Intricate Interfaith Networks in the Middle Ages

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VOLUME 5

Intricate Interfaith Networks in the Middle Ages

Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts

Edited by

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BREPOLS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

D/2016/0095/44
ISBN: 978-2-503-54429-8
e-ISBN: 978-2-503-54483-0
DOI: 10.1484/M.HDL-EB.5.112708
Printed on acid-free paper

Contents

Jewish Converts in Jewish–Christian Intellectual Polemics in the Middle Ages

Piero Capelli*

For my Petra, whose gestation was much shorter

Conversion — like assimilation, a ubiquitous pressure on religious minorities — stems from multiple and often complementary factors. This is true both at the level of daily social contact among 'the common people' not well represented in the sources, and at the level of the exchange of ideas among intellectuals from sociologically circumscribed communities of discourse or from wider, chronologically unbounded communities of knowledge.[1] In analysing concrete cases, it is helpful to follow Sarah Stroumsa in tracking 'immediate factors which bring about — or at least hasten — the decision in each case to adopt another faith'. In the case of intellectuals, these factors are different, either in intensity or in kind, from those that operate among other sectors of the population. Intellectuals are more likely to leave written traces of

* My thanks to Marina Rustow for her suggestions and help with the revision of my English draft and to Ephraim Shoham-Steiner for his generous and insightful advice. Any mistakes or shortcomings are mine alone. Žonca, 'Apostasy and Authority'; Bobichon, 'Juifs et convertis'; and Schwartz, 'Images of Revelation', are very important studies dealing with conversion from Judaism and Jewish–Christian polemics, but they appeared, or came to my attention, only after completion of this article (winter 2011).

[1] For the concepts of community of discourse and community of knowledge, see Schwartz, 'Images of Revelation'.

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Intricate Interfaith Networks in the Middle Ages: Quotidian Jewish-Christian Contacts, ed. by Ephraim Shoham-Steiner , HDL 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016) pp. 33–83
BREPOLS PUBLISHERS 10.1484/M.HDL-EB.5.112698

their interior worlds and their motives, whether those motives are profoundly considered or merely circumstantial.[2]

Christian anti-Jewish polemics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries witnessed the emergence of a new line of argumentation on behalf of conversion. This line of argumentation was innovative in two ways: it was inaugurated and prevalently argued by converts from Judaism well versed in the Oral Torah; and it engaged in critiques of the Talmud and Midrashic *aggadot* both for their content and for their status within Judaism. In this study, I will survey some of the best documented cases, extending as far as the early sixteenth century, in search of possible analogies and continuities. My hypothesis is that the motives for which medieval Jewish intellectuals converted to Christianity become more useful tools for historical analysis when intellectual history is added to the usual social-historical considerations.[3]

Moses 'Sefardi' / Petrus Alfonsi

Petrus Alfonsi, who was baptized as an adult in Huesca in Aragon on 29 June 1106, wrote his *Dialogi adversus Iudaeos* (*Dialogues against the Jews*) around 1109. He presents the dialogues as a dispute between his former Jewish self — Moses, whom modern historians conventionally refer to as 'Sefardi' or 'Sefarad', though this has no basis in the sources — and his current Christian self: Peter, taking his surname from the ruling king of Aragon, Alfonso I.[4] He divides his work into twelve *tituli* (chapters): the first four attack Judaism, the fifth attacks Islam, and the last seven defend Christianity.[5]

Alfonsi suggests that his former Jewish community suspected he had converted in order to advance his career. Such disclaimers may reflect not only actual accusations launched by former coreligionists but also a Christian expectation that Jews are essentially and irremediably carnal and that therefore, if they converted to Christianity, it could only be for material gain.[6] Similarly, at the end of the fourteenth century Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi — before becoming

[2] See Stroumsa, 'On Jewish Intellectuals', pp. 179–81.

[3] For a brilliant analysis of the conversion of Jewish intellectuals to Islam in the Middle Ages in terms of intellectual history, see Stroumsa, 'On Jewish Intellectuals'.

[4] In MSS of his works his surname is *Alfunsus* or *Alfunsi*, i.e. '(spiritual son) of Alfonso' (Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 8–9 n. 17).

[5] For Petrus's biography, see Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 3–27.

[6] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 15.

Christian himself — entertained the hypothesis that his old mentor, Shelomoh ha-Levi (Pablo de Santa Maria), had converted for economic convenience or in pursuit of mundane pleasures. The *Sefer Niṣṣaḥon Yashan* (*Ancient Book of Polemics*), an anti-Christian polemic from thirteenth-century Germany, similarly states that 'an evil Jew [...] becomes an apostate, because his motives are to enable himself to eat all that his heart desires, to give pleasure to his flesh with wine and fornication [...], to free himself from all the commandments, cleave to sin and concern himself with worldly pleasures'.[7] In Baghdad, under the Mongol rule in the thirteenth century, the Jewish sceptic Sa'd ibn Kammūna claimed in his *Examination of the Three Faiths* that conversion to Islam stems from only the most pragmatic of motivations:

> To this day we never see anyone converting to Islam unless in terror, or in quest of power, or to avoid heavy taxation, or to escape humiliation, or if taken prisoner, or because of infatuation with a Muslim woman, or for one similar reason. Nor do we see a respected, wealthy, and pious non-Muslim well-versed in both his faith and that of Islam going over to the Islamic faith without some of the aforementioned or similar motives.[8]

Quoting the above passage from the *Niṣṣaḥon Yashan*, David Malkiel has rightly noted that 'not only do medieval sources present more evidence of venal than ideological apostasy, they expressly posit that apostasy is predominantly venal. [...] Modern historiography, on the other hand, tends to downplay venal apostasy and to spotlight the implosion of the ideological apostate's religious identity. Apostasy is thus portrayed in sombre tones, as an act of immeasurable pathos'.[9]

Another possible consideration draws on the Talmudic distinction between 'one who apostatizes in order to provoke (God) to anger' (*mumar le-hakh'is*) and 'one who apostatizes because of appetite (for forbidden food)' (*mumar le-te'avon*). In Rabbi Aḥa's opinion, the first is a *min*, and therefore an actual pagan, whereas the latter remains only an apostate.[10] By defining a convert as an

[7] Trans. from *The Jewish–Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. by Berger, § 211, pp. 206 (Engl.), 144 (Hebr.: שהרי יהודי רשע כשנשתמד שיוכל לאכול כל תאוות לבו ולמשוך את בשרו ביין ובזנות [...] ומשחרר עצמו מכל מצוות ומדבק בעבירות ונפקא ליה חיי שעה) (cited in Malkiel, 'Jews and Apostates', p. 29).

[8] *Ibn Kammuna's Examination*, trans. by Perlmann, p. 149 (cited in Stroumsa, 'On Jewish Intellectuals', p. 185).

[9] Malkiel, 'Jews and Apostates', p. 31.

[10] b. '*Avodah zarah* 26a; b. *Horayot* 11a. Variant readings for *min* are *ṣeduqi*, 'Sadducee', and *apiqoros*, 'Epicurean' (freethinker).

apostate 'because of appetite', medieval authors might have meant to downplay the gravity of his behaviour and the threat it constituted to the community's religious cohesion.

Whatever the main or deeper reasons for Moses's / Petrus Alfonsi's conversion might have been, the blame he repeatedly places on the Jews for not believing the genuineness of his conversion also accords with the fact that his Latin work was meant for a Christian audience.[11] Alfonsi insists that his conversion was a simple response to his discovery of religious truth.

Thus in the extensive anti-Muslim polemic of his *Dialogi* (fifth *titulus*), he seeks to explain not only why he abandoned Judaism, but also why he did not convert to Islam. He could easily have done so because he was quite familiar with Islam and well acquainted with Arabic texts. Indeed, Moses asks Petrus: 'I wonder why, when you abandoned your paternal faith, you chose the faith of the Christians rather than the faith of the Saracens, with whom you were always associated and raised'.[12] Responding to this question, Alfonsi seizes an opportunity not only to demonstrate Christianity's superiority over Islam, but also to support the integrity of his conversion. If his conversion to Christianity were only to advance his career, why had he not previously converted to Islam for the same reason? Truth alone, he insists, compelled his choice.[13]

Alfonsi's *Dialogi* became one of the most widely read and perused anti-Jewish polemical texts of the Middle Ages.[14] Its wide diffusion is attested by the eighty extant manuscripts in which it is preserved and by its influence on subsequent polemical literature, both Christian and Jewish. It had a considerable influence on the harsh invectives against the Talmud by Peter the Venerable (*c*. 1092–1156) in his tractate *Adversus Iudeorum inveteratam duritiem* (*Against the Inveterate Stubborness of the Jews*).[15] Peter of Cornwall's late twelfth-century *Liber disputationum contra Symeon Judaeum* (*Book of Disputations against*

[11] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 15.

[12] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 146 (*titulus* v) (Petrus Alfonsi, *Diálogo contra los judíos*, ed. by Mieth, p. 91: 'Sed cum paternam reliqueris fidem, mirror, cur Christianorum et non pocius Sarracenorum, cum quibus semper conversatus atque nutritus es, delegeris fidem').

[13] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 16–17.

[14] See Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers*.

[15] Petrus Venerabilis, *Adversus Iudeorum inveteratam duritiem*, ed. by Friedman, pp. 125–26. Cf. Kedar, 'Canon Law', p. 81, nn. 7–8. Alfonsi's possible sources are discussed in Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, pp. 258–60.

Simon the Jew) includes Alfonsi's *Dialogi* among its sources.[16] In the thirteenth century, Ramón Martí exploited the *Dialogi* in his monumental *Pugio fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*, 1278), and Vincent of Beauvais included a long extract from it in his popular encyclopaedia, the *Speculum historiale*.[17] It was also translated into Catalan for popular diffusion.[18] Well into the fifteenth century, converts from Judaism who became anti-Jewish polemicists perused the work, among them Nicolas Donin, Pablo Christiani, Alfonso de Valladolid, and Gerónimo de Santa Fe (the aforementioned Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, see below).

It stands to reason that Alfonsi's *Dialogi* should have enjoyed such a long afterlife: it presented a point of view contrary to previous Christian philosophy, which had claimed that the Jews were blindly practicing the Old Law.[19] Alfonsi argued instead that the Jews no longer followed the Old Law but a new and heretical law, that of the Talmud. In the *Dialogi* Alfonsi defends his mastery of Jewish religious texts; after all, while still a Jew he had preached in the synagogues on their proper interpretation in order to prevent Jews from apostatizing.[20] Now he argued that this law was full of generic nonsense and ridiculous anthropomorphic representations of God:

> PETRUS: [...] I see that they attend to the surface [meaning] and the letter of the law alone, and do not explicate it spiritually but rather carnally, [and] this is why they are especially beguiled by error. [...] Are you not mindful of your teachers who wrote your teaching (*doctrina*), on which your entire law relies, according to you, how they claim that God has a form and 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? And that they advanced such opinions concerning him which appear to be nothing other than the words of little boys making jokes in school, or women telling old wives' tales in the streets. [...] If you want to know where it is written: [it is] in the first part of your teaching, whose name

[16] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 21, quoting Hunt, 'The Disputation of Peter of Cornwall'.

[17] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 28–29.

[18] See Ainaud de Lasarte, 'Una versión catalana' (*non vidi*); survey of the editorial history of the *Dialogi* in Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 35 (with bibliographical notes).

[19] See Funkenstein, 'Ha-temurot be-wikkuaḥ ha-dat', pp. 133–37, and Funkenstein, 'Basic Types'; Cohen, *Living Letters*, pp. 167–218.

[20] Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten', p. 272; Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 11. No chapter of Alfonsi's work is specifically directed against the Talmud; the critique against it is distributed over *tituli* I–III and X of the tract.

> is *Benedictions* [a reference to b. *Berakhot* 3a, where God is depicted wearing phylacteries]. Then, if you want to know how: they have said that God has a head and arms and wears a little box tied to a band on the hair; that the knot of this same band is made fast from the rear part of the head under the skull; that within the box there are four parchments that contain praises of the Jews; that on the upper part of the left arm, moreover, he wears another box bound in a similar fashion by a band, and that there is a parchment there that contains all the praises which are said to be written in the four previously mentioned.[21]

The anti-anthropomorphic argument was not new in anti-Jewish or anti-Talmudic argumentation. Already in the early ninth century, Agobard of Lyon, in his *De Iudaicis superstitionibus* (*On Jewish Superstitions*), criticized the Jews for saying that 'their God is corporeal and differentiated throughout the limbs according to corporeal dimensions'.[22] He was basing himself on the Jewish mystical tradition called *Ma'aseh merkavah*, perhaps on the specific text called *Shi'ur qomah* (*Measurement of [God's] Dimension*), which he might have known via a Jewish convert.[23] Similarly, the tenth-century Iraqi Qaraite author Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī had complained of Talmudic statements that

> Attribute to him [God] likeness and corporeality, and describe him with most shameful descriptions: that he is composed of limbs and has a (definite) measure. They measure each limb of his in parasangs. This is to be found in a book entitled *Shi'ur Komah* [...]. This, as well as other tales and acts, etc., mentioned by them

[21] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 46–49 (Petrus Alfonsi, *Diálogo contra los judíos*, ed. by Mieth, pp. 11–12: 'P. – [...] video eos solam legis superficiem attendere et litteram non spiritualiter sed carnaliter exponere, unde maximo decepti sunt errore. [...] Non reminisceris doctorum vestrorum, qui vestram doctrinam, cui lex vestra tota secundum vos annititur, scripserunt, quomodo asseverant deum corpus et formam habere, et eius ineffabili maestati talia applicant, que et nefas est credere et absurdum audire, quoniam nec ulla constant ratione? Quin et de eo tales protulere sententias, que non aliud nisi verba videntur iocantium in scolis puerorum vel nentium in plateis mulierum. [...] Si nosse cupis, ubi scriptum sit: in prima parte vestre doctrine est, cuius vocabulum benedictions. Si igitur vis scire quomodo: dixerunt deum habere caput et brachia et in cesarie pixidem gestare ligatam corrigia, ipsiusque corrigiae nodum a postera capitis parte sub cerebro firmatum, intra pixidem vero quatuor esse cartulas Iudeorum laudes continents, in summon autem sinistri brachii gestare aliam pixidem simili modo corrigia ligatam, cartamque ibi esse continentem omnes laudes, que in predictis quattuor scriptae dicuntur').

[22] Translation mine; *Agobardi Lugdunensis Opera Omnia*, ed. by van Acker, p. 205: 'Dicunt denique Deum suum esse corporeum et corporeis liniamentis per membra distinctum'.

[23] As suggested by Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, p. 253.

> [rabbinic Jews] in the Talmud and their other writings, does not suit (even) one of the (earthly) creatures, much less the Creator.[24]

Al-Qirqisānī's colleague and contemporary Salmon ben Yeroḥam (b. *c.* 910) also mocked some aggadic portions of the Talmud, warning that 'were the Gentiles to hear the enormity of the abominations which we have recounted, would they not stone us, mock and laugh at us, and loath us?'.[25]

Although no documentary evidence of Spanish Qaraites has survived from Alfonsi's age, the frequency and vituperative nature of Spanish Rabbanite responses to Qaraism provides good reason to suppose that there was a vital, active Spanish Qaraite community in the eleventh century.[26] (Polemic against Qaraism was among the main purposes of Yehudah ha-Levi's *Kuzari* — especially in Book III — written in Iberia before 1140.)[27] Alfonsi's critique of aggadic literature in Jewish post-biblical texts, then, seems to reflect a living, contemporary debate. His rejection of Talmudic legends, particularly anthropomorphic ones, echoes the Qaraite critique in some ways, as well as the complaints of Muslim scholars like the Iberian polemicist Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064). The polemics on anthropomorphism would continue being discussed in inner-Jewish and Jewish–Christian polemics well into the thirteenth century, with Provençal-Sephardi intellectuals such as Shemu'el ben Mordekhay of Marseilles and Nahmanides blaming Ashkenazi scholars and anti-Maimonists for it;[28] but in the twelfth century, as Meir Bar-Ilan has pointed out, European rabbinic thought still mainly adhered to an anthropomorphic conception of divinity.[29]

The *Dialogi* was the first polemical work written anywhere in Europe that turned systematically to Jewish post-biblical literature in general, and the

[24] Translation, Nemoy, 'Al-Qirqisānī's Account', p. 331 (with a slight emendation for consistency in transcription).

[25] The Hebrew reads: גודל התועבות האלה אשר ספרנו אם ישמעו בני נכר הלא יסקלונו וישחקו עלינו ויבוזו אותנו. Translated from Salmon ben Yeroḥam, *Sefer milḥamot ha-Shem*, ed. by Davidson, p. 113, lines 77–80 (discussed in Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 30–31).

[26] Lasker, 'Karaism in Twelfth-Century Spain'; Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 485–508.

[27] See Berger, 'Toward a New Understanding', p. 226.

[28] See Kanarfogel, 'Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz', showing how Ashkenazi points of view about God's shape were much more nuanced.

[29] Bar-Ilan, 'The Hand of God'; see Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, pp. 30–32 and n. 96.

Talmud in particular, in order to demonstrate the inferiority of Judaism and the truth of Christianity.[30] Alfonsi believed that Jewish leaders were knowingly and wilfully leading their flock astray; he claimed that the Talmud was written to keep Jews from seeing that Jesus was the Son of God, and that Jewish leaders knew he was and purposely lied in order to conceal their sin of having killed him. Alfonsi thus turned away from the relative Christian tolerance of Jews and Judaism inspired by the writings of Augustine, who had argued that the Jews were condemned to dispersion for having crucified Jesus and not accepting him as the Messiah prophesied in their Scriptures, but their presence within Christian society was necessary because with it and their custody of their scriptural lore, 'they bear witness that it was not us [Christians] who fabricated the prophecies about Christ' (*City of God* 18:46).[31] Alfonsi, by contrast, argued against the Jews' necessary role in Christian society. From a battle over the proper interpretation of the shared biblical text, he turns to a specifically Jewish set of texts to argue that Judaism had gone astray from its origins.

It is telling that Alfonsi himself never employs the term 'Talmud', preferring instead the expression 'the teaching of your sages' ('doctrina doctorum vestrorum'). In introducing a passage from b. *Bava Batra*, he says, 'your sages report in a book of teachings' ('vestri doctores in doctrinarum libro asserunt').[32] In the Christian world, *doctrina*, besides being an etymological and perfectly acceptable translation of *talmud*, carried with it an irrefutable implication of religious authority. Although Alfonsi himself does not attack the *halakhah* in the Talmud, with his attack on *aggadah* he intends to undermine all of rabbinic literature. His critique, and that of his followers, seems to have been that the Talmud was *doctrina* in its entirety, and one either accepted or rejected it in toto.[33] Later Jewish thinkers would contend that one was not compelled to accept as true all of the aggadic legends or stories contained within the

[30] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 29.

[31] 'Per Scripturas suas testimonio nobis sunt prophetias nos non finxisse de Christo'. Cf. *Against Faustus* 16:21: 'the authority of those books [of Scripture] is not diminished by the fact that the Jews do not understand them; rather, it is increased by this, for such blindness itself was foretold' ('Nec inde auctoritas illis libris minuitur, quod a Iudaeis non intelleguntur; imo et augetur: nam et ipsa eorum caecitas ibi praedicta est'). Cf. further Augustine's letter 149 (to Paulinus of Nola), 1:9. See Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 88.

[32] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 53 (Petrus Alfonsi, *Diálogo contra los judíos*, ed. by Mieth, p. 15).

[33] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 32.

Talmud. Maimonides makes this point in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, 3:43;[34] Nahmanides would stress it in the disputation at Barcelona in 1263, and Rabbi Abraham reintroduced it in the disputation at Paris in 1269.

Alfonsi further inaugurated a new line of thought in anti-Jewish polemic by stressing that the literal Jewish interpretation, as opposed to the Christian allegorical interpretation, made one deviate from the path of reason.[35] His rationalist tendencies were evident from the 1110s. During a sojourn in England, where he served as a physician to King Henry I,[36] Alfonsi may have been exposed to the rationalist teaching of Anselm of Canterbury.[37] At that time, he sent some Christian scholars in France — whom he called *peripatetici*, 'Aristotelians' — a letter (*Epistola ad peripateticos*) demonstrating that he understood himself not merely as a Christian, but as an Aristotelian belonging to an international intellectual *koine*:

> To all those of the holy mother Church who are students of Aristotle, otherwise nourished with the milk of philosophy or diligently engaged in any scientific study: [...] Because all who have been given to drink any of the nectar of philosophy should love one another, [...] it is right and fair that he freely communicate it to the others so that the knowledge of all may grow and increase over time.[38]

[34] The Judaeo-Arabic original reads: ''פאנקסם אלנאס פי אלדרשות קסמין, קסם תכ''יל אנהם קאלוא ד'לך עלי ג'הה' תביין מעני ד'לך אלנץ וקסם אסתכ'ף בהא ואתכ'ד'הא צ'חכה אד' הו בין ואצ'ח אן ליס הדא הו מעני אלנץוד'לך אלקסם צ'ארב וכאבר עלי תצחיח אלדרשות בזעמה ואלמחאמאה להא וט'ן אן ד'לך הו מעני אלנץ ואן חכם אלדרשות חכם אלאחכאם אלמרויה, ולם יפהם אלפריקאן אנהא עלי ג'הה' אלנואדר אלשעריה אלתי לא יבלס אמרהא עלי די' פהם'' (Mosheh ben Maimon, *Guide*, ed. by Qafiḥ, III, 624–25); 'For some think that the Midrash contains the real explanation of the [Biblical] text [...]. [They] struggle and fight to prove and to confirm such interpretations [...]; they consider them in the same light as traditional laws' (trans. by Friedländer, pp. 353–54).

[35] So Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 25.

[36] Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against the Jews*, trans. by Resnick, p. 17; Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, p. 256.

[37] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 27 n. 16.

[38] Trans. by Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 27 (see p. 43 n. 18 for bibliography on Aristotelianism among Jewish intellectuals from the tenth century) (ed. by Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers*, pp. 164–65: 'Vniuersis sancta matris ecclesie omnibus, uidelicet perypateticis ac per hoc aliis philisiphico lacte nutritis, ubique per Franciam quamuis scientie doctrina diligentius exercitatis, [...] Quoniam omnes quocumque philosophico nectare potatos alterutrum se diligere, [...] iustum est et honestum benigne aliis impartire, ut sic cuiusque Scientia et crescat et amplificetur in horas'). The *Epistola* is published in Millás Vallicrosa, 'La aportación astronómica', and in Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers*, pp. 163–81 (with English translation). Resnick (Petrus Alfonsi, *Dialogue against*

His rationalist beliefs pervade his polemic against the Jews. In *titulus* III, he condemns the Jewish belief in corporeal resurrection, arguing that the Talmudic teaching on the subject is philosophically unsustainable.[39] The accusation that Petrus most frequently lodges against Moses is that he reasons in an erroneous or irrational fashion.[40] There were still few Aristotelians on the European continent, and Petrus seems to have had to go to England to discover Anselm of Canterbury. On the Iberian Peninsula, though their number was increasing among Jews and Muslims, there were still few enough that conversion to Christianity was an obvious choice.[41]

All this confirms Amos Funkenstein's suggestion that 'perhaps Alfonsi [...] was led by his rationalist temperament to prefer Christianity as the only faith "befitting a philosopher"';[42] for this reason, Jeremy Cohen compares him to the sceptical interlocutor in the *Kuzari* of Yehudah ha-Levi (before 1140), as opposed to previous thinkers like Se'adyah (882–942), who considered tradition to be a legitimate source of authority, on par with sensory perception, reason, and logical inference.[43] This rationalistic stance of Alfonsi's corresponds to what another convert and a contemporary of his, Herman of Cologne (Hermannus quondam Iudaeus, *c*. 1107–81, converted in 1128 or 1129), wrote in his spiritual and intellectual autobiography, *Opusculum de conversione sua* (*Short Account of his Own Conversion*, *c*. 1150) about the sermons of Bishop Egbert of Münster and his non-literal, allegoric (therefore *rational*) exegesis of Scripture: 'Using this kind of distinction, he adverted to the examples of the Jews, like some beasts of burden, content with the letter of the precepts alone, as with chaff, and Christians, *like men using reason*, refreshing themselves with spiritual understanding, as with the sweetest pith of straw'.[44]

the Jews, trans. by Resnick, p. 19) dates it shortly after 1116 and suggests it was written from France itself.

[39] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 26.

[40] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 27; Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 199.

[41] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 27.

[42] Funkenstein, 'Ha-temurot be-wikkuaḥ ha-dat'.

[43] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', pp. 28–29.

[44] Translated in Morrison, *Conversion and Text*, p. 79 (italics mine) (Hermannus quondam Judaeus, *Opusculum de conversione sua*, ed. by Niemeyer, p. 74: 'tali in hac discretione utens exemplo, ut scilicet Iudeis tamquam brutis quibusdam iumentis sola in his littera velut palea contentis, Christiani ut homines ratione utentes spirituali intelligentia velut dulcissima palee medulla reficerentur'). The *status quaestionis* on Herman and his *Opusculum* can be found in Schmitt, *The Conversion of Herman the Jew*.

Nicolas Donin

Biographical evidence about Nicolas Donin, the convert from La Rochelle (*de Rupella*), is scant. What remains is mostly to be found in the accusations lodged against him in 1240 by the Jewish defendant in the first public trial held against the Talmud in medieval Europe, Rabbi Yeḥi'el of Paris, as recorded in the Hebrew account of the trial, *Wikkuaḥ Rabbenu Yeḥi'el* (*Disputation of Our Rabbi Yeḥi'el*).[45] Donin was apparently expelled from the Jewish community in 1225 but was baptized only in 1236; there is no positive evidence that he ever joined the clergy.[46] In 1239 he submitted a list of charges against the Talmud and its authority within Judaism to Pope Gregory IX. In June 1239, this elicited an apostolic letter (*Si vera sunt*) from the Pope to the monarchs of western Europe in which he stated that the Jews had a new and illegitimate Law, the Talmud, falsely attributed to Moses; that it was full of 'contemptuous expressions [against Christianity] and unspeakable things (*abusiones et nefaria*)'; and that it was what kept the Jews in their obstinate refusal of Christian truth. For that reason, all the books of the Jews were to be requisitioned and committed to the mendicant orders, if necessary with the help of the secular arm. In a second letter, addressed to the priors of the Dominican and Franciscan orders of Paris, Pope Gregory IX ordered that the requisitioned books be examined and that those that contained such 'errors' should be burned.[47] Louis IX of France was the only king who complied with the Pope's dictate. A public trial was initiated with the compilation of a dossier of Talmudic sources translated into Latin, maybe by another convert from Judaism, the Dominican Thibaud de Sézanne (*Extractiones de Talmut*, Paris, BnF, MS Lat. 16558).[48] The dispute between Donin and Yeḥi'el took place at the royal court of Paris on 25 June 1240; the

[45] The oldest extant manuscript is Paris, BnF, MS Hébr. 712, copied within a generation of the event itself. I am currently preparing a critical edition of the text based on this manuscript and the five other extant witnesses, to be accompanied by a translation and extensive historical and text-critical introduction. See now *The Trial of the Talmud*, trans. by Hoff and Friedman; Capelli, 'Editing Thirteenth-Century Polemical Texts', pp. 46–49.

[46] Tuilier, 'La condamnation du Talmud', pp. 61–62.

[47] Gregory IX's letters are published in Merchavia, *Ha-Talmud bi-re'i ha-naṣrut*, pp. 446–48, and Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: Documents*, pp. 171–74 (nos 162–65), and translated in *The Trial of the Talmud*, trans. by Hoff and Friedman pp. 93–98.

[48] Dahan, 'Les traductions latines', p. 101. On the authorship of the *Extractiones*, see Fidora, 'The Latin Talmud and its Translators'. The *Extractiones* are being investigated and edited within the research project on *The Latin Talmud and its Influence on Christian–Jewish Polemics* (ERC Consolidator Grant 2013) directed by Alexander Fidora.

court was chaired by Queen Mother Blanche of Castile and comprised of three bishops, the King's chaplain, and the chancellor of the Sorbonne. While it is unclear whether this might already be considered, technically, an inquisitorial proceeding,[49] a concise chancery account of the trial in Latin (in the same Paris, BnF, MS Lat. 16658) ends with the condemnation of the Talmud. At the implementation of the verdict, twenty cartloads of Talmudic manuscripts were burned at the stake in the Place de Grève in 1241 or on two separate occasions in 1242 and 1244 (the second time under Innocent IV's pontificate).[50]

Donin's thirty-five charges against the Talmud are all based on and argued from quotations from the Talmud itself and are grouped in the Latin manuscript according to the following categories:

1. On the authority of the Talmud and the Rabbis.
2. On hostility towards Christians.
3. On blasphemies against God, including the anthropomorphic representation of God according to some of the sources already treated by Alfonsi.
4. On blasphemies against Jesus, Mary, and Christianity, including the allegation that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a certain Ben Pandera.
5. On the stupidity of Talmudic laws and stories.

It is relevant to inner-Jewish debate that Donin's first accusation is against the rabbinic claim to Jewish leadership and the last against the 'stupidity' of a number of Talmudic *halakhot* and *aggadot* — that is, their non-conformity to standards of rationality. This suggests that Donin was influenced by Alfonsi.

Among modern scholars, only Shlomo Simonsohn stressed the surprising biographical detail that Donin was baptized some eleven years after being expelled from his Jewish (Rabbanite) community, thus confining himself to a religious no man's land that — since medieval civilization, as Jacob Katz wrote, 'was expressed almost entirely in religious terms' — would have meant social death or life-in-death.[51] This fact is confirmed (though without mention of the eleven-year lag) in the letter of a certain Ya'aqov ben Eliyyah (possibly Ya'aqov ben Eliyyah de Lattes of Valencia or Venice) to Pablo Christiani, which mentions 'Donin the apostate, who deserted the laws of the Lord and his statutes,

[49] Discussion in Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, pp. 261–62.

[50] On the date of the burning, see Rose, 'When Was the Talmud Burnt at Paris?'.

[51] Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History*, p. 279; Cf. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, pp. 75–76.

while also not believing in the religion of Rome'.[52] This suggests the intellectual and spiritual motivation of Donin's conversion. It is confirmed in the Hebrew account of the trial: notwithstanding Yehi'el's aggressiveness against Donin, he does not charge him with the same allegations as Alfonsi, of having converted for the sake of personal convenience.

Yeḥi'el defines Donin as 'one who ceased to believe in the words of the Sages' (*asher kipper be-divre ḥakhamim*), a fact that has led some modern secondary literature to call him a Qaraite.[53] But there is no evidence of the presence of Qaraite groups in France in the Middle Ages.[54] A reading of the Paris *affaire* as an indicator of inner-Jewish debate was suggested for the first time by Bernard Blumenkranz, who spoke of Donin's 'Qaraite attitude' and his 'refusal of the authority of the so-called Oral Law' during his rabbinic studies. Such studies are not documented, even if one can infer them from the undeniable Talmudic competence that Donin exhibited during the trial.[55] According to Blumenkranz, Donin finally converted to Christianity perhaps only because in France at the time there were no Qaraites; Blumenkranz thus stopped just short of claiming that in mid-thirteenth-century Ashkenaz, opposing the rabbinic version of Judaism automatically meant being a Qaraite.[56] But given the lack of evidence for Qaraites or information about Qaraism in thirteenth-century France, there is no reason to presume that Donin had any Qaraite connec-

[52] Kobak, 'Iggeret', p. 29: דוני המין אשר המיר חקי ה' וגם דת רומה לא היה מאמין. The passage is signalled and translated by Chazan, 'The Condemnation of the Talmud Reconsidered', p. 15. For the *status quaestionis* on the letter (slightly anterior to 1263), its author, and its addressee, see Chazan, 'The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah'.

[53] E.g. Rosenthal, 'The Talmud on Trial'; Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews: History*, p. 279 (he 'apparently adopted Karaite beliefs').

[54] Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, p. 262, takes into account the possibility that Donin might have been a Qaraite refugee to France from elsewhere.

[55] Dahan, 'Les traductions latines', p. 101, downplays Donin's role in the *affaire* to a mere representative of Thibaud de Sézanne's ideas and knowledge of the Talmudic sources — this, admittedly ('J'ai peut-être tort de voir en lui'), notwithstanding what is told in the *Extractiones* (*c.* 211a of Paris, BnF, MS Lat. 16558): 'extremely learned in Hebrew even according to the testimony of the Jews, to the point that it would be extremely difficult to find the like about the character and grammar of the Hebrew language' ('in hebreo plurimum eruditum eciam secundum testimonium Iudeorum, ita ut in natura et gramatica sermonis hebraici vix sibi similem inueniret', transcription mine). On Donin and Thibaud de Sézanne, see now Fidora, 'The Latin Talmud and its Translators'.

[56] Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten', pp. 279–81.

tions at all. His anti-rabbanism should, rather, be seen in the context of debate and dissent within the rabbinic Jewish community.

The discussion between Donin and Yeḥi'el on the dating of the Talmud — therefore on its real or proclaimed authoritativeness — occupies an important place at the beginning of the Paris trial. Donin dated the composition of the Talmud to four hundred years before the trial, that is, to the ninth century (rabbinic authorities usually dated it to the fifth); it is enticing to think that he had in mind its diffusion on the Iberian Peninsula after Palṭoy, *ga'on* of the academy of Pumbedita in Iraq from 842 to 857, had it copied and sent there.[57] (The question of the Talmud's dating would arise once more in Nahmanides' defense in the disputation of Barcelona in 1263, and from there, it would be taken up by Gerónimo de Santa Fe, with much more chronological awareness than Donin.)[58] The passage in question reads:

> The apostate answered: 'I will interrogate you about an ancient question: in this respect, I cannot deny[59] that the Talmud is four hundred years old'.
>
> The rabbi said: 'More than one thousand five hundred years old'! Then, turning to the queen: 'I pray you, my Lady, do not force me to respond to his words, since he himself acknowledged that the Talmud is extremely ancient, and until now, no one has found anything to say against it. [...] What did you find against us, that you brought us here to defend our lives and fight for our Torah against that sinner, who already fifteen years ago ceased to believe in the words of the Sages — according to whom the Talmud is one thousand five hundred years old — and believed only in what is written in the Torah of Moses without interpretation? You know that every word needs commentary. This is why we separated him from ourselves and excommunicated him. [...]'
>
> 'Do you believe in what is found in these four [orders of the Talmud]?'
>
> 'I believe in all the laws and decrees that are written in them according to our interpretation, so that they can be taught. Such is the Talmud; and its name is "Talmud" according to Scripture, as it is written: *And you shall teach them to your children* (Deuteronomy 11. 19). They contain some *aggadah* as well, with the aim of making the human heart understand the allegories of Scripture [...]. In it are tales of won-

[57] Parente, *Les Juifs et l'Église romaine*, p. 235 (and n. 38), with bibliography (read 'Cowley' for 'Neubauer').

[58] Capelli, 'Dating the Talmud'.

[59] Here, the reading 'you cannot deny' from the now lost Strassurg manuscript, transcribed by Johann Christoph Wagenseil in his editio princeps of the *Wikkuaḥ*, included in his *Tela ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681), is probably preferable.

> ders as well, so as to inspire unbelievers, freethinkers, and apostates to faith. I have no obligation to answer you about these things: believe them if you want, and if you do not, do not, because no legal decision is made on their basis'.[60]

As argued above, Donin's anti-Talmudic stance does not necessarily mean that he had been a Qaraite before becoming Christian: he was more likely a learned Jew influenced by the 'new' rationalist philosophy and irritated by the rejection of Maimonides' thought and books by a part of the rabbinic establishment.[61] His dating of the Talmud might also indicate that he opposed one particular aspect of early Ashkenazi rabbinic culture, namely, the *textualization in written form* of Talmudic lore, perceived as a treason against its *oral* origin and transmission throughout late antiquity and the gaonic era.[62]

The immediate and decisive context of the trial of the Talmud in Paris was the Maimonidean controversy. Provençal rabbis had accused Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* and the philosophical parts of the *Mishneh Torah* of the kind of rationalist scepticism likely to foment heresy. Rabbi Shelomoh ben Abraham of Montpellier (with his disciples David ben Sha'ul and Yonah ben Abraham Gerondi) asked for the support of the northern French Ashkenazi rabbis and obtained anti-Maimonidean decrees from them, rather than from Provençal or Spanish rabbis. Hebrew sources stemming from the pro-Maimonidean party blame Shelomoh for having solicited the intervention of the Inquisition in the matter; this is supposed to have led to the public burning of copies of the *Mishneh Torah* and the *Sefer ha-Madda'* in Montpellier in 1232 or 1233, and to

[60] Translation and transcription mine from the Paris, BnF, MS Hébr. 712, fol. 44a–b:
ויאמר המין על דבר ישן אשאלך, כי בזה לא אכפור כי התלמוד מד› מאות שנה. ויאמר הרב יותר מט״ו מאות שנה. ויאמר אל המלכה אנא אדונתי, אל נא תכריחני לענות לדבריו, אחרי כי הודה אשר הוא ישן נושן. ועד הלום אין דובר עליו דבר [...] ומה מצאתם בנו להביאנו עד פה לעמוד על נפשינו להלחם על תורתינו, לחוטא הלז אשר כפר בדברי חכמים, זה ט״ו שנה ולא היה מאמין רק בכתוב בתורת משה בלא פתרון. ואתם ידעתם כי לכל דבר צריך פשר, ועל כן הבדלנוהו ונדינוהו […]
האתה מאמין בארבעה אלה. [...] אני מאמין לכל החקים והמשפטים הכתובים בהם, כדרשינו להורותם, זה תלמוד ונקרא תלמוד על שם המקרא, דכת› ולמדתם את בניכם, אך יש בהם דברי הגדה להמשיך לב אדם להבין המליצה, ככת› להבין משל ומליצה, ויש בהם דברי פלא להאמין, לכופר לאפיקורוס ולמין. ולזאת לא הוצרכתי להשיבך, אם תרצה תאמין אותם ואם לא תרצה לא תאמין אותם, כי אין משפט נכרת על פיהם.

[61] Thus Merchavia, *Ha-Talmud bi-re'i ha-naṣrut*, p. 233; cf. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 61 n. 19 ('Donin need not have been personally involved with Karaites in order to acquire his anti-rabbinic outlook'); Chazan, 'The Condemnation of the Talmud Reconsidered', p. 16 ('a denier of rabbinic authority [...]. The specific nature and the sources of his denial [...] must remain an open question').

[62] On this, see Fishman, 'Rhineland Pietist Approaches', esp. 322–25 (see now her *Becoming the People of the Talmud*, pp. 182–217).

have been the first attested intervention of the Church or the Inquisition in an otherwise utterly inner-Jewish question.[63] But Shelomoh's 'betrayal' is not documented outside of anti-Maimonidean sources (in fact there is evidence that he continued to enjoy prestige in France and Spain), and there is no conclusive evidence that the burning of Maimonides' works actually took place.[64] Thus the first burning of Hebrew books in European history that is documented with certainty remains the one in Paris in 1241 or 1242 and 1244.

It is altogether possible that the Inquisition would have objected to Maimonides' books for their reliance on Aristotelian thought. Indeed, the condemnation of the 'absurdities' in the Talmud corresponds to that of Aristotelian rationalism in defence of the authority of Christian revelation, and took place in the same historical context: Aristotle's works on natural science, metaphysics, and physics were prohibited more than once by the Sorbonne.[65] Guillaume d'Auvergne (1180–1249), Bishop of Paris and a member of the jury in the trial of 1240, wrote in the first chapter of his *De legibus* (*On Laws*) that Aristotelian philosophy had led the Jews to neglect Mosaic law and to embrace heresy, whereas in his earlier *De universo* (*On the World*, 1:3:31), he had written that what had led them astray were the 'unbelievable fables' — that is, rabbinic *aggadot* — to which they had long dedicated themselves.[66] Even more than the Maimonidean controversy, it is the Paris Talmud *affaire* that marks the Church's shift from theological polemics to actual religious and political anti-

[63] An analogous case can be found in Castile under Alfonso VII (1126–57), when the *almoxarife* (tax collector) Yehudah ibn 'Ezra 'requested of the King to forbid the heretics to open their mouths throughout the land of Castile, and the King commanded that this be done' (Abraham ibn Daud, *Book of Tradition*, ed. and trans. by Cohen, p. 72 lines 403–04 (Hebr.) and p. 99 (Engl.): והוא בקש מאת המלך לבלתי תת למינין פתחון פה בכל ארץ קשטילה ויאמר המלך להעשות כן). See also the comments of Rustow, 'The Qaraites as Sect', pp. 154–56.

[64] See the precise recapitulation and discussion of evidence in Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 52–60.

[65] First by the provincial synod of Sens held in Paris in 1210, then by the statutes of Robert of Courçon in 1215; these were followed by the preventive censure of the works on natural science by Gregory IX in the bull *Parens scientiarum* of 1231; in 1277 the Bishop of Paris Étienne Tempier would even condemn the 'errors' contained in the writings of Thomas Aquinas; see Denifle, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, pp. 70 (n° 11), 78–80 (n° 20), 136–39 (n° 79), 543–58 (n° 473) (see Denifle's note, p. 556, on 'errors' 81, 96, and 191 of the list). See Bianchi, *Censure et liberté intellectuelle*, pp. 89–162.

[66] Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 62 n. 20. See William of Auvergne, *Opera Omnia*, I, 24b (F) (*De legibus*), and 805b (C: 'Gens enim Hebraeorum [...] a tempore autem multo ad fabulas incredibiles se convertit, et illis se totaliter dedit').

Jewish persecution. Yet the intellectual underpinnings of the event are clear, as is the evidence it provides for inner-Jewish divisions over rabbinic leadership and the role and authoritativeness of the Talmud within Judaism itself.

Sha'ul of Montpellier / Pablo Christiani

Born in Montpellier and trained as a *talmid ḥakham* under Eli'ezer ben Immanu'el of Tarascon and Ya'aqov ben Eliyyah, Sha'ul of Montpellier converted and became a Dominican friar in the early 1230s, as a result of the wave of preaching by Raymond of Peñafort in Provence.[67] A fourteenth-century biography of Peñafort says that he promoted the training of friars in Hebrew in order to oppose the malice with which the Jews, 'as in the past, shamelessly deny the true text *and the commentaries of their sages, which agree with our saints* in the questions that pertain to the Catholic religion' and 'had inserted untruths and (textual) corruptions in many places in the Bible in order to hide the mysteries of the Passion and other sacraments of the faith'.[68] One of these friars was Ramón Martí (*c*. 1215–85), the author of compilations of Talmudic material that became 'canonical' for subsequent polemical literature: *Capistrum Iudaeorum* (*The Halter of the Jews*, 1267) and *Pugio fidei* (*The Dagger of Faith*, 1278). For Raymond of Peñafort, Judaism had strayed from its biblical foundation — if not specifically via rabbinic tradition — and, in so doing, had become a heresy.[69]

Christiani was a renowned itinerant preacher in Aragon and Provence and participated in public disputations against Nahmanides at Barcelona in 1263, in the presence of King James I and Raymond of Peñafort and against Rabbi Abraham ben Shemu'el of Rouen at Paris in 1269. He died in 1274. In his disputation against Nahmanides, he attempted to show that the *aggadah* revealed the truth of Christianity and demonstrated a certain competence on rabbinic *auctoritates*, notwithstanding Nahmanides' attempts to downplay his knowledge as incorrect or unoriginal.[70] For Christiani, *aggadah* and *halakhah* were

[67] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', pp. 37–41.

[68] Trans. and italics mine from the *Ancienne Vie de saint Raymond de Pennafort* in Balme and Paban, *Raymundiana seu documenta*, p. 32: 'sicut actenus consueverant, audacter negare textum verum et glossas suorum sapientum antiquiorum cum sanctis nostris in hiis que ad fidem catholicam pertinent concordantes. Falsitates insuper et corruptiones quas in Biblia in locis pluribus inseruerant ad occultanda mysteria Passionis et cetera sacramenta fidei' (cited in Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 38).

[69] So Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 38.

[70] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 110–11.

equal as sources of authority; Nahmanides replied by asserting that for the Jews, the 613 *mitzvot* were binding, and the Talmud was a necessary commentary on them, but the Midrash was not binding. (In the Paris disputation of 1269, Christiani's line of attack, and the rabbi's line of defence, would be exactly the same.)[71] Differently from the disputation in Paris in 1240, in Barcelona in 1263 the Talmud itself was not the object of contention but rather the basis of which to demonstrate, through Judaism, the truth of the Christian *kérygma* regarding Jesus's messianic nature, for example, the fact that the suffering servant in Isaiah 52–53 is a prophecy of Jesus as the Messiah. The Latin Christian account of the Barcelona disputation says that Nahmanides was 'defeated by irrefutable proofs and authorities' because the fact that Jesus was the Messiah 'was proved to him clearly by both the authority of the Law and the Prophets and by the Talmud'.[72] In Paris in 1269, Christiani would use for the same purpose arguments taken from the very recent *Capistrum* of Martí.[73] Such pro-Christian usage of Talmudic materials, especially *aggadah*, is precisely what Christiani's adversaries found most irritating. Rabbi Mena, another purported adversary of Christiani in a dispute subsequent to that of Barcelona, accused him of 'destroying the *aggadot* of our Talmud';[74] and Ya'akov ben Eliyyah devotes the first third of his letter to Christiani to refute Christiani's allegations regarding Jewish interpretations of difficult rabbinic homilies,[75] stating that Talmudic *aggadot* are the kind of easily accessible material that every religion must commit to writing for the purposes of preaching to the unsophisticated masses who are incapable of understanding higher religious truths in their purer intellectual form.[76]

[71] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 117.

[72] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 106 (ed. by Baer, 'Le-biqqoret ha-wikkuḥim shel R. Yeḥi'el mi-Paris we-shel R. Mosheh ben Naḥman', p. 186: 'fuit ei evidenter probatum tam per auctoritates legis et prophetarum quam per Talmuth [...] victus necessariis probationibus et auctoritatibus').

[73] See Cohen, 'Wikkuaḥ Pariz ha-sheni'.

[74] Rosenthal, 'Wikkuaḥ dati', p. 62: ופוקר על ההגדות שבתלמודינו, cited in Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', pp. 38–39. This adversary is the purported 'Rabbi Menaḥem' of Rome, BNC, MS Or. 53; see Rosenthal, 'Wikkuaḥ dati', and David Berger's observations in *The Jewish–Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. by Berger, p. 36 n. 104.

[75] Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 38.

[76] Chazan, 'The Letter of R. Jacob ben Elijah', p. 59.

Again in his letter to Christiani, Ya'aqov ben Eliyyah connects Christiani's conversion to the conflict between rationalists and anti-rationalists in Provence.[77] In his opinion, the burning of Maimonides' books in Montpellier in 1232 — which he assumed had actually taken place — must be blamed on a spirit of heresy that led the 'slanderers', that is, the anti-rationalists, to destroy Jewish communal structures by denouncing the Maimonideans to the Christian authorities and thus facilitating Pablo's conversion to Christianity. In his letter, an older Ya'aqov repents of the anti-Maimonidean heterodoxy to which he adhered in his youth, and would later even write a commentary to Maimonides' *Guide*:

> It was the sin of our youth [...], when the fire of stormy controversy raged among them [...]. The slanderers were a brood of sinful men; they assumed leadership and caused division between brothers. They beheld false and fraudulent visions, espoused a foreign faith, and enkindled the fire; children spoke impudently, and the lowly with harshness to the venerable [...].[78] When I too was there, I joined in as one of them. And so words fail me; for I am ashamed and reproach myself for the sins of my youth.[79]

Jeremy Cohen puts forward the hypothesis that Ya'aqov and Pablo had been comrades in the anti-Maimonidean camp at Montpellier and that Pablo, rather than becoming more moderate as Ya'aqov would, ended by converting and continuing to attack what he thought of as the Jewish heresy of his time. In fact, his other above-mentioned adversary accused him also of 'revealing the mysteries of Torah' to the Gentiles,[80] a fact that suggests that the Jewish camp still esteemed Christiani's Jewish knowledge. If Cohen is correct, Christiani was one of the few intellectual Jewish converts of the Middle Ages who were not rationalists.

The cases of Donin, Martí, and Christiani demonstrate the increasing relevance of *auctoritas* in anti-Jewish polemics during the thirteenth century. As Ryan W. Szpiech explains, all of Christian polemics is grounded on *auctoritates*

[77] See Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', pp. 39–40.

[78] According to the late tractate m. *Soṭah* 9:15, the insolence of the young before the old is one of the calamities that will precede the coming of the Messiah.

[79] Translated in Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate', p. 39, from Kobak, 'Iggeret', p. 21: מחטאת בחורינו [...] בקרבם המריבה משלחת והאש מתלקחת [...] והרכילים תרבות אנשים חטאים הם המוציאים והם המביאים ומפרידים בין אחים ויחזו משאות שוא ומדוחים מקריבים אש זרה ומבעירים את הבערה הנער יענה עזות והנקלה לנכבד רגזות [...] גם אני בהיותי שם כמוני כמוהם והייתי כאחד מהם על כן לעו דברי ובושתי וגם נכלמתי כי נשאתי חרפת נעורי.

[80] Rosenthal, 'Wikkuaḥ dati', p. 62: מגלה רזי תורה.

'taken as apodictic and legally binding proofs'.[81] This fundamental attitude did not change over the centuries — though the corpus of *auctoritates* expanded — regardless of whether the goal was converting the Jews (as among converts from Judaism like Donin, Christiani, and, as we will see, Abner of Burgos/Alfonso de Valladolid) or only apologetics (as in Martí). Both Christiani and Martí, for example, use Talmudic material to demonstrate that the Messiah had already come. As the principle of *auctoritas* was one of the cardinal beliefs of medieval rationalism, Szpiech argues, the Jews were considered subhuman for refusing evidence of Christian truth on the basis of biblical authority. This claim is based partly on Amos Funkenstein's argument that one basis of Peter the Venerable's anti-Judaic thought was the following syllogism: if Christianity is true according to reason, and if man is rational, therefore the Jews are subhuman.[82] What had begun in the twelfth century as one aspect of the drive towards intellectual rationalism continued into the thirteenth 'as a campaign to appropriate rabbinical sources under the guise of Christian *auctoritates*'.[83]

Abner of Burgos / Alfonso de Valladolid

Commonly acknowledged as the most important intellectual convert from Judaism in the Middle Ages[84] for the complexity of his argumentation and the influence it exerted on subsequent authors such as Pablo of Burgos and Gerónimo de Santa Fe, the Castilian Abner of Burgos (*c.* 1265–1347) converted, at least publicly, around 1325, when Alfonso XI reached his major-

[81] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 16.

[82] Funkenstein, 'Basic Types'. See the discussion of Funkenstein's argument in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 89–91.

[83] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 290. Cf. pp. 94–95: 'it is clear that the transformation of the concept of argumentative authority in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially in response to Jewish post-Biblical literature, began first of all with the introduction of rational arguments, rather than strictly Biblical evidence interpreted from a Christological perspective [...]. The effort in the thirteenth century to employ postbiblical sources was simply an effort to realign the uncertainty presented by the identity of the Talmudic Jew within a traditional framework of Christian abrogation'; cf. also Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens*, p. 443: 'la littérature rabbinique est passée au rang d'*auctoritas* servant le dessein des chrétiens'. The first Christian author to use a Talmudic source as the basis for his own arguments rather than as evidence of heresy from Judaism had been, already in the twelfth century, Alan of Lille (d. 1202) in his *De fide catholica contra haereticos* (*On Christian Faith against the Heretics*) (Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 30–31).

[84] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 2, with bibliography.

ity as the King of Castile and Abner took his own name as a Christian from him: Alfonso de Valladolid. Several works by Abner survive either in Hebrew or Castilian or both. The main one, *Moreh ṣedeq* (*Teacher of Righteousness*), is lost in the Hebrew original but survives in a single manuscript (Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53) of a fourteenth-century Castilian translation, *Mostrador de justicia*, possibly copied by Alfonso himself.[85] It consists of a dialogue in ten chapters between a Christian Teacher (*Mostrador*) and a Jewish Rebel (*Rrebelle*), and the main topics are the Messiah and the necessity of the new Law and the new Chosen People.[86]

In the work's introduction, Alfonso, like Herman of Cologne, describes at length the crisis and the doubts that he had suffered before converting. The work is explicitly directed towards Jewish readers with a conversionary aim: 'to show the correct faith, and the truth and justice in it, to the Jews who have need of it'.[87]

Alfonso's intellectual library included few Christian sources apart from the New Testament (e.g. he shows no acquaintance with Ramón Martí's works).[88] In the main, his arguments are grounded prevalently in rabbinic and Aristotelian tradition. Rationalist and specifically Aristotelian tendencies are in frequent evidence in the *Mostrador*. Alfonso explains Christian dogmas and doctrines through Aristotelian discourse and vocabulary, such as original sin, its transmission and atonement for it through the Messiah (chap. 4). The trinity is also explained in Aristotelian terms, with quotations from Avicenna and Alfonsi's *Dialogi* (chap. 5). With very few exceptions, mostly authors of medical and astronomical texts, all the Arabic writers quoted in Alfonso's works in general via Hebrew translations are philosophers of the Aristotelian tradition. There

[85] Almost all the information about Abner/Alfonso and all the translations from his works are taken here from R. Szpiech's fundamental dissertation of 2006, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony'. In the following, quotations from the *Mostrador* are given according to the pagination of the MS (Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53) and of the edition Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann.

[86] For a detailed outline of the contents of the *Mostrador*, see Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 151–67, 574–84.

[87] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 151 (from fol. 13a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 15: 'por mostrar la ffe çierta, e la verdat e la justicia en ella, a los judios, que la auien mester').

[88] On Alfonso's sources in the *Mostrador*, see Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 172–73, 351–572, 593–667.

are some fifty quotations from the Aristotelian corpus in Abner/Alfonso's works, though some are repeated or pseudepigraphical.[89]

Of all the Jewish *auctoritates* on whom Alfonso relies, Maimonides is one of the most frequent.[90] Alfonso follows the *Mishneh Torah* in having the Teacher analyse the error and non-necessity of certain *mitzvot* (chap. 10).[91] The oft-repeated Aristotelian enumeration of causes (*Metaphysics* 5:2; *Physics* 2:3) is mediated in some cases through Maimonides' reading of it (*Guide* 1:69) and in others through Averroes's.[92] Alfonso's teachings on determinism and free will are strongly influenced by Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* and *Epistle to Yemen* respectively, even through Shem Tov ibn Falaquera's *Guide to the Guide* (*Moreh ha-Moreh*).[93] He is further indebted to Maimonides' writing on astrology.[94] He also uses earlier polemical literature: the *Sefer Nestor ha-Komer*, *Wikkuaḥ Rabbenu Yeḥi'el*,[95] and Nahmanides' account of the Barcelona disputation, though not Ramón Martí's.[96] It is true, though, as Szpiech claims, that Alfonso's tie to earlier anti-Jewish polemics is even more about its deep relationship to sources commonly deemed authoritative than about direct utilization of writings from the preceding generation.[97]

[89] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 425, 430.

[90] The Teacher quotes a saying of Maimonides (without identifying it as such) from the introduction to the *Eight Chapters*, 6: 'I help myself to the truth no matter who says it' (fol. 32b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 52: 'Yo me ayudo de la verdat de quien quier que la diga'; Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 285 n. 61).

[91] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 166.

[92] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 432.

[93] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 536–41. On Abner/Alfonso's philosophical ideas, see Sirat, *History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, pp. 308–12.

[94] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 523.

[95] He takes from Donin the polemic on *Birkat ha-minim*; he knows of the burning of the Talmud in Paris; he mentions (chap. 7, fol. 201^{r-v}; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 136–37) the deprecatory legends (b. *Sanhedrin* 67a) about Mary as a hairdresser, her adulterous lover Panṭera, and the two different people by the name of Jesus, which had passed into the tradition of the *Toledot Yeshu*, though Alfonso knows them via 'some contemporary Jews' ('algunos de los judios postrimeros'), that is, the *Wikkuaḥ Rabbenu Yeḥi'el* (Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 207–08, 563–64). For an assessment of this tradition, see Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, pp. 20–22, and 'Agobard's and Amulo's *Toledot*', pp. 37–38, 46–47.

[96] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 563–68.

[97] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 85.

There are a great number of Talmudic citations in the *Mostrador* — more than 175.[98] In chapter 1 Alfonso already uses the Talmud to prove that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and that the Jews understood this but out of malice did not wish to accept it.[99] Alfonso — who converted at an advanced age — declared his great respect for rabbinic tradition ('I converted to the faith of the Christians [...] always drawing near to the understanding of those great, authentic [Talmudic] sages, as far as I was able'),[100] and in his work seeks to imitate Talmudic more than scholastic style.[101] Thus, according to Szpiech's analysis, 'Abner/Alfonso's rhetoric operates on two levels, at once appealing to the difficulties and doubts suffered by contemporary Jews, and also depicting himself as fundamentally Jewish in his experience, knowledge, and even his conversion to Christianity, in order to appeal to his Jewish reader to trust his argument'.[102]

In his usage of Talmudic materials, Alfonso does not rely on previous Jewish authors and polemicists, according to whom *aggadot* are not authoritative sources of Jewish law, though they may be believed or not. As he explains, citing Shemu'el ha-Nagid, where *aggadah* follows reason, one must accept it,[103] and he who does not is 'a Samaritan [i.e. non-Jew] and an unbeliever' (*kuti we-apiqoros*).[104] *Aggadot* should be understood when possible in the literal sense, not as metaphors and parables without precise significance.[105] Taken and interpreted this way, *aggadot* serve as proof of a Christian truth based either on rational intellect or on Jewish tradition: 'There are many *aggadot* in the teach-

[98] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 461–62. On Alfonso's attitude towards the Talmud, see ibid., pp. 383–90.

[99] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 152 (fols 31b–33b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 49–54), 380 (fol. 342b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 444); the argument can also be found in Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3:47:5.

[100] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 202 (fol. 36a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 59: 'me conuertí a la fe de los christianos [...] e allegándome siempre a los entendimientos de aquellos grandes sabios abtenticos, segund quanto yo más pude').

[101] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 239.

[102] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 266.

[103] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 256, on the basis of Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53, fol. 57a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 101–02.

[104] From Alfonso's *Teshuvot la-meḥaref*, fol. 54a of Parma, Bib. Pal., MS 2440 (text in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 258 n. 22).

[105] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 269.

ings of the ancient sages that teach in this way about salvation, but the majority of the people do not pay heed to them'.[106]

In this way, Alfonso avoids exposing himself to the criticism that Nahmanides had made against Christiani, that he was basing himself on *aggadah* out of ignorance in *halakhah*. Thus, in Alfonso's thought, all the three major sources of authority — the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and reason — demonstrate that Jewish laws and revelations find their fullest expression and fulfilment in the Church, and that the real fidelity to Scripture is that of the Christians.[107] As the Teacher says to the Rebel at the end of the work, 'It is a blessing and an honour to you that your authentic sages disprove you and agree with the sages of the Gentiles in giving testimony against you that you are false and in error'.[108] This notwithstanding the calumnies against Christians that abound in Jewish post-biblical authorities (a theme already raised by Donin):

> After we showed in the 'Book of the Maledictions of the Jews' [another work by Alfonso] the many slanders that the Jews have against the Christians in their books which they themselves composed and which they hold as authentic book among themselves [...] we now want to show in this book the many good things of our Christian Law, good things which the Jews have written in the books of the Law of Moses and of the holy prophets and according to the sayings of the great sages of their Talmud, which are authentic among them, and from the majority of the philosophers — good things which no Jews among them do or believe.[109]

[106] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 254 from the *Teshuvot lameḥaref*, Parma, Bib. Pal., MS 2440, fol. 54b / Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53, fol. 83b: ובעבור היות בדברי החכמים הראשונים הגדות רבות בדרך זה מורות את הישועה, ולא היו המון העם שמים לב אליהם.

[107] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 299.

[108] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 282 (fol. 342a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 444: 'benedicion e onrra es a uos en que los uuestros ssabios abtenticos entre uos desmienten e que concuerdan con los sabios de los gentiles en dar testimonio contra uos de que ssodes erradores e ffalsarios').

[109] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 246, from the *Libro de la ley*, fol. 1b of Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Ofrenda*, ed. by Mettmann, p. 87: 'Despues de que mostramos en el 'Libro de las Malliçiones de los Judios' muchas maliçias que tienen los judios contra los cristianos escriptas en sus libros que ellos compusieron de ssí e que los tienen por libros autenticos entre ssí, [...] queremos agora mostrar en este libro muchos bienes de la nuestra Ley cristiana, los quales bienes los judios tienen escriptos en los libros de la Ley de Moysen y de los profetas santos y segund dichos de los sus grandes sabios del su Talmud, autenticos entrellos, y de los mayores de los filosofos, los quales bienes no fazen nin creen los judios ninguno dellos'.

Since it bears authoritative witness to Christian truth, the Talmud should not be destroyed as it was in France after the Paris trial. Alfonso's position regarding the Talmud is summarized in the following passage:

> There are found among the Jews many men who deny their Talmud [...]. They demand of the bishops and other Christian princes that they burn that Talmud [...]. [S]uch men flee and distance themselves from disputing with Christians, because they believe of him that he will prove to them [these things] from their Talmud [which Martí and Christiani had attempted to do]. And this is so that what they deny about their Talmud would not be known, and they strengthen themselves in their heresy when they see the disagreements that the Jews have in their faith. This is because it is amazing to find ten men among twenty of them who agree on all issues of their faith.[110]

Alfonso considers such fragmentation of religious opinions one of Judaism's worst shortcomings; conversion to Christianity appears to him to be the ultimate and best way to avoid it: 'The Jews', he writes, 'are so dispersed and lacking in agreement that one does not believe what the other believes regarding all the sayings of the Law'.[111]

After the dream that spurred him to conversion, Alfonso claimed that he was motivated by the desire for a philosophical quest for religious truth:

> a desire entered me to see and study about the foundations of faith in books of the Law and of the Prophets and wise men [= Talmud], and historical and allegorical commentators *and books of philosophy*, as much as I could, and I worked at this for some time. And what I gained from all those studies after much work was hard for me [to accept], because it was very strange reasoning to me, according to the habit and custom which I was used to before this in believing in the faith of the Jewish people.[112]

[110] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 208 (fol. 328ab; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 419: 'E por eso sson fallados en los judios muchos omnes que niegan el ssu Talmud dellos [...] e demandan a los obispos e a los otros prinçipes chrisianos que quemassen aquel Talmud. [...] E tales omnes como estos ffuyen e aluénganse de disputer con el christiano, que cuydan dél que les prouará del ssu Talmud. E esto porque non ssea ssabido lo que ellos niegan al ssu Talmud, e enfuérçansse en ssu eregia quando veen las desacordanças que an los judios en ssu ffe').

[111] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 247–48 (fol. 28a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, p. 43: 'Ca tanto sson los judios ssueltos e non concordantes, que non cree el vno lo que cree el otro en todos los dichos de la Ley'); cf. p. 211.

[112] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 220 (italics mine) (fol. 12a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 13: 'me entró en voluntad a catar y

In Szpiech's opinion, Alfonso was attempting, in a subtle way, to replace the opposition between Christian and Jew with an opposition between those who, like Alfonso, seek truth and those who, like most Jews, merely follow tradition.[113] Conversion is brought about by spiritual experience, but above all, by intellectual experimentation; the authorities cited by Jews are not false, but only Christians fully understand their meaning, while Jews oppose it.[114] Says the Teacher to the Rebel, putting the latter's Talmudic authority on a par with his own philosophical reason:

> Thus, when you should find Christians who give some gloss of some verse that contradicts your opinion, do not pressure yourself to push it away or discard it on the basis that other [verses] do not follow that intention — as many Jews did who composed books of disputations against Christians — but look first to see if that argument which they linked to the verse is confirmed as true *through philosophical study or the sayings of students of philosophy* or the sayings of the sages of the Talmud or others who are authentic [authorities] among you.[115]

Alfonso's idea of philosophical, rational *auctoritas* cuts across religious boundaries — like Petrus Alfonsi's ideas in his letter to the French scholars — and philosophy is by no means hierarchically inferior to Scripture and tradition in establishing rational truth. This is shown clearly by the following passage in the *Mostrador*:

> *There are books from which both sides, Christians and Jews, [...] should take proofs equally, and also the Moors* can take proof from them if they should want to. These are the 'Books of Moses' and the 'Prophets', twenty-four books, and books of Heb-

estudiar sobre las rrayzes de la fee n los libros de la Ley e de los prophetas e de los sabios e de los glosadores estoricos e allegoricos e en los libros de filosofos segund esso que yo podia, e trabajé en esto algun tiempo. E lo que gané de todos aquellos estudios despues de gran trabajo, érame duro ademas, porque era rrazon estranna a mí mucho, segund el huso e la costunbre que avía husado ante desto en creer la ffe del comun de los judios').

[113] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 174.

[114] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 183–84.

[115] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 186 (italics mine) (fol. 40b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 67: 'E por ende, quando fallares a los christianos que dieren alguna glosa de algun uiesso tal que contradiga la tu opinion, non te apressures a empuxarla nin a desecharla por parte de que non siguissen los otros uiessos asegund aquella entencion, como lo fizieron todos los judios que conpusieron libros de disputaciones contra los christianos, mas cata primero si aquella rrazon que arrimaron al uiesso es confirmada por verdadera de parte del estudio filosofico o de dichos de los filosofos estudiantes o de dichos de los ssabios del Talmud o los otros abtenticos entre uos').

> rew grammar, and the 'Book of Josippon'. Also *the books of the philosophers*, who are affirmed for the weight of their good understanding, *are of this category*. *And also everything which shows good human understanding, even if it [is] not found written in a book, is of this category*.[116]

We are left to wonder whether Alfonso's philosophical predecessors, and the rationalistic drive in his use of rabbinic lore (especially *aggadot*) as proof of Christian truth, could depend on Qaraite anti-Talmudic polemics, a hypothesis suggested by Carlos Sainz de la Maza Vicioso,[117] or even on a Qaraite personal background. Groups of Qaraites are attested in the Iberian Peninsula in the eleventh century; Szpiech believes it likely that some remained until the fourteenth.[118] Abner/Alfonso knew of the forced conversion of Castilian Qaraites to Rabbanism imposed by King Alfonso VIII in 1178 under pressure from the Rabbanite Jewish courtiers Yosef ibn Alfakar and Ṭodros ben Yosef Abulafia;[119] he also knew of Anan ben David.[120] I agree with Szpiech's conclusion that the title of the *Mostrador*, even though it corresponds to the title of the founder of the *yaḥad* in the Qumran texts and was used by Qaraites too, is not sufficient to prove a direct influence of Qaraism on Abner/Alfonso; rather, the title indicates quite generically a person capable of revealing the Christian truth embedded in Jewish sources. Alfonso does indeed make use of Qaraite sources and

[116] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 243 (italics mine) (fol. 28a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, I, 43: 'ay libros donde deuemos tomar prueuas por egual amas las dos conpannas, los christianos e los judios, [...] e assi los moros tomarán prueua della ssi quisieren. Estos sson los 'Libros de Moysen', e de los 'Prophetas' veynt e quatro libros, e los libros de la gramatica del ebrayco, e el 'Libro de Joseffon'. Otrossi los libros de los filosofos, los que fueron çertifficados por peso de bon entendimiento, sson deste linage. E assi todo lo que muestra el bon entendimiento ymanal, maguera non fuesse fallado escripto en el libro, será deste linage').

[117] Sainz de la Maza Vicioso, 'Alfonso de Valladolid y los caraítas'.

[118] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 489 n. 64 (for an overview on Qaraism in Spain and in Alfonso, see ibid., pp. 485–508).

[119] Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53, fol. 330a; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 422: 'E poco tienpo a passado que estos judios del rregno de Castiella e de los más de la Espanna eran todos çaduçeos e erejes'; translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 490: 'It was not long ago that these Castilian Jews and most of the Jews of Spain were Sadducees and heretics'.

[120] Paris, BnF, MS Esp. 53, fol. 233b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 204 ('Hanem' and 'Hanen'), and fol. 322b; Alfonso de Valladolid, *Mostrador*, ed. by Mettmann, II, 409 ('Rrabi Hanen').

ideas, but only indirectly, probably through Ibn Daud.[121] As with Donin, one must remember that anti-rabbanism does not a Qaraite make.[122]

Pseudo-Samuel Maroccanus

The missionary appeal of intellectual converts from Judaism was considered so strong that the Christian side produced forgeries to make it seem as though more intellectuals were converting than really were. Such was the epistle-treatise *De adventu Messiae quem Judaei expectant liber* (*Book on the Coming of the Messiah Expected by the Jews*),[123] which the Spanish Dominican Alfonso Buenhombre (Alfonsus Bonihominis, who would become Bishop of Morocco in 1344; d. 1353) declared to have discovered and translated from Arabic into Latin in 1339. The work purported to have been composed just after 1000 by a certain Rabbi Samuel of Fez (*Fethet*) in order to explain secretly to another rabbi named Isaac the reasons for his imminent conversion. The topics dealt with in the tract are, quite simply, which sins caused the Jews' exile among the Gentiles and whether they would ever be redeemed. The sins of the Jews, according to the author, were having 'sold the righteous for silver' (Amos 2. 6) — the righteous having been Christ, blindly not recognized as the Messiah; Grace has therefore superseded Law, and the sacraments have supplanted sacrifices.

The work does not show a specific knowledge of rabbinic exegesis and literature, whereas it does demonstrate familiarity with Christian theology and liturgy.[124] Although at the time Jewish authors such as Ḥayyim ibn Mūsā and Yiṣḥaq Nathan ben Qalonymos of Arles attacked the work as a forgery, some modern scholars have deemed it authentic;[125] it is now generally acknowledged as pseudepigraphic.[126] It is the only work of this kind whose author resorts to

[121] Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 499–508; Lasker, 'Karaism in Twelfth-Century Spain'.

[122] Rustow, 'Karaites Real and Imagined', p. 52.

[123] Most readily available in *PL*, CXLIX, cols 335–68. The incunable of Nürnberg (1498) is reproduced on the website of the Wolfenbütteler Digitale Bibliothek (<http://diglib.hab.de/wdb.php?dir=inkunabeln/69-2-quod-11>, accessed 29 January 2011). See Limor, 'The Epistle of Rabbi Samuel'.

[124] Limor, 'The Epistle of Rabbi Samuel', pp. 184–85 n. 32, argues it is influenced by Alfonsi's *Dialogue*.

[125] E.g. Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten'; Merchavia, *Ha-Talmud bi-re'i ha-naṣrut*, pp. 98 and 113.

[126] See Limor's extensive analysis, after van den Oudenrijn, 'De opusculis arabicis', and

pseudepigraphic fiction, so that, as Ora Limor puts it, 'Christian truth is presented as [...] hidden Jewish truth. This gives his work an authority no previous polemical work ever possessed: a Jewish authority'.[127] In that sense, the work took further the use of sources taken from rabbinic tradition as proof of Christian truth.

The number of surviving exemplars, both in manuscript and printed, is evidence of the surprising fortune this work enjoyed into the early modern age. Limor has counted three hundred manuscripts that postdate the fourteenth century, as well as translations — both medieval and modern — into nine languages, eighteen incunables, and eleven sixteenth-century editions.

Shelomoh ha-Levi / Pablo de Santa María

In 1391 Shelomoh ha-Levi (b. *c.* 1351), the learned and influential former Rabbi of Burgos, converted to Christianity, assuming the name of Pablo de Santa María and starting an ecclesiastical career that would lead him in 1415 to the archiepiscopal seat of Burgos — an office he held until his death in 1435. The young Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi from Alcañiz in Aragon wrote him an open letter to investigate the reasons for his conversion.[128] He suggested greed as motivation, along with lust for Gentile women — which, however, does not correspond to ha-Lorqi's recollections of his intimate conversations with ha-Levi:

> Perhaps your appetitive soul longed to climb the rungs of wealth and honour which everyone desires and to satisfy the craving soul with all manner of food and to gaze at the resplendent beauty of the countenance of Gentile women. [...] [But] You were always shoring up breaches in the faith, being punctilious with the commandments and their performance, never doubting any of its principles, or being lax in any of its particulars or preventive restrictions as is appropriate behaviour for anyone who takes religion seriously. [...] And ever since the time that I was eagerly drinking your waters when you made your servant one of those who ate at your table, I knew of your comings and goings and I saw in you the intensity of desire, for speculative discourse and for essential truths, and you held back from the pursuit of great deeds and wondrous things. Indeed let me remind your honour

Marsmann, 'Die Epistel des Rabbi Samuel' (*non vidi* — cited in Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 174 n. 8).

[127] Limor, 'The Epistle of Rabbi Samuel', p. 187.

[128] Text in Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau; Krieger, 'Pablo de Santa Maria', pp. 263–309 (with English translation). The translation quoted here is taken passim from Gampel, 'A Letter to a Wayward Teacher' (here, pp. 391–425).

> about the time I went there to the wedding of your friend Don Meir Benveniste, when you began to occupy yourself with matters of state and you had acquired for yourself a chariot, horses, and runners to do your bidding, you stated privately to me: 'I regret that I have subjected myself to the rule of these seeming successes, for they are vanity and works of delusion. They produce nothing but sorrow of heart. If only I could have back as my own that garret where my tent was pitched in those early years and where I spent day and night in diligent study'. This was the gist of what you said — rightly — and such expressions were frequently heard from you.[129]

Another reason might have been an earnest quest for religious truth — an intellectual endeavour of the same kind as his fellow citizen Abner's, which would lead him to a psychologically and somatically less austere faith. But in ha-Lorqi's view, not even ha-Levi's philosophical training would have been sufficient to drive him from Judaism:

> Or perhaps you were seduced by philosophical inquiry (*ha-'iyyun ha-filosofi*)[130] to overturn the bow and to consider the underpinnings of all faiths to be vanity and works of delusion and so you turned to a religion more conducive to bodily calm and to peace of mind and not accompanied by terrors and fear and dread [...]. Also of philosophical knowledge (*da'at ha-filosofya*),[131] you ate the essence and cast aside the shells. And so the first two causes have been dispensed with.[132]

Thus ha-Lorqi turns to Shelomoh's possible discontent with the unfortunate condition of Israel in the dispersion, which could have convinced him of the supersessionist idea that Christendom was actually the new Israel. Such a doubt

[129] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 1–2: אם באולי חשקה נפשך המתאוה לעלות במעלת העושר והכבוד. כי הוא דבר שיכספוהו הכל ולהשביע נפש שוקקה מכל מאכל אשר יאכל ולחזות בנועם זיו קלסתר פנים נשים נכריות. [...] על אשר ראתיך מעולם מחזיק את בדק האמונה ומדקדק במצות ובקיומם בלתי מסופק בדבר משרשיה בלתי מתעצל באחד מפרטיה וסייגיה כראוי לכל בעל דת. [...] ומאז מימיך בכוסף שתיתי ותשת את עבדך באוכלי שולחנך ידעתי את מוצאך. ואת מבואך וראיתיך עם חוזק התשוקה לדברי העיוניים ולהשקפת האמתיות מתעצל טומן יד מלכת בגדולות ובנפלאות: והנה אזכיר לפני כבודך כי בלכתי שמה לחתונת דון בנבנשת דודך אשר התחלת אז להתעסק בעסקי מלכות ועשית לך מרכבה וסוסים ואנשים רצים למלאות רצונך אמרת מפיך לאזני נחמת כי המלכתי על עצמי אלה ההצלחות המדומות כי הבל המה מעשה תעתועים אין זה כי אם רוע לב מי יתנני למקנה אותה עליית קיר קטנה אשר היה שם אהלי בתחלה בשקידת העיון יומם ולילה. עד כאן תורף דבריך הנכונים וכאלה רבות עמך.

[130] Krieger, 'Pablo de Santa Maria', p. 261, translates 'philosophical rationalism'.

[131] Here too Krieger, 'Pablo de Santa Maria', p. 267, translates 'philosophical rationalism'.

[132] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 1–2:
או שמא השיאך העיון הפלוסופי להפך קערה על פיה ולחשוב על מחזיקי האמונות כי הבל המה מעשי תעתועים. ולכן פנית אל היותר נאות להשקט הגוף וליישוב השכל בלי חרדות ואימתה ופחד: [...] גם מדעת הפילוסופיא אכלת התוכות וזרקת הקליפות. והנה יצאו שתי סבות הראשונות.

had indeed already bothered Abner/Alfonso and contributed to his conversion. But, ha-Lorqi argues, Israel's presence and resilience in the rest of the known world outside Christendom is proof that God has not forsaken it — an argument already raised by Rabbi Yeḥi'el against Donin in the Paris trial.[133]

> Or when you observed the destruction of our homeland and the many troubles that have recently befallen us, consuming us and scattering us — and that God has almost hidden his countenance from us and made us as food to the birds of the heaven and the wild beasts of the earth, it occurred to you that 'the name of Israel will be remembered no more' [Psalm 83. 5] [...]. And I cannot argue that the third reason, that is the destruction of the people, may have deluded you, because I am confident that you are not ignorant of the fact that is well-known amongst us from the travelogues of those who have journeyed the length and breadth of the world, or from the letters of Maimonