussion about religious matters with Inghetto. – But perhaps you could challenge him into a dispute, although we would not advise it. Astruc: This man for whom you have such fear, is he a priest? They said: No, we have already told you that he is a simple merchant like the other merchants, but his knowledge in religious matters is unusual. If you want to see him, go to the Genovese *loggia* and ask for Inghetto Contardo. He is a young man, and you will find him at once.

Astruc went to the Genovese *loggia*, and asking for Inghetto, was led outside the city where he found Inghetto with other merchants, enjoying the fresh air after their evening meal. Having complimented Inghetto for his good reputation among the local Jews, Astruc asked permission to ask Inghetto one question. Inghetto: It had rather be brief since it is now late in the day. If you come to the Genovese *loggia* early tomorrow, I will not only answer one brief question, but as many as you like. Astruc, however, put his question at once: For what sin was Israel taken captive by Pharaoh in Egypt for 450 years? What was the cause for this long exile? When Israel entered Egypt, they were only 70 souls. When they left Egypt, they were more than 70 thousand men, women and small children not included!<sup>1084</sup>

Inghetto: It would take more than a whole day to recount the whole story of how and why the Israelites ended up in Egypt – how Joseph was sold, how Jacob came to Egypt and all

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<sup>1084</sup> It seems the point Astruc is driving at is that this long exile was not punitive at all, but rather an expression of God’s mercy toward his people. The same could be the case with the present long exile.

that. I will, however, respond to the last part of your question: It was not God that made Israel captives in Egypt, on the contrary, he *delivered* them from that captivity. To this very day you Jews and we Christians say the same thing about this: “God, you who have led your people out of the land of Egypt and the hands of Pharaoh.”<sup>1085</sup> These words dumbfounded the Jew.

Astruc resumed the initiative, however, and asked permission to continue the discussion. The other Genovese merchants said they would listen with great interest, and the whole group went to a place where they could be seated. The Jew now presented four questions: (1) For which sin was Israel punished with the Babylonian exile of 70 years, and (2) for which sin is Israel punished in their present exile, which has lasted 1286 years since God, according to Christians, came by Mary. (3) Where is it written that the present exile of the Jews will last forever, as Inghetto had told the other Jews? (4) When are the 1290 days mentioned in Daniel 12:11 completed?<sup>1086</sup> Inghetto answered these questions in turn.

(1) The Babylonian exile was because of Israel’s sin with the Golden Calf, as Astruc himself certainly knows.<sup>1087</sup> Why ask at all?

(2) The present Jewish exile came about because the Jews, as Isaiah prophesied (Isa 1:15), were guilty of crucifying the Messiah – see also David in Psalm 109:10,12 (the children of the Messiah’s enemies becoming wandering beggars, driven away from their home, no one helping them). Innumerable passages confirm this.

(3) As shown earlier, the prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27 means that 490 years after Daniel’s vision, the epoch of the Messiah will come. Since Christ’s passion, the final seven weeks, 49 years, elapsed before the Temple was destroyed by Titus. According to Daniel, this destruction was final (9:26–27): Israel’s enemy would “destroy the city and the sanctuary... and the devastation would last until the consummation and the end.” From this the Jews can

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<sup>1085</sup> Exactly this phrase is not documented in the Roman liturgy nor the Jewish Passover liturgy, but sayings to the same effect occur in both, compare also Deut 5:15.

<sup>1086</sup> The question seems unprovoked by anything said earlier in the entire discussion. It was, however, a very live issue among Christians as well as Jews in the latter part of the thirteenth century. The Jews tended to take the 1290 “days” to be years, and to count them from the abruption of the Temple cult in 68 C.E. This gives 1358 as the year of the coming of the Messiah. This was Nachmanides’ interpretation of Daniel 12:11: In that year the Messiah ben Ephraim would come. Forty-five years after that (the 1290 + 45 = 1335 days of Dan 12:12), in 1403, the victorious Messiah ben David would appear. This and other Jewish end-time calculations, centering on dates around 1300, are reviewed in Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (orig. published 1927; latest reprint Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 82–101. Silver also reviews three Jewish self-proclaimed Messiahs from this period: Abraham Abulafia (1240 – after 1291); Samuel of Ayllon and Abraham of Avila. On the Christian side, radical Franciscans got very eschatologically high-strung as A.D. 1260 (and/or 1290) approached, and they remained so during the following 45 plus years (cf. note 1088 below).

<sup>1087</sup> As above, Inghetto here takes the general description of the sins of Israel in Jer 25:6 to be exemplified above all in the Golden Calf incident: *they went after other gods to serve and worship them, and provoked God to anger with the work of their hands*. In Jer 25:11 the punishment for this is said to be 70 years of servitude under the Babylonian king.

understand that their exile will not end before the world ends, but they should also understand that with Christ “an end was put to sin” (Dan 9:24), viz. when he atoned for all sin since Adam.

(4) The 1290 days of Daniel 12:11 equal the three and a half years of Daniel 12:7.<sup>1088</sup> With these 1290 days (literally understood as days), the time of the present world comes to an end. They are singled out because in this end-time period the Antichrist will reign, and the true believers in Christ will be severely persecuted. At the end of the period, a mass conversion of Gentiles and Jews will take place, lasting 45 days. This explains the 1335 days of Daniel 12:12.<sup>1089</sup> Inghetto underpins this interpretation with several sayings in Daniel 12 and others in Daniel 8:23–25. He ends with the following appeal:

[When the Lord’s judgement comes upon the Antichrist,] also you, o Jews, will recognize the coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. Within forty-five days he will be revealed throughout the entire universe in such a manner that all will believe in God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ, his Son, who was deemed worthy of saving us and being gracious towards us always and to the end of time. Amen.<sup>1090</sup>

Having listened to this exposition of the Daniel prophecy, Astruc requires a private conversation with Inghetto. They leave the others behind and are alone, the two of them.

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<sup>1088</sup> In ancient Jewish and Christian tradition, a year comprised 360 days (as in Revelation: 3½ years (“times”) = 42 months = 1260 days, Rev 11:2–3; 12:6.14; 13:5). Daniel 12:7, speaking of “three and a half times,” could accordingly be interpreted as equaling 1260 years rather than 1290. This explains why A.D. 1260 was an important end-time marker in Christian, especially Franciscan, end-time calculation in the thirteenth century, in part inspired by the eschatological prophecies of the abbot Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135 – 1202). When the year 1260 had passed, and no eschaton had taken place, one could suggest that the year from which to count was rather the passion and resurrection than the birth of Christ, which made 1290 the year of the end. In 1286, the year of the present dispute, this term was only four years away, and many Christian theologians warned strongly against such calculations. Inghetto follows one such strategy: By taking the 1290 days of Daniel 12:11 literally as days of 24 hours, the Daniel prophecy spoke about a three-and-a-half year’s period before the final eschaton but did not contain a term for the eschaton to be inaugurated or completed. This strategy undercut not only Christian end-time calculators, but also Jewish ones, like, e.g., Nahmanides (see next note). For this whole issue, see, for the Jewish material, Silver (as in note 1086), and for the Christian material, Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 45–70; esp. 48–55.

<sup>1089</sup> As was explained apropos Nahmanides’ exegesis of Dan 12:11–12, many Jewish interpreters explained the two dates of 1290 and 1335 “days” by the well-established doctrine of the two Messiahs: The Messiah of Ephraim would come after 1290 years, the Messiah of David after 1335 years (see Nahmanides’ *Vikuah*, passage 61).

<sup>1090</sup> Latin text: Limor, 274:6–11; my translation.



*Second act: the private conversation, Astruc Isaiah's conversion* (scene: several locations, date: several days)

Astruc began by saying to Inghetto that what the latter had said to his countrymen had been proved true in the dialogue that the two of them had just finished. He now recognized that “Our Lord Jesus Christ” had come as the Messiah, and that questions he had heard no answers to, be it among Christians or Jews, had now been clarified by Inghetto. He therefore now requested that Inghetto would guide him further towards the truth and bring him to baptism so that his soul should not perish but be saved together with all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He now believed in him in a pure spirit and with all his heart.

Inghetto, however, doubted the sincerity of Astruc, and said to him: You do not know the consequences of what you say. If you are baptized, you will be called “a dog, or son of a dog” by Christians as well as Jews. You will have to beg, and those who gave you a coin yesterday, will give you nothing more for a whole year. You will live in indignity, and possibly drown in despair. I advise you to remain as you are, the punishment of a false Christian is worse than that of a false Jew.<sup>1091</sup>

Astruc, however, was adamant: I am over fifty years of age and will save my soul while it is still time. If I die unbaptized my soul will be lost, and I will hold you responsible before God for this. I believe with certainty in Our Lord Jesus Christ; I will be baptized; and I demand of you in God's name that you lead me to baptism.

On hearing this, Inghetto thought with himself: Be this man sincere or not, I cannot take the responsibility of denying him baptism. He said to him: Since you want baptism, answer me: Do you believe in Our Lord Jesus Christ, born of Mary the Virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit? Astruc: I believe it and I am sure about it. Inghetto then proceeded with asking Astruc if he believed the whole second article of the Apostles' Creed, which Inghetto paraphrased before him in a somewhat expanded version, followed by a full quotation of Psalm 50. Astruc assured him that he firmly believed all this and added: Being so firm in my faith in Christ, it seems to me I cannot miss another hour before I receive the name Christian.

On hearing this, Inghetto asked him to say the same “ecumenical” prayer that he had enjoined upon his Jewish interlocutors earlier. Having said this prayer, he should keep vigil

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<sup>1091</sup> This Christian warning against conversion to Christianity from Judaism is interesting in many respects. (1) It is strikingly like the warning against converting to Judaism that Inghetto heard from the Jewish spokesman when he declared his willingness to conversion if he should be defeated in the debate. Sincerity of conviction was an issue for both parties. (2) The warning is altogether realistic in its predictions of the consequences for Jewish *convertos*. (3) It is hard to overhear an implied criticism of the ecclesiastical and royal politics that furthered these consequences.

the following night, praying and weeping and confessing his sins, making the words of the seven Psalms of penitence his own (Psalms 6; 32; 38; 51; 102; 130; 143). On the next day, he should fast, not drink or eat anything until the ninth hour. He should examine himself whether there still was anything he had not understood clearly. If so, he should seek Inghetto at the third hour, in order to have these things clarified. Should he die during the night, he would be safe in God's hand, and Inghetto would vouch for him, provided his heart believed what his mouth had confessed.

After these words, Astruc left Inghetto. The next day, he returned to Inghetto in the evening. Inghetto greeted him: Welcome, o' Jew! Astruc: Don't call me a Jew; call me a Christian in heart and will! Inghetto: Is there anything on your heart about which you are still unclear? Astruc: The more I reflect upon and consider the books of the prophets, the firmer I become in my belief in the Christ of God, Savior of the world. Inghetto: God be praised! Come with me, good and pious Christian, and prepare for baptism, so that tomorrow you can be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Inghetto led him to his own house. Astruc was still in fasting; now he ate and drank with the Christians present. The following day he was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen, in the Church of Saint Mary of Majorca. Let us praise God and Our Savior Jesus Christ, whom God has deigned worthy of saving us! The baptized was given the name Philip.

Inghetto then instructed him in the Christian faith as follows: Philip, be a good and pious Christian. Have trust in God, he gives grace and power to all those who set their hope in him. He suffered for our salvation so that he could free us from our enemy, the Devil, and liberate us from the sin of our first ancestor, Adam. David attests this in Psalms 31:6 and 49:16; Isaiah likewise, 61:1–3 (“... to announce freedom for the captives and liberty to those in chains...”) and 53:4–5 (“... he was wounded for our wrongdoings, bruised for our crimes...”). All the prophets proclaimed him. Honor his teaching: that which God values most, is patience. Without patience a human being cannot be perfect, as Jesus Christ himself said: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matt 5:9). Therefore, be patient always, keep God before your eyes, learn to do good and cease doing evil, as Isaiah said (Isa 1:16-17). When you meet opposition, be patient and always praise God. Love the Holy Church of God, and let it remind you of His passion. Honor our teachers and the Catholic faith. Confess your sins often. Do not sow discord, but to the best of your ability make peace among those who quarrel. Love all and treat them as brothers. Teach, as best you can, those who err from the way of truth. Keep company with good people, not with

bad. Give your neighbor what is due to him and let him hear only what is true from your mouth. Return a curse by a benediction, as Solomon said: A harsh word evokes wrath, a mild word calms rage (Prov 15:1).

Having said this, Inghetto led Philip to the Minor Friars (the Franciscans) and said to them: Teach him the New Testament and the Catholic faith and let us all in one mind keep the peace of Christ who was chosen to bring this peace. He is blessed to the age of ages.

Amen.<sup>1092</sup>

*Third act: Two miracles accompanying Astruc's baptism*

(1) The first miracle was that a series of events that first appeared to prevent Astruc from receiving baptism, were all surprisingly overcome. First, some of his fellow Jews told him, falsely, that his presence back in Catalonia was urgently requested. Astruc evaded by telling of news about pirates operating in the waters that had to be crossed, sailing now was therefore too risky. Secondly, he was told that a large royal vessel was sailing the same evening, with royal servants and even some Jews on board. This vessel was thus safe transportation. Astruc still sought a delay, and said he had to say farewell to his spouse and children. The Jews answered they would convey his farewell to his relatives. Finding no further reason for delay, Astruc found himself on board the ship, which lay at bay in the harbor basin. But God created a complete wind-still that night; the ship could not get out of the harbor. Astruc prayed to God for an escape, and suddenly a fisher's boat came near to the ship. Astruc asked the sailors on the ship to call the fisher's boat. When it came near, they shouted to those on board: By God, bring this man ashore. They did so. This was the first miracle.

(2) It had been agreed between Astruc's sponsors and Inghetto that his Christian name should be John, and this was the answer when the priest asked for the name of the candidate for baptism. Astruc, however, surprised all by saying "no, my name shall be Philip!" How

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<sup>1092</sup> I cannot but quote Ora Limor at this point: "One should note the role played by Inghetto at Astruc Isaiah's conversion. Not only does he convince him of the truth of the Christian religion; he also prepares him for baptism and teaches him Christianity. That is a quite expanded interpretation of the sponsor's role. For the [ecclesiastical] institutions there is hardly any role left in this process. This is another clear manifestation of the cultural and religious self-consciousness of this Genovese merchant" (Limor, 279, note 319, my translation). My own impression on reading the story of Astruc's "catechumenate" under Inghetto's leadership, was that Inghetto was following a kind of "manual" composed by himself; in any case that the different steps taken were something he had practiced many times over before this case. It is certainly no beginner in the conversion business we see in action here. – Inghetto bringing Astruc/Philip to the Franciscans: The Franciscan Convent at Majorca was founded in 1230 and functioned as a center for mission. It had a school in which Arabic was taught, perhaps an indication that the friars here were more into mission to the Muslims than to the Jews. See Limor, 281, note 329.

could the Jew know that the day when the process leading to his baptism began (i.e., the beginning of the debate), was the day of the apostles Philip and James (1 May).

*Fifth discussion (scene and date not specified)*

*Theme: God the Father and God the Son are clearly distinguished in Psalm 89*

After Astruc's baptism, the Jews were very disturbed and terrified because such a learned man as he, their Master, had converted to the religion of Christ. Somewhat later, Inghetto happened to catch sight of the Jew whom they called Rabbi. He took him aside and said to him: O' Rabbi, you have seen Astruc Isaiah choose the good religion and recognizing that Christ, the savior Messiah, has come. Do the same as he. I will show you from all the prophets that the Father and the Son are expressly named. Hear what David says in Psalm 89!<sup>1093</sup>

The Jew: Tell me what you have found there.

Inghetto answered by quoting from verses 27 and 28: "He invoked me by saying: You are my Father, my God, and the origin of my salvation. And I installed him as Firstborn, above the kings of the earth." While conversing about this saying, another Jewish 'Master' came by, and the Rabbi called on him to join them and listen to Inghetto's exposition. He praised Inghetto for his intelligence, proven by his ability to convert a learned and knowledgeable Jew [Astruc Isaiah]. Inghetto addressed the newcomer and said Astruc had acted wisely by abandoning his errors and walking now the way of truth and salvation. The 'Master' then asked the 'Rabbi' what Inghetto had said, and the latter answered with a reference to the two verses of Psalm 89. He did so in Hebrew, however. The Master then said to his Jewish friend, the Rabbi: You speak to Inghetto, I for my part declare defeat. There is no one on earth who knows how to answer him. – The two Jews left Inghetto, speaking Hebrew among themselves.

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<sup>1093</sup> Inghetto was not the first to use Psalm 89:27–28 as proof of the distinction in God between the Father and the Son. Dahan lists Cassiodore and Guillaume of Bourges (275, note 165); Limor refers to Augustine, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*; and Peter Damian, *Epistola contra Iudaeos* (284, note 333).

*Sixth discussion* (scene: given in the text; date: “another day”)

*First theme: Did David in his Psalms speak of himself or the Messiah Jesus?*

Another day Inghetto met the Master alone and asked him if even a single messianic prophecy fulfilled by Jesus would not be sufficient to show him being the Messiah. The Master agreed.

Inghetto: David said: “They have pierced my hands and feet; they have counted my bones” (Psalm 22:17–18); and “they gave me gall for my hunger and vinegar to drink for my thirst” (Psalm 69:22). None of these things happened to David; hence he is speaking here in the person of Christ [who suffered these things]. The Master: In the first quotation, David did not say he was wounded [by men], but in the Hebrew text he says that *lions* pierced him.<sup>1094</sup> This refers to David’s hiding from the Philistines, he stumbled into lions, and it was in his fear of them he said this.<sup>1095</sup> Inghetto: I am awestruck by your wisdom! How can you claim this in the light of what follows in the Psalm: “They observe me carefully, they have divided my clothes among themselves, they threw lots over my robe” (Psalm 22:18–19). Lions should have done this! No, this was done to Christ when the Roman soldiers crucified him.

*Second theme: More about the 1290 days in Daniel 12:11–12*

The Jewish Master now suggests they should not continue the discussion in public on the street, but rather retire into a nearby pharmacy. Inside, the pharmacist said to Inghetto: If you can convert this man, your medicine must be excellent! – They now found a shielded corner that could not be watched by passers-by.

The Jew now reverts to the 1290 days of Daniel. How does Inghetto understand them? Inghetto: The other day you told me you do not consider Daniel a prophet, why should I waste my time answering you? The Jew: True, but for God’s sake, please tell me your thoughts. Inghetto now repeats his former interpretation: The 1290 days equal the three and a half years the false Messiah of the ungodly shall reign. The author of the *Disputatio* is satisfied here to

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<sup>1094</sup> The Masoretic vocalization of the Hebrew text makes verse 17 read: “Dogs are all around me, a company of evildoers encircle me, like a lion, hands and feet.” This is hardly the original reading, but probably was the current one in 1286. In that case, the text presupposed by the Jew seems to be a mixture of the Masoretic and the Septuagint/Vulgate. The word for *lion* in the Masoretic text is the same as that taken as a verb in the Septuagint and the Vulgate: Greek *oryxan* and Latin *foderunt* can both be rendered “they dug out” or “they pierced.” But you cannot have the same word translated both ways, as is the case in the Jew’s quotation: *leones foderunt*. This probably means that Inghetto or the author knew that the word lion was present in the Hebrew text, but otherwise trusted the Vulgate rendering. It seems unlikely that a contemporary Jew with a decent knowledge of the Hebrew text would have done the same.

<sup>1095</sup> This is, at best, a misleading reference to 1 Sam 17:34–37: David, facing Goliath, boasted of his courage in saving a lamb from the jaws of lions and bears by killing them. The reference is probably due to Inghetto’s or his ghostwriter’s inexact memory.

say that Inghetto repeated the rest of his explanation of Daniel's prophecy, already presented to Astruc Isaiah.

When the Jew is quoted next, his words seem to express agreement with the whole of Inghetto's exposition of the Daniel prophecy (12:11–12), but not his insistence that "days" in the prophecy means 24-hour days. For the Jew, they are years (as they were for Nahmanides at Barcelona). He adds that if the Messiah comes in 1290 C.E., there is now only four years left before his coming.

Comment: In the years before 1290 C.E., the Jewish prophet and self-proclaimed Messiah Abraham Abulafia announced this year as the year of the eschatological "end" (*qetz*), when he, the Messiah, would bring redemption (of a spiritual nature) to Israel and to the worthy ones among the Gentiles.<sup>1096</sup> The Jew at the Majorca disputation probably alludes to such expectations when he says that he knows that "now" (i. e. 1286 C.E.) there are only four years left before the Messiah comes. There were also ideas around among the Christians to the same effect, in part inspired by the idiosyncratic writings of Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202). Especially, the so-called Spirituals among the Franciscans were deeply involved in such expectations, first dating Christ's return in 1260 and, when that term had passed, 1290. In other words, the years before 1290 were replete with eschatological expectations among Christians as well as Jews; mutual influence should not be excluded.<sup>1097</sup>

Inghetto takes the last saying of the Jew (about the four years) as an occasion to urge the Jewish Master to convert at once, since he does not know how long he will live.<sup>1098</sup> He continues: What holds you back is the love of your children, and also your craving for usury, this damned sin. Get hold of a Hebrew translation of the Book of Revelation, and you will find answers there to everything you wonder about, like the three-and-a-half times (of Dan 12:7) and the four beasts of Ezekiel (1:5–14). The Jew: I would like that. Inghetto: It exists only in the difficult language of Latin. In order to translate it into Hebrew, you need a person very competent in both languages. May God grant you mercy to act wisely, so that you may save your soul, and may I be granted the same, if that is His will. Have no fear: God will not

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<sup>1096</sup> For a comprehensive review of the Jewish material of this period, see Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel: From the First through the Seventeenth Centuries* (orig. published 1927; latest reprint Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 82–101. For Abulafia in particular, see Moshe Idel, "'The Time of the End': Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology," in *Apocalyptic Time* (Numen Book Series: Studies in the History of Religions LXXXVI; ed. Albert I. Baumgarten; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 155–85. For Abulafia, who was born in 1240, the turn from the fourth to the fifth millennium after the creation of the world, the year 50 of this fifth millennium, 1290, marked the end of the last, intense period of eschatological fulfilment, 1280–90. He derived these dates by the technique of *gematria* (since all the Hebrew consonants also have numerical value, each word has a numerical sum) applied to Dan 11:2; 12:7 and Isa 63:4, all pointing to the year 5050 of the Jewish counting from the creation, equaling 1290 of the Christian era. In Idel's article, I find no reference to Dan 12:11, the 1290 "days." But could it be that Abulafia's attention to this year of the Christian calendar was strengthened by the enormous Christian interest in it during the years 1260–90? (See next note).

<sup>1097</sup> For the Christian material, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 45–70; esp. 48–55. May I also refer to note 1075 above.

<sup>1098</sup> As it stands, the text can best be understood as an *argumentum ad hominem*. Inghetto himself did not believe in the Messiah's coming in 1290, but if the Jew did, he had all the more reason to convert as soon as possible!

abandon you, or any righteous person. He knows what your need is. David says: “God gives to the animals their food...” (Psalm 147:9); and “... I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Psalm 37:25).

*Seventh discussion* (scene: Inghetto’s house; date: not specified, but this is the last day of the discussions)

*First theme: Why do Christians make images and worship them?*

During these days, another very learned Jew came to Majorca. His compatriots told him about Astruc Isaiah’s conversion, and that there was no Jew in Majorca who could defeat Inghetto in religious debate. The newcomer asked them to arrange a discussion between himself and Inghetto and his convert. They willingly did so, telling Inghetto that this time he would meet his superior in knowledge. Inghetto declared himself ready, provided this man really were knowledgeable, discussing with the ignorant being a waste of time. The Jews now introduced Inghetto to the new Jewish sage, and they agreed to meet in Inghetto’s place. As before, the Jew insisted that Astruc, now Philip, should be present.<sup>1099</sup>

The Jew began by saying: You Christians astonish me when you produce and worship images and statues which neither understand nor hear. You act against the word of God by David: May those who produce idols, become like them, together with all those who put their trust in them (Psalm 115:8 ≈ 135:18). Inghetto: I have never seen, nor do I know, any Christian who made idols or images and worshipped them. The Jew: How can you say that, when your churches are full of images and statues, before which you light candles and which you worship? Inghetto: We worship neither idols nor images. We only worship the God who is in heaven, who is the Father, his only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives in unity and reigns eternally. We do not worship the images that you see in our churches. Our mother, the Holy Church, has placed them there as a mirror. When our bodily eyes see them, the eyes of our hearts see them too, and are reminded of the passion of Christ. He suffered for our salvation and for the redemption of humankind. Isaiah prophesied about it: He was wounded for our iniquities... (Isaiah 53:5 quoted in full). Other prophets also said the same.

But I will tell you: If any Christian or any Jewish friend needed hot water because of some malady, and I had no other available wood, I would take any wooden cross or other burnable holy picture and burn them to heat the water.

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<sup>1099</sup> So that Astruc could change his mind and revert to Judaism.

We owe these pictures respect, however, just like we pay respect to the pictures of a human king or sovereign. If anyone defaces the engraved picture of a king, he is in for severe punishment. Accordingly, o' Jew, do not think that we worship idols or other representations of God or the saints. We only pay them respect, in honor and remembrance of God or a saint, in whose similitude the images are made. You, Jews, do know this, and the argument you proposed is worthless, like trying to cover yourselves with dust, which really can cover nothing.<sup>1100</sup>

*Second theme: The Trinity*

The Jew: How come you Christians invent three Gods, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Inghetto: We do no such thing, and our Mother the Holy Church, expressly has forbidden us even to imagine or speak about three Gods. God is threefold in persons, but one in divinity. I will show you this clearly from the first of the holy books, Genesis. In the beginning God said: "Let us create man in our image and in our similitude" (Gen 1:26). When God speaks in the plural in this way, the plurality of persons in God is demonstrated.<sup>1101</sup>

The Jew: God was speaking to the angels. Inghetto: How come? Did the angels create the human being? You are making a blasphemous statement. The angels are not creators, they are created by God, as was said by David: "You who create the angels like the wind, and your messengers like the burning fire" (Psalm 104:4). In another place he says: "God speaks, and they are made; he commands, and they are created" (Psalms 33:9 and 148:5).

Inghetto proceeds by repeating his earlier arguments (1) that the triune God is speaking in Genesis 1:26 (as above) and (2) is witnessed to in Psalm 89:27–28 (above, fifth discussion), and in Psalm 62:12–13: The Father is speaking about himself when he says, in the third person: "The power is God's"; the Son and Holy Spirit are speaking when they say, in the second person: "You are, O Lord, full of mercy..."<sup>1102</sup>

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<sup>1100</sup> Limor, in her interesting note to this exposition about holy images – in particular the saying about using the wood of holy images as fire material if hot water is needed to save a human life – finds Inghetto's position extremely daring, "bordering on heresy." "One can hardly imagine a cleric formulate such an extraordinary position" (Limor, 291, note 354).

<sup>1101</sup> This theme is a classic in Jewish/Christian polemic, and Inghetto's first answer from Gen 1:26 is also a classic. But when he says that there is a "plurality of persons" in the one God, this seems to be the only occasion that he employs the more philosophical concepts that Tertullian crafted for Latin theologians, to be used ever since: God is one essence and three persons. This is not Inghetto's home ground, but biblical texts supporting the Trinity are, and here Inghetto, on occasion, expands the traditional dossier. Interestingly, when Astruc Isaiah takes over the debate, he adduces Isaiah 6:3, the threefold Holy, as proof of the one essence and the three persons, see below, pp. 405–406.

<sup>1102</sup> Quoted once before to the same purpose, see above, p. 387. Neither Dahan nor Limor quotes any reference to these verses prior to Inghetto. They may be his own discovery.



He then adds Trinitarian analogies in nature: A fig tree has leaves, fruit, and wood, but remains one tree. Or take the sun: It remains in the heavens, while its rays of light and beams of heat enlighten and heat the earth – three distinct things making up one sun.<sup>1103</sup> And just as the sun remains in heaven, while its rays illumine the earth, in the same way only the Son was incarnate on earth. You can beat the earth, but the sunlight illuminating the earth is not thereby beaten. In the same way your ancestors thought they could kill Jesus Christ by crucifying him [in his flesh]. But being [as God’s son] immortal, his divinity did not suffer. Similarly, they who pierce the earth do not thereby pierce the sun; it retains its full power always. And if you take a pole or a spade up from the earth, the light returns to the spots you had dug up or beaten. In the same way, when the body of our Lord, Jesus Christ, God’s Son, had died and been interred; on the third day he rose and forty days thereafter he ascended to his Father in heaven. He now lives and reigns in unity with God the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally.

I will also show you that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Those who do not see the sun nor its light, do not perceive its heat either. If you object that a *blind* person feels the sun’s heat even though not observing neither sun nor light, I answer that a blind person can still perceive heat without seeing, just like the human soul can be perceived without being seen. Indeed, the Holy Spirit can similarly be perceived because no one can live without its grace. And just as the earth remains cold and sterile when the sun and its light are out of sight, and therefore also the sun’s heat is absent, in the same way the person who does not believe in the Father and the Son will also be cut off from the grace of the Holy Spirit and will therefore miss out on the joys of eternal life. This is the case with you Jews, therefore you cannot be saved. That is why I urge you to recognize the Trinity so that you can bear fruit and share in the heavenly joys.

After Inghetto had said this, Philip (former Astruc Isaiah) took over, speaking Hebrew, and proved the Trinity from the Prophets. Inghetto asked him to speak Latin, so that he also could follow the exposition and respond, but Philip asked him to keep silent; he would afterwards tell Inghetto exactly what he had said in Hebrew. He continued his Hebrew exposition, which left the Jew thunderstruck. Afterwards, he spoke Latin and said he had proved the Trinity from Isaiah 6:3, the angels saying “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God of Hosts...” First, the *three* holies mean: Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, whereas the *one* Lord, God of Hosts, means that the three persons are one Divinity. Had God been one person

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<sup>1103</sup> The analogy of the sun, its light and heat, has its origin early in the Patristic period, and returns repeatedly thereafter. We found it in Alfonsi’s *Dialogue*, Titulus 1 and 6.

only, there would have been just one “holy”: Holy is the Lord God. Had God been three divine essences, the text should have been: Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God, the Lord God, the Lord God.

Inghetto now said to the Jew: You have heard Philip, a new soldier of Christ. Defend yourselves against him. If you will do what is right, do as he has done. The Jew: Isaiah has said: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has anointed me; he has sent me to announce his word to the meek and healing to those with a broken heart” (Isa 61:1). Inghetto: This was exactly what I had planned to say to you, so I think that in your heart you are a Christian. The prophet is clearly speaking in the person of Christ since he continues: “... to preach grace to the captives and freedom to those in chains.” The Jew: Isaiah said all this to the Jewish people when they were captives in Babylon. Inghetto: True, but he also said: “They will rebuild the abandoned cities, abandoned for many generations” (Isa 61:4). Your cities have not been rebuilt, they have rather been destroyed and annihilated, and you have become exiles all over the world. This is the contrary of that prophesied, accordingly it applies to Jesus Christ. The Jew: Our Masters and our Sages in their commentary have interpreted the text like I have said, and one should believe them. Inghetto: Who should one rather believe, your masters or the prophet? The Jew: Our masters, because they lived afterwards, saw what happened and knew the truth. Inghetto: You are speaking out of ignorance: One should believe the prophet rather than your masters – I submit this to the judgement of your coreligionists. Inghetto then explained the matter of contention to the Jewish masters. They spoke in favor of believing the prophet rather than the commentary [of the Jewish scholars].

*Third theme: Prophecies concerning the Messiah's passion*

Inghetto: I will show you that the passion of Christ was clearly set forth by David in Psalm 22 and by Isaiah in chapter 53 (vss. 1–12 quoted in full). Dear Jew, recall this text, go home, and study your Scriptures. In them you will discover the passion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And you will find nothing contradicting or refuting that everything said about this has been accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Jew did not respond directly to this but said he would bring his books and especially the book of Daniel. He requested that they should meet again in a place where they could not be attended by such a crowd of people. Inghetto invited him to his own home, where only the Jew, his friends, and Inghetto himself would be present. But he asked the Jew whether he considered Daniel a prophet. The Jew: Yes indeed, and one could even say more

than a prophet regarding sanctity and righteousness. Inghetto: But your coreligionists, the most learned on the island, have said that Daniel was not a prophet. On hearing that, the Jew left him and would not come back to continue the discussion.

Comment: The ending is abrupt and definitely not the final climax that one would expect if the entire *Disputatio* were, first and foremost, a literary composition with a somewhat loose connection to the events it pretends to talk about. On the contrary, such features as this abrupt ending, and the many rather uninventable details in the narrative which play no argumentative role concerning the questions debated, speak, at least to my mind, for the basic trustworthiness of the narrative. If post-event polishing and refinement, and even additions, have been made – and on one occasion the writer explicitly says that this is the case – then this is to be expected more in the argumentative passages than in the narrative.

### 3. General Comment

I find it very enlightening to compare the Majorca disputation with the Barcelona event 23 years earlier, which was clearly known by the Jewish participants at the Majorca dispute, and directly, or through them, also by the writer of the Majorca *Disputatio*. In the following, I will try to show that it makes sense to think that, to a considerable degree, the writer of the *Disputatio*, a close friend and perhaps a relative of Inghetto, wrote his book as a conscious contrast to the Dominican Protocol of the Barcelona disputation; perhaps he also knew the contents of Nahmanides' *Vikuah*. In favor of this hypothesis, I list some salient points.

(1) *Barcelona*: The King summoned the foremost Jewish rabbi to take part, the Dominicans one-sidedly set the terms of the debate. The Christian side had the right to put questions to the rabbi, he only had the right to answer them, not return questions, because the truth of Christianity was beyond questioning.

*Majorca*: The initiative came from the Jewish side. Inghetto wanted *the Jews* to put questions to *him*, whatever questions they liked. And as far as the truth concerning the two faiths was concerned, he promised to convert to Judaism if he be convinced that Judaism was the truth. He put his own Christian faith at risk in the debate and challenged his interlocutors to do the same concerning their faith.

(2) *Barcelona*: The Dominican argumentative strategy presupposed that the Christian participant had expert knowledge of rabbinic literature, to match the rabbi.

*Majorca*: There is no question brought forward concerning rabbinic literature in this disputation. Both parties restrict themselves to interpreting texts in the Hebrew bible – in this sense the Majorca disputation looks “oldfashioned” compared with the earlier one in Barcelona. The new strategy of proving Christianity from the Talmud is entirely absent. But this also means it has nothing of the artificiality or abstractness that mars the Dominican

argument at Barcelona. The question of which books the argument should be based upon, is only raised regarding Daniel at Majorca; rabbinic literature is never brought into the discussion.

(3) *Barcelona*: To decide the outcome of the debate, and declare the winner, a very high level of learned expertise in rabbinics was necessary. The Christian spokesman was a Jewish convert with a decent Jewish education, and he had learned his arguments by reading rabbinic books. And he was a Friar, with a good Christian education as well. Nahmanides was the greatest of rabbis in his time, certainly in Spain, possibly in the world.

For most of the audience, Christians and Jews, the disputation itself would have been hard to follow. The audience would have to rely on what their authorities said concerning winning or losing.

*Majorca*: The contestants are laymen, merchants, there is a basic equality in their cultural and “bookish” level. For the most part, Inghetto as well as his Jewish antagonists express themselves simply and straightforward, and even the modern reader recognizes the sheer fun it must have been to watch Inghetto apparently paint himself into corners, only to extricate himself triumphantly at the end. What makes this technique work so well, is the fact that the Jewish objections are often formulated so as to seem quite convincing. It is this that makes the Majorca document such a charming read, compared with the more somber and aggressive tone of the Barcelona narratives.

(4) *Barcelona*: Although the Dominican strategy *prima facie* was based upon the exclusive use of arguments, not force, to produce conversions; there were also other means of a more brutal nature available should arguments fail. One of these means was regularly used before the argumentation began: Jewish attendance at the missionary preaching of the Dominicans was not voluntary but obligatory. At Barcelona, we see this, not so much at the disputation proper, but clearly in the synagogue event after the disputation. And in the follow-up after the whole Barcelona event, the Dominicans urged the king to give edicts commanding the Jews to attend to Paul Christian’s missionary campaigns all over the kingdom of Aragon, and the king did. (It is not difficult to observe that the king did this under pressure, and finally he did in fact revoke these royal orders).

In Paris, seven years later, the element of coercion and outright threats and intimidation – of the Jewish participants as well as the Jews in attendance at the disputation – and afterwards of all the Jews in the kingdom, is for all to see. This aspect seems to have followed Paul Christian during his entire career as a missionary.

*Majorca*: What makes the Majorca *Disputatio* such a pleasant read, is the almost total absence of this aspect. The Christian merchant and the Jewish merchants are colleagues, they are used to having business with each other, in many ways they meet on equal footing, and the Christian missionary has no means of coercion up his sleeve. True, the contestants are often rather outspoken about how silly they find the arguments of the other side, but one gets the feeling that this is inside the rules of the game, and that there is a basis of mutual friendship during the whole event.

(5) *Barcelona*: As I have argued, the few public disputations were arranged with the intention of producing mass conversions. This would be the outcome when the new missionary strategy succeeded in making the rabbis admit that their own Talmud contained sayings underpinning the truth of Christianity. Seen from this perspective, Barcelona was a complete failure, no single conversion is recorded.

*Majorca*: What the learned Dominicans could not accomplish was done by a Genoese layman, a simple merchant at that. He did not need a spectacular arrangement, he did not need expertise in rabbinica, it was enough to argue from the Hebrew bible's canonical books.

Unlike the Barcelona disputation, the Majorca dispute resulted in at least one conversion, the possibility of more is left open.

It is interesting to notice that the Majorca report seems to be self-consciously aware of all these differences between the two events. First: the Barcelona disputation is known to the author of the Majorca report. He makes the Jewish side in Majorca inform Inghetto about it. The Jews introduce this information by saying that the question they have just put to Inghetto, is clearly beyond his competence, because even if all the priests, all the Minor Friars and the Preachers and all the other Christian teachers and learned men were united in one place, they could not explain this. How can you, a merchant, think yourself capable of doing it? You deceive yourself. You should better leave this to the Preaching Friars and the Minor Friars, whose business it is to discuss and deliberate these matters (see above, pp. 357, 380–81, 389, 394).

By having them say this, the author effectively increases the triumph of Inghetto, when the latter brilliantly solves the problem. The contrast between the wisdom of the self-taught layman *vis-à-vis* the non-productive learning of the Christian experts could not be made clearer. But the author, not satisfied with this, allows Inghetto to make an ingenious response to the Jews' report on the unsuccessful outcome of the Barcelona disputation, seen from the Christian side. He says that with Paul Christian as their representative, the Christian

side cannot have made such a lackluster performance as claimed by the Jews. But even if it were so, why cannot the Jews, then, do better in their present discussion with a simple layman? Beating the layman Inghetto should be much easier than beating Paul Christian! And if the Jewish rabbi's refutations of Paul Christian's arguments are available to you, how come that you don't use them to beat me? To this the Jews say that Inghetto would not understand such difficult matters. I suspect the Christian author of insinuating that the Jews themselves did not feel quite up to the intricacies of the learned debate concerning rabbinic sayings between Nahmanides and Paul.

Inghetto concludes with poorly concealed pride: You blush because you have been defeated and beaten by a simple layman, a merchant. What would you have done if your opponent were a specialist in Holy Scripture?

The real sting of the last sentence is better understood when one remembers that lay reading of the Bible, not to speak of interpreting it, was prohibited by the Pope already at the council of Toulouse in 1229 (see above, p. 203).

But the Christian reporter of the Majorca disputation is not yet satisfied with his emphasis on Inghetto's superior wisdom. He makes the Jews say that Inghetto would have been a great preacher; he knows which words to use and how to embellish them. They ask, could it be that Inghetto had once been a Franciscan or a Dominican or even a priest since he has this mastery of the Scriptures? Inghetto's answer is no, he has never been other than he is now: a merchant. All he knows, he has learned from debating with the Jews and with the help of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, he had debated the two uppermost Jewish authorities in his time, the Jewish Nasi or King of Jerusalem, and the greatest rabbi from Babylonia (see above, pp. 389–390).

On a third occasion, a Jewish opponent has the following to say: I am dumbfounded by your wisdom. I think that if all the priests of Majorca were assembled, they could not have said what you have said. You have answered all our objections in such an allegorical way that I was unable to contradict you (see above, p. 393).

Finally, when Astruc Isaiah said to his fellow Jews that he wanted to debate Inghetto, they warned him that he was a formidable opponent. He asked: This man for whom you have such fear, is he a priest? They said: No, we have already told you that he is a simple merchant like the other merchants, but his knowledge in religious matters is unusual (see above, p. 394).

In conclusion, I think one has every reason to say that the Majorca account of successful missionizing by Christian lay-people debating Jews based on common Scriptures, is a very well-constructed rejoinder to the Latin protocol of the Barcelona disputation. The

whole Barcelona event is simply considered a fiasco resulting from a faulty missionary strategy.

But this polemical purpose was not the only motive for publishing the Majorca report. The writing clearly belongs to the larger group of writings in which an author describes a successful missionary debate to arm other Christians with arguments they can use in similar debates in which they may happen to take part. In Inghetto's case, the addressees of the author's work seem to have been specifically the large group of Christian merchants taking part in the Mediterranean trade. The report on Inghetto's debate re-used material from the earlier published report of a similar debate between a Genovese merchant and the Rabbi of Ceuta. One could say that the Majorca report increased the now available dossier of good arguments that could be used and re-used in future debates between Christian and Jewish merchants.

And this is not the end of the story. Around 1300 a Genovese Carthusian monk – who also, perhaps earlier in his life, was active as a diplomat and a merchant, Porchetto Salvaygo, and with whom Inghetto had business – wrote an anti-Jewish tract, later entitled *Victoria adversus impios Hebraeos*.<sup>1104</sup> In this work, he updated the Genovese dossier of arguments against the Jews with some of the rabbinic material in Marti's *Pugio*, which he explicitly mentions as his source. He only quotes the Latin parts of this work. This happened when Inghetto was still alive. So, there were three Genovese merchants contributing to the development of fully updated missionary tracts for use in the mission towards the Jews: Guglielmo Alfachino, Inghetto Contardo, and Porchetto Salvaygo.<sup>1105</sup>

Like some other writings in this genre, the Majorca report opens a window to something that probably happened quite often among travelling people who routinely had business with other people across religious boundaries. Behind the few documented encounters, there were certainly many more undocumented ones. But there is no reason to doubt that Inghetto was outstanding among the missionary merchants.

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<sup>1104</sup> See Limor, 9–10 and 25–26; and Schreckenberg III:356–57.

<sup>1105</sup> The only one of this triad mentioned in Peter Browe's otherwise very comprehensive gallery of missionaries, *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste* (Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae 8; Rome: Herder, 1942) is Porchetto Salvaygo, whom he renames Victor Porchetto, Victor obviously taken from the first word of the title of his book. Browe, pp. 104 and 108. Alfachino and Inghetto were unpublished and thus apparently unknown in 1942.

*Addition 2021: Jewish/Christian Debates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*

I am inspired to write a few words on the continuation of the history of debates and conversations between Jews and Christian in Spain after the thirteenth century, because this aftermath of the official as well as the private disputes is quite interesting, quite extensive, and in many ways more productive than those of the thirteenth. My inspiration comes from re-reading Ram Ben-Shalom's "Between Official and Private Dispute."<sup>1106</sup>

The Barcelona Disputation 1263 inaugurated several missionary campaigns by Dominican and other preachers, some of them Jewish converts, and though attendance at these preaching events was sometimes compulsory for the Jews, the Jews were only told to keep silent during the preacher's presentation; afterwards the floor was open for real debates. Often this latter point was said explicitly in the royal decrees regulating these events. With time, it seems the Jews often took part in such semi-official discussions voluntarily and enjoyed making a good case for their own religion.

Just one example: Isaac ben Moses Arama (c. 1420 – 1494), a Spanish rabbi, reports that he once engaged in a dispute with a Christian preacher from Aragon. The preacher had first delivered a sermon before a mixed audience of Christians and Jews,<sup>1107</sup> and afterwards a number of Christian and Jewish scholars met to discuss it – quite openly and freely. The rabbi picked the preacher up on the question of predestination. The preacher had followed Thomas Aquinas on this question, but Arama could agree only in part (praising the preacher for his wisdom) but not fully; a quite advanced discussion of the problem of free will followed, each side speaking openly with no fear of unpleasant consequences.<sup>1108</sup>

Arama described how Jews living in a Christian city came of their own accord to hear Christian sermons, and how free intellectual discussion between Jewish and Christian scholars took place. We know about this phenomenon from other sources, and, what's more, about Christians coming to hear Jewish sermons in the synagogues.<sup>1109</sup>

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<sup>1106</sup>“Between Official and Private Dispute: The Case of Christian Spain and Provence in the Late Middle Ages,” *AJS Review* 27 (2003):23–72.

<sup>1107</sup> It was also located outside the Jewish quarter; this, and the mixed audience, make Ben-Shalom posit that this was not a meeting the Jews had been forced to attend. In general, he states, “Since the thirteenth century, the Jews of Aragon had been occasionally required to attend sermons delivered by Christian missionaries in the *aljama* and the synagogue. In the fifteenth century many willingly attended these sermons, drawn by their philosophic content” (p. 30).

<sup>1108</sup> For a full account, see Ben-Shalom, 29–35.

<sup>1109</sup> Ben-Shalom, 35. For the last statement, he refers to Baer II:251, who here says that “in circles close to the government and at the courts of the kings and princes, intimate ties of friendship were cemented between Jews and Christians... The official records also mention friendly intercourse between Jews and Christians as



On other occasions, the setting of a discussion could be even more spontaneous, and sometimes the Jewish side took the initiative. According to Ben-Shalom, “the Jews ... preferred to debate in the unofficial channel. The results of most of the official disputes in the Middle Ages were, for them, disastrous.”<sup>1110</sup>

Did such non-official discussions sometimes result in conversions? The simple answer is yes. In principle, this could happen both ways. But in a society in which converting from a discriminated minority group to the large majority group has its benefits, while converting from Christianity to Judaism would, by law, result in a death sentence,<sup>1111</sup> conversions were mostly a one-way traffic of Jews becoming Christians. All the available evidence speaks about this type of conversion. And this evidence is clear and explicit. For example, as early as ca. 1260, the rabbi of Narbonne, Meir ben Simeon, had a dispute with the archbishop of the city, Gui Fulcodi. He reports on this debate in his polemic book *Milhemet Mizvah* (*A Prescribed War*). In the course of the debate, the archbishop confronted his adversary with the following fact: There had been a change in who converted among the Jews. “In the past, only those on the margins of Jewish society converted. Now, the community’s intellectuals and wealthy were converting.”<sup>1112</sup> Meir would have no interest in rendering this saying of the archbishop, without disputing it, had he known it was not true. Until 1258, Narbonne had for a time been Aragonese territory, and hence was part of the Aragonese “Mediterranean Empire.” That, as we have seen, was also the case with Majorca (since 1230). In other words, when the archbishop of Narbonne speaks about the intellectuals and the wealthy as potential converts, one is reminded of the Jewish group Inghetto addressed at Majorca: religious leaders and merchants. Thus, the words of the archbishop of Narbonne supply a precise description of the sociological setting in which Inghetto’s disputation should be placed. Again, Inghetto may have been extraordinarily qualified with the gift of persuasion, but the kind of event the *Disputatio* describes, was certainly not unique. The conversion of Astruc Isaiah was hardly unique either.

In short: In situations where a basic equality and a basic friendship placed the contestants on common ground, and in which no coercion, no hidden threats were applied, in

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something that was taken for granted. On the Jewish festivals, Christians visited their Jewish friends at the synagogue and in the *succah*.”

<sup>1110</sup> Ben-Shalom, 36.

<sup>1111</sup> As the ‘Master’ reminded Inghetto when the latter said he would convert to Judaism if convinced of its truth!

<sup>1112</sup> Ben-Shalom’s paraphrase of Meir’s text in the *Milhemet*, Ben-Shalom, 49.

such contexts frankness and outspokenness thrived, and sometimes Jews were convinced by arguments to change their faith.

*The Thirteenth Century in Spain: Concluding Remarks*

I said in my Introduction that since the Visigothic takeover in Spain, the Iberian Peninsula was in many ways different from the rest of Latin Christendom, especially concerning the situation for its Jews. This characterization of Spain as a different case, different compared with its closest neighbors, eastwards and northwards, remains true right up to the final expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492/93, and from Portugal 1496/97. In France (1306) and in England (1290), they were expelled two hundred years earlier.<sup>1113</sup> This reflects the different conditions for the Jews of Spain on the one hand, and especially the Jews of the French monarchy on the other. This difference had to do with factors that were clearly to be seen in the thirteenth century.

As was shown above, in the thirteenth century the Church reached its peak in centralizing the Church under the Pope's leadership, and in making this power equal to, and sometimes even greater, than that of the Christian kings. Here, the kings of Aragon and Castille were the most independent and often imperceptive to Papal orders. This is true especially of the kings of Aragon, Jaime I (1213–1276) and Jaime II of Majorca (1276–1311). When the Lateran council 1215 mandated the Jewish badge to prevent socializing between Christians and Jews, there is no trace of any follow-up of this decree in Aragon. And when the Pope backed the Dominicans in Spain in their efforts to have the Rabbi of Gerona punished for his publication of the *Vikuah*, the king simply ignored the Papal orders. He also revoked the measures against Nahmanides which the Dominicans had pressured him to impose at first. In short, the Aragonese king boycotted ecclesiastical rulings against the Jews as best he could.

In France, we find the opposite picture. As in Aragon, one king ruled for the greater part of the thirteenth century, Louis IX (1226–1270). He was the almost over-obedient son of the Church, and obeyed the Papal orders to the letter, e.g., in the campaign against the Talmud and in forcing his Jews to attend at Paul Christian's missionary campaigns.

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<sup>1113</sup> The expulsion from France in 1306 was the first one in a series of recallings and new expulsions until the final expulsion in 1394. See Simon R. Schwarzfuchs, "The Expulsion of the Jews from France (1306)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57 (1967): 482–89. The English expulsion was final until they were readmitted in the middle of the seventeenth century by Cromwell.

After the turn to the fourteenth century, the Papacy abruptly lost its strong position, and entered the humiliating “Babylonian captivity” of the Avignon period (1309–1376). The Popes were now appointed by the French King and were dependent on him. In the fifteenth century it was the Reform Councils that took over the real leadership of the Church, deposing and installing Popes as they wanted. How this impacted the Jews is for another volume to describe. For the Jews of Spain, it was still not decisive what happened outside Spain. The development towards the expulsions 1492 and 1497 was mainly a process peculiar to Spain.

The most significant gamechanger regarding treatment of the Jews in the thirteenth century was the re-definition of Judaism. It was now no longer regarded as being the religion of the Old Testament to which the Jews were still clinging due to their not recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. Instead, it was now discovered that they had produced a new Law, a book much bigger than the Old Testament, called the Talmud or the Oral Law. It was found that this new law in practice overruled and sometimes even suspended the law of Moses. And worse still: This book contained extremely blasphemous sayings about Jesus, his mother, his disciples (the Christians), and allowed Jews to lie to them and even kill them. This meant: Judaism as such was heretical, and it contained heretical ideas. This transfer of Judaism from the category of true but outdated religion, to heresy plain and simple, was dangerous for the Jews. It meant that in the wholly unified and purified Christian society that now was within reach, there was no place for heresy of any kind, including Judaism. – Again, France under Louis IX was the kingdom most perceptive to this new idea, while Aragon was probably the most resistant of all the kingdoms within the pale of the papacy.

The almost obsessive fear of heresy that characterized the thirteenth century was the backside of a coin that had national and European unification on its front side. Latin Christendom was, as never before, united under the leadership of the one Pope in Rome. On the other hand, emerging national states were also striving towards national, political, and cultural unification under one king or one prince. Spain had experienced one such period earlier, under the Visigothic kings. Now it came back, but because of the legacy from the period of the Muslim dominance, the situation of the Jews was, for most of the time, relatively favorable. But in the latter half of the thirteenth century, there appeared forebodings of a more sinister future. These forebodings came through the activity of Paul Christian and the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans, in Spain. Their advocacy of coercive measures against the Jewish heresy was

held in check by the Aragonese kings, only to reappear with a vengeance toward the end of the fourteenth century, resulting in the pogroms around 1391 and the Tortosa Disputation of 1413–14, both events accompanied and followed by mass conversions.

This, no doubt, whetted the appetite of all those in Spain who fought for full Spanish unity, employing the two recognized methods to achieve it: *conversion* of the Jews and expulsion of those who remained resistant. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the “success” of the first method had been so great that the latter method could be used on those who remained Jewish. The *Marranos* or *Conversos* had reached such numbers that the rest of the Jews could be dispensed with. Absolute cultural and religious uniformity seemed, at last, to be within reach. The complicated processes and the decisive reasons for this tragic end of Spanish Jewry are still the subject of scholarly debate.

The thirteenth century was also the one century in which Jews, Muslims, and Christians tried to unite into one coherent whole their respective faiths on the one hand, and on the other hand the purely rational theology that scholars of all three faiths had been working to develop during the preceding two centuries. In the two preceding centuries, Jews and Muslims had fostered the best brains in this endeavor, but during the thirteenth century one senses that the Christian side is catching up. In the titanic synthesis that was constructed by Thomas Aquinas, Christians had an apparently unassailable fortress of *ratio* underpinning *auctoritas*. There are examples of Jewish warnings against debating with Christian theologians who were schooled in Thomas’ system. They felt they were lagging behind regarding the advanced rigor of method and argument in this system.<sup>1114</sup>

There can be no doubt that the Christian Latin theologians, on the other hand, had a feeling that during the latter half of the thirteenth century they had finally not only come abreast of their Jewish and Muslim antagonists; they had surpassed them. To themselves, this certainly appeared as a great intellectual victory. By superior rational arguments, their faith could triumph by reason and argumentation, not coercion.

But there was a catch in this; first observable in the rational theology of the Almohads. Because the Almohad version of the Islamic creed was fully rational, it could not be allowed

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<sup>1114</sup> I should add, though, that these warnings occur in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when the knowledge of Thomas (d. 1274) became more widespread among the Jewish scholars. See Ram Ben-Shalom, “Between Official and Private Dispute: The Case of Christian Spain and Provence in the Late Middle Ages,” *AJS Review* 27 (2003):23–72, here at pp. 68–70. He quotes, e.g., Abraham Bibago (ca. 1420s – 1480s) who said that he agreed “to interpret Aristotle as a result of Christian superiority in the dispute.” Joseph Ya’avetz (before the expulsion 1492): “And it is known that all the scholars of Israel who philosophize in this period do not reach the ankles of the scholars of Edom [Christians].” (Quoted here from note 256, page 68, in Ben-Shalom’s article.)

for any human being to deny it. Anyone doing so, would prove that he or she was not living up to a universal command for all human beings: to live and think according to universal reason. We see the phenomenon of *totalitarian* reason. This was adopted by the Church, and we see it in full blossom during the Tortosa Disputation. For the Church, it may at that time have been perceived as a great intellectual victory, for later generations it looks more like a great moral and spiritual catastrophe if not to say bankruptcy.

I do not like to end on this negative note, so I add a positive one. It comes as a relief when one turns to the story told above about the “private” debates between Christians and Jews. The decisive point here is the absence of pressure or coercion. The participants meet on almost equal footing and under as “free” circumstances as were available at that time. Terms were not fully equal, considering that the Jews were a minority among a large majority of Christians. But when, for example, one reads the debate between Inghetto Contardo and the Jewish sages and merchants of Majorca, this asymmetry is – in surprising measure – almost non-existent. Under such circumstances, especially when friendly socializing between Jews and Christians was taking place on an every-day basis, voluntary conversions could and did take place.

## Concluding Unscientific Postscript

The title of this last Part is, as I suppose many of my readers know, a rather wooden translation of the title that the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard gave one of his most important philosophical books, *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift*.<sup>1115</sup> In the subtitle he called it an “Existential Statement” (*Existentielt Indlæg*). Like Kierkegaard, I want, in this last chapter, to step out of the purely descriptive mode I have practiced throughout this study. I have tried, as best I could, to describe what happened and to explain *why* things happened the way they did – as far as this is possible. I have not passed value judgements on what happened. In my view, that lies outside the task of a scholar concerned with history.

But that is exactly what I want to do in this last chapter. I want to step outside my role as a scholar and express my personal value judgements on the historical development of the entity called Christianity (or Christendom or the Church). In a recent Norwegian publication, I have done this on a broader basis than I will do here.<sup>1116</sup> In this chapter, however, I will focus more specifically on the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people.

I begin by quoting an important and fateful text. It is the famous *Cunctos populos* edict issued by Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) in 380:

It is our desire that all the various nations (*cunctos populos*) which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue in the profession of that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition; and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus [the then bishop of Rome] and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness.

According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe the one deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We authorize the followers of this law to assume the title of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgement, they are foolish madmen, we

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<sup>1115</sup> The Danish title is much longer: *Afsluttende uvidenskabelig Efterskrift til de Philosophiske Smuler: Mimisk-pathetisk-dialektisk Sammenskift, existensielt Indlæg*. It was published 1846 under the alias Johannes Climacus; the same alias that he had used in his *Philosophiske Smuler* published 1844. In his “unscientific postscript” Kierkegaard voiced a passionate (*pathetisk*) protest against the all-encompassing philosophy of Hegel, with its claim of being scientific as well as entirely objective, without the subjectivity of its originator playing any role.

<sup>1116</sup> Skarsaune, *Etterlyst: Bergprekenens Jesus. Har folkekirkene glemt ham?* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 2018) (*Wanted: Jesus the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount: Has he been forgotten by the Folk-churches?*).

decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the name of churches.

They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation, and in the second, the punishment which our authority, in accordance with the will of Heaven, shall decide to inflict.<sup>1117</sup>

What this decree amounted to, was a formal declaration that from now on, Nicene Christianity was the new religion of the Roman Empire, fulfilling all the functions of the Old Roman state religion, and some new ones at that. Which means: Just like the former state religion – worshipping the Roman gods and the emperor’s genius – the new Imperial religion was no matter of free choice. It was now obligatory for all citizens of the Empire to worship the new Deity protecting the Empire and its armies in particular: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And also, just like it had been, there was still only one people exempt from this duty: the Jews.

As far as the Latin Church was concerned, Augustine hammered out the theology justifying this state of affairs: All Gentiles and all Christian heretics should be persuaded to join the Catholic Church, if not willingly, then by coercion (first, during Augustine’s lifetime, applied to the so-called Donatist heresy). The Jews, however, should not be subject to any coercion, because they served their role as involuntary witnesses to the truth of Christianity exactly by remaining Jews. As witnesses to the pre-Christian origins of the Christian Old Testament they guaranteed the authenticity of the messianic prophecies fulfilled by Christ; and by their subject state under Christian overlordship, they unwillingly confirmed that their faith was dated and powerless, while Christianity was proven true by the dominance granted it by God.

I ask my reader to read once more the above passage. To my mind, it describes a theological turn that did immeasurable harm to Christianity – harm of a deeply spiritual nature. To illustrate my point, I quote a second passage, something Mark attributes to Jesus:

You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever

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<sup>1117</sup> *The Theodosian Code*, XVI.5.6, trans. according to Henry Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church Selected and Edited*. (Second Edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 22.

wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:42–45 NRSV).

According to Mark, Jesus said this as a response to a request put to him by the two sons of Zebedee: “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” In the somewhat enigmatic answer of Jesus, talking about a “baptism” which he is about to endure, it becomes obvious that the “glory” of Jesus’ kingdom is not at all like the glory that pertains to earthly kingdoms. It is rather the exact opposite, as he then makes clear in the passage just quoted. The royal glory of the kingdom of God is incarnated in human beings selflessly and humbly serving their fellow human beings. Therefore, suffering persecution and suppression will be the signs of the citizens of this kingdom; by no means will they suppress others.

With Emperor Theodosius’ decree of 380 this was turned upside down; the ordinary means of dominion and enforcement were now regarded as useful tools of realizing the reign of the heavenly Lord Jesus Christ on this earth. When Augustine provided theological justification for this turn, the only Christians who resisted this allurements were those branded heretics by the Imperial edict. They, of course, had no reason to celebrate it, being its first victims. The Christian “heretics” who first bore the brunt of Imperial power were the Donatists on the North African coast. “For Donatus and those who followed him, the [“Christian”] Empire was still Babylon, and the emperor had no mandate to meddle in Church affairs.”<sup>1118</sup>

Coercion and violence had now become legitimate means of bringing pagans and heretics into the Church of Christ. As far as the Jews were concerned, not so, but precisely in their state of subjection to Christian overlordship, they were living proofs of the dominance – that is: the truth! – of Christianity, and the obsolescence of Judaism.

It took a Jewish man to point out the great paradox in this state of affairs – Judah Halevi.<sup>1119</sup> In his *Kuzari*, he objects to Muslim and Christian claims that the political dominance of these faiths are proofs of their truth, while the abject state of Judaism is proof of its lack of truth. He makes the Rabbi say:

It [the light of Judaism] is only extinguished for him who does not see us with an open eye, who infers the extinction of our light from our degradation, poverty and

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<sup>1118</sup> William H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 554.

<sup>1119</sup> On him, see pp. 84–85 above.



dispersion, and concludes from the greatness of others [Christians and Muslims], their conquests on earth and their power over us, that their light is still burning...<sup>1120</sup>

In response to this, the Kuzari king has the following interesting comment:

I have explained to thee in connection with the verse: ‘Behold My servant shall prosper’ (Isa 52:13), that humility and meekness are evidently nearer to the Divine Influence than glory and eminence. The same is visible in these two religions [Christianity and Islam]. Christians do not glory in kings, heroes and rich people, but in those who followed Jesus all the time, before his faith had taken firm root among them. They wandered away, or hid themselves, or were killed wherever one of them was found, suffered disgrace and slaughter for the sake of their belief. These are the people in whom they glory, whose ministers they revere, and in whose names they build churches...<sup>1121</sup>

The king emphasizes that he is speaking about the very first generations of Christians as well as well as Muslims, and Halevi seems to trust that the reader will draw his or her own conclusions regarding the striking contrast between these first generations and those of his own days who did indeed glory in kings, heroes, and a position of superiority as far as power in this world was concerned. In this way he prepares the rabbi’s response: Indeed, there are many among us Jews who could easily escape our degraded status by taking advantage of the privileges offered us by those in power if we yield to their allurements. But we don’t, and besides,

God has a secret and wise design concerning us, which should be compared to the wisdom hidden in the seed which falls to the ground, where it undergoes an external transformation into earth, water and dirt, without leaving a trace for him who looks down upon it. It is, however, the seed itself which transforms earth and water into its own substance, carries it from one stage to another, until it refines the elements and

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<sup>1120</sup> *The Kuzari* (transl. Hirschfeld) IV.21; p. 225. In the beginning of the book, the Kuzari king states that he thinks the truth should rather be found in Christianity or Islam, not among the Jews because “they are of low station, few in number, and generally despised.” Compare the full title of the Arabic original: *Book of Refutation and Proof on Behalf of the Despised Religion*.

<sup>1121</sup> *The Kuzari*, IV.22; pp. 225–26.

transfers them into something like itself... The original seed produced the tree bearing fruit resembling that from which it had been produced.<sup>1122</sup>

I cannot escape the temptation to think that Halevi used this simile with a side glance to John 12:24: “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” Jesus told this simile in response to the disciples telling him of some Greeks who wanted to see him. In Halevi’s case, the seed falling to the ground and being made invisible is the Jewish people. When that has happened, the Jewish Messiah will appear, and all the Gentiles, if they turn to him, will become one tree. “Then they will revere the origin [of all this: the Jewish people], which they formerly dispersed, as we have observed concerning the words, ‘Behold My servant prospers’.” – Halevi’s motif of all the peoples being united by believing in the Messiah of the suffering Servant Israel, is also paralleled in John 12: “Whoever serves me must follow me [in suffering]” (v. 26), and “When I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], I will draw all nations to myself” (v. 32).<sup>1123</sup>

What Halevi has achieved in the quoted passages is, I believe, to give a striking demonstration that in his time it was the Jewish people who actually acted out the ideal piety of Jesus and his Jewish disciples, not the Christians contemporary with Halevi. Quite obviously, in suppressing the Jews and other non-Christians, they acted contrary to everything Jesus taught. I find it very hard to disagree with Halevi on this point.

Until Halevi’s time, Christian rulers, ecclesiastical and secular, had as a rule been content in holding the Jews in a subordinate position within Christian society. In Spain, we have seen one of the exceptions during the Early Middle Ages, viz. in the Catholic era of the Visigoth kingdom, when laws outlawing Judaism were given and recalled intermittently. Later, during the first year of the Crusades, the terrible massacres of Jews in the towns along the Rhine Valley in 1099 were another exception, as were the mass slaughtering of civilian Jews and Muslims (and local Christians!) during the Crusaders’ conquest of Jerusalem itself.

But it is when we turn to the 1200s that things really turn to the worse for the Jews. The Dominicans, as we have seen, launched a new missionary strategy for making the Jews convert to Christianity *en masse* and voluntarily. It was based upon new arguments from their

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<sup>1122</sup> *The Kuzari* IV.23, pp. 226–27.

<sup>1123</sup> Halevi’s familiarity with Christian theology and The New Testament is on evidence in his summary of Christian doctrine in *The Kuzari* I.4, pp. 40–41, The passage ends with a rather *verbatim* quotation of Matt 5:17.

own Talmud, claiming that the Messiahship of Jesus and other Christian points of doctrine could be convincingly substantiated from this and other post-biblical Jewish books. This strategy seemed to presuppose a more positive view of Jewish authoritative books, and a more friendly approach to Jews in general. But that appearance was devious. Before this new strategy was put into practice, a Jewish convert alarmed the Pope about horrendous blasphemies being contained in the same Talmud. Therefore, Judaism, revering this book, was not simply outdated religion based upon the Old Testament; it was outright heresy, plain and simple.

Accordingly, the new missionary strategy was combined with the traditional means applied to combat heresy – in other words: the use of coercion and threats accompanied the new missionary strategy from its very beginning as an unavoidable shadow. The Jewish converts playing a main role in the execution of this program, Nicholas Donin and Paul Christian in particular, succeeded in making the new program deeply resented by the Jews, to put it mildly, and also in making Jewish converts hated as being their own people's worst enemies. What Augustine had advised concerning heretics – force them to enter, *coge intrare* – was now legitimized concerning the Jews as well.

In my view, the Augustinian theology about the Jews, that they should be kept in a subject state in the Christian society as proof of their religious error, was un-Christian enough. But making the Jews enter the Christian fold by outright coercion, was worse by far.

At the bottom of it all, we find the potentially very poisonous idea of *honor*. In our days, Christians often wonder how Muslim terrorists can even imagine that they legitimately defend and protect the honor of God and his prophet by killing blasphemers. But Christians in our days do well to remember that through the greater part of the history of the Church – in fact, ever since Constantine – Christians have been doing exactly the same, and no people has suffered more from it than the Jews. Innumerable are the stories about Jews not daring to leave their homes on Good Friday for fear of being lynched or worse by the Christians coming from Mass in Church. Death to the Christ-killers!

The absolute low point of this history comes in the two centuries following the thirteenth. The Spanish Inquisition treated the forced converts with the greatest suspicion and brought them to trials and torture – the suspicion being that their enforced conversion was not sincere! Sufficient proof of this insincerity was any secret observance of Jewish customs.

To my mind, this is a scandal beyond description, and until the Church has officially and unreservedly condemned it, it makes “the Church” utterly unfit to approach the Jews with the Gospel about Jesus.

Before I end, I have one last point to make. In all the debates between Jews and Christians that we have studied in this volume, the Jews have always pointed to the Prophets’ description of the Messianic Age as a period of universal peace on earth – peace and self-rule for Israel and for all peoples. The epitomic prophecy mentioned by all has been Isaiah 2:2–4 (or the parallel Micah 4:1–4):

In days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (NRSV).

I cannot forget the impression it made on me when, many years ago, I read Nahmanides’ comment on this passage for the first time:

From the days of the Nazarene until now, the entire world has been full of violence and robbery. [Indeed], the Christians spill more blood than the rest of the nations, and they also lead immoral lives. How difficult it would be for you, my lord king, and these your knights if they would ‘neither ... learn war anymore’!<sup>1124</sup>

The general tendency of the Christian responses has been either (1) to thoroughly spiritualize the prophecy, or (2) to refer it, in its literal sense, to a short period of time before and after the birth of Jesus, or (3) to refer it in its literal sense to the second coming of Jesus. When commenting on these different Christian strategies above, I found none of them fully

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<sup>1124</sup> Vikuah, passage 49, trans. Chavel, *The Disputation at Barcelona*, p. 20–21.

satisfactory, and I called the second “rather lame,” as did the Jewish opponent at the Paris disputation.

One way to re-phrase Nahmanides’ objection against Christian claims (that this prophecy had in fact been fulfilled in the period after Jesus) would be this: The Christian kings had themselves seen to it that the prophecy was not fulfilled! Thinking that one made Christ’s reign at the right hand of the Father in heaven effective on earth by use of military power was the most effective way of betraying it.

How did Jesus envisage the fruits of his reign? I have already quoted his *mode* for it from Mark 10 above, and to this quote several others from the Gospels could be added. But since I am discussing the Isaiah prophecy about the Lord’s city of peace on top of the hills, attracting the attention of all the nations, I cannot but quote Jesus’ saying about the city on the hill:

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14–16).

We can also, I believe, hear an echo of the Isaiah prophecy about God’s law and word going out to all peoples from Jerusalem in Luke 24:47: “Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his [the Messiah’s] name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” This is followed up in the book of Acts, not only quite explicitly in 1:8, but also in the basic structure of the book.

Among the early Fathers, this is followed up in a striking way in Justin Martyr. Having quoted the Micah version of the prophecy, he comments:

We Christians, who have gained knowledge of the true worship of God from the Law and from the Word which went forth from Jerusalem by way of the Apostles of Jesus, have run for protection to the God of Jacob and the God of Israel. And we who delighted in war, in the slaughter of one another, and in every other kind of iniquity, have in every part of the world converted our weapons of war into implements of peace – our swords into ploughshares, our spears into farmers’ implements – and we cultivate piety, justice, brotherly charity, faith, and hope, which we derive from the Father through the crucified Savior; each of us ‘sitting under his vine,’ that is, each of

us living with only his own wife... But the rest of the prophecy will be fulfilled at his second coming.<sup>1125</sup>

For Justin, the time of Jesus' second coming was near, he therefore got quite concrete in his admonition: "Come with me, all you who are god-fearing and desirous of seeing the prosperity of Jerusalem. 'Come let us walk in the light of the Lord, for he has liberated his people, the house of Jacob'" (Isa 2:5–6, *Dial.* 24.3).

Already in his *Apology* Justin had set out the centrality of this prophecy, and the quite literal fulfilment of it by Christians:

'For a law will go out from Sion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, and it will judge between nations and will correct a great people, and they will beat their swords into ploughs and their spears into pruning-hooks and nations shall not take up sword against nation and they will no longer learn to make war' (Isa 2:3–4 modified LXX). That this has happened you are able to ascertain. For men twelve in number went out from Jerusalem into the world, and they were unskilled in rhetoric, but through the power of God they signified to the whole human race how they were sent by Christ to teach the word of God to all; and we, who formerly were slaying one another, – not only do we no longer fight against our enemies, but we do not even allow ourselves to serve as soldiers. Instead, we die gladly when we tell the truth – that we are Christians – so as not to lie to those who examine us [when called upon to state or renew our military oath of loyalty to the Emperor and the Roman Gods].<sup>1126</sup>

Following the example of Jesus, the first generations of Christians were consequent pacifists and non-violence people. Christians who were already soldiers at their conversion and had no prospects of finding another occupation, were not told to leave their occupation, but to refuse when ordered to kill somebody – and take the consequences. Justin was not in this position, but he sealed his words about Christian martyrdom with his own.

<sup>1125</sup> Micah 4:1–7 quoted in *Dial.* 109.2–3; comment given in *Dial.* 110.2–5, trans. Halton, *St. Justin Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho*, 164–65.

<sup>1126</sup> *1 Apol.* 39.1–3, translation according to Minns and Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, 183, slightly adapted. The supplement of context within square brackets is well argued by Minns and Parvis in their footnote 3, the same page.

A little more than 150 years later, under Diocletian's persecution (303–311), some Christians from Egypt having been arrested and led to Lod (Lydda), where they suffered horrible torture unto death, made a deep impression on the local Jews witnessing their misery. Eusebius' account bears being quoted in full:

The Jews, who were always accused by the prophets for worshipping idols, stood around, seeing and hearing, while the Egyptians renounced the gods of their own fathers and confessed the God who was also the God of the Jews, and witnessed for Him whom the Jews had many times renounced. And they [the Jews] were the more agitated and rent in their hearts when they heard the heralds of the governor crying out and calling the Egyptians by Hebrew names and making mention of them under the names of prophets. For the herald, when he cried out to them, called saying "Elijah," "Isaiah," "Jeremiah," "Daniel," and other similar names, which their fathers had selected from among the Hebrews, that they might call their sons by the names of prophets. And it came to pass that their deeds were in harmony with their names. And at the men and at their names, at their words and at their actions, the Jews were greatly amazed, while they themselves were despised for their wickedness and apostasy.<sup>1127</sup>

Could we simply say that these Egyptian Christians showed themselves as true followers of Jesus, suffering violence rather than perpetrating it; and confessing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jakob even when facing martyrdom for this confession? Seeing born Gentiles doing this did not leave the Jews unimpressed, according to Eusebius. "Through Eusebius's own triumphalist rhetoric, which implies that the presence of the Jews there was to lead to their humiliation, we can hear ... another story, a story of identification between the Jews and these Gentiles willing to die for the Jewish God."<sup>1128</sup>

Returning for a while to Justin's *Dialogue* with Trypho, there is an interesting exchange between the two at the very beginning of their dialogue. Justin asks Trypho whether he and his companions have anything against the Christians other than (1) the fact that they do not observe circumcision, sabbath, and the other ritual commandments in the Law. Do they, for

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<sup>1127</sup> Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John E. L. Oulton, *Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea: The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine* vol. 1 (London: S.P.C.K., 1927), 365. I owe this reference to Daniel Boyarin's *Dying for God*; see next note.

<sup>1128</sup> Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism (Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture)*; Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 124.

example, (2) believe the rumors that Christians in their meetings eat human flesh and indulge in promiscuous lust after having put out the lights? (3) Or do they only blame Christians for following false opinions concerning the Messiah?<sup>1129</sup>

Trypho had already stated the third accusation; he now adds an interesting comment on the first two points:

Those charges which the rabble lodge against you are not worthy of belief, for they are too repulsive to human nature. And also, the precepts in your so-called Gospel are so marvelous and great that I don't think that anyone could possibly keep them. For I took the trouble to consult them.<sup>1130</sup>

Since the ethical commandments that Christians try to live by are so admirable, why do they not obey the ritual commandments in the Law, too? Trypho had already commented on Christian martyrdom for their (false) belief in Jesus as the Messiah,<sup>1131</sup> why did they not accomplish the easier task of following the ceremonial laws?

I believe one can sense here some of the same admiration, even sympathy, with Christian martyrs that we encountered among the Jewish observers of the Egyptian martyrs at Lod. Trypho was obviously aware of the fact that Christians were martyred for believing in a man they held to be the Jewish Messiah, Son of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And he eagerly accepts to dialogue with Justin on the questions that divide them – first and foremost the Messiahship of Jesus. At the end of the second and final day of their discussion he has the following to say:

You see that it was not by any deliberate design that we began the discussion of these matters, but I confess that I have derived great pleasure from our conversation, and I think that these [my friends] too are of a similar opinion. We have heard more than we expected and beyond what could be expected. If we could meet more frequently and continue our study of the Scriptures, we certainly would profit even more by it. But,

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<sup>1129</sup> Justin, *Dialogue*, 10.1.

<sup>1130</sup> Justin, *Dialogue* 10.2, trans. Halton, slightly adapted.

<sup>1131</sup> *Dialogue*, 8.3 end: "You [Christians] have ... invented for yourselves An Anointed One for whom you blindly give up your lives" (trans Halton, slightly adapted).



since you are about to leave the city, and expect to set sail any day now, do not hesitate to remember us as friends when you depart.<sup>1132</sup>

The point I am trying to make here, is that in the pre-Constantinian period, the Christians dialoguing with Jews, were socially and politically the weaker part. In approaching Jews with a wish to convince them of the Messiahship of Jesus, they had no other means in their arsenal than arguments from the Bible which they shared with the Jews. Apart from that, they could only point to their lives, particularly the practical testimony of their faithfulness to the God of Israel by refusing to bring the sacrifices required by the Roman rulers as signs of loyalty to the Emperor and the Roman gods. In the 150ies and 160ies when Justin wrote, Gentile Christian martyrdoms probably outnumbered Jewish ones by far. During the persecution of Diocletian, certainly so.

For me, it is at this point that the fascination of contra-factual history makes itself irresistible. What if...? What if Christians had followed in the footsteps of Jesus, followed his advice of total rejection of violence, revenge, paying back in kind? What if Christians had lived their lives according to the commandments exemplified in the Sermon on the Mount? What if there had never been a “Constantinian turn” resulting in an unholy alliance between Christianity and political dominance and suppression of “the others.” What if...?

What if Jewish Believers in Jesus had never been acquired to abandon their Jewish observance of the Torah when they became believers in Jesus? What if Christians, by their practicing the radical ethics taught by Jesus, had in fact become a peace-movement the like of which had not been seen. What if...?

I believe that this contra-factual history was what Paul had in mind when he wrote Romans 11, revealing this “mystery” (11:25): God himself had allowed Israel to harden their hearts so as not to believe in Jesus; it was therefore no point in waiting for “all Israel” to receive Jesus as their Messiah before proceeding with the mission to the Gentiles. The latter was to be taken up at once (11:25), and then, because of what the Jews saw happening among

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<sup>1132</sup> Justin, *Dialogue* 142.1, trans. Halton, adapted. I am aware, of course, that one may raise a fundamental objection against this use of Justin’s *Dialogue*. Is it not naïve to think of this book as anything like a stenographic report on what was said by the antagonists – if the dialogue really took place at all, which is far from certain? My answer is this: I do not think that Justin’s *Dialogue* is entirely fictional, but even if it were, the book would function badly for the intended readership (whether Christians, Jews, or interested Pagans) if its characters behaved completely out of character with the real characters they represented. If Justin’s book is not “true” as a report on an actual debate, it should have a basic *verisimilitude*, also in the portrayal of its characters.

the Gentiles, Israel would become “jealous” (11:11) and “all Israel” would turn to belief in Jesus as their Messiah and be saved (11:26). What if this vision had come true?

We cannot know; it did not happen. What happened after the Constantinian turn, was that Christians became those in power who applied violence and coercion to those who did not join the Church by their own choice. The Jews were placed in a position that clearly emphasized their lack of kingdom, self-rule, and equality with the Christians around them. The Christians behaved in such a way that any semblance between the state of the world under Christian rule on the one hand, and on the other hand that state of the world which Isaiah’s prophecy promised, – any similarity between these two states vanished completely. Or, to recall Paul’s vision in Romans 11: After little more than three centuries, the Jews had no reason to envy Christians anything else than their political dominion. And it was certainly not this Paul had in mind.

Let me round it all up simply by saying: The decisive argument on the Jewish side against the Messiahship of Jesus – viz. that the universal peace for Israel and the nations spoken of in Isaiah 2:2–4 was not realized after Jesus – this argument was served the Jewish people on a platter by the Church itself through its suppression and persecution of the Jews. In general, a persecuting Church effectively undermines its message of peace by its own acts. The prime example is its treatment of the Jews.

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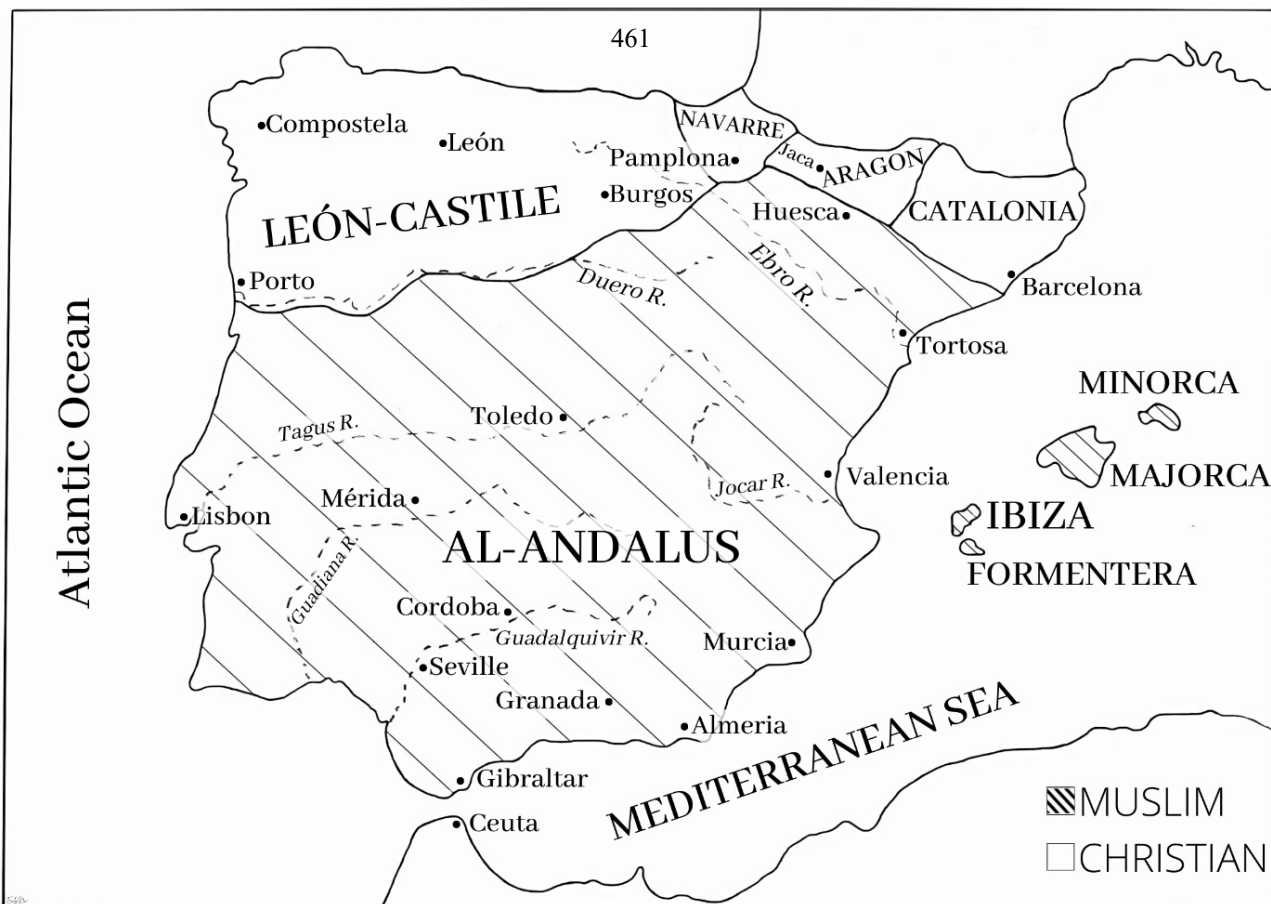
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Map 1: Muslim Spain 711–1031.



Map 2: Spain 1150, after the first period of reconquest. Year of conquest given for important cities.





Map 3: Spain 1250, after the second period of reconquest. Year of conquest for some cities, provinces and islands.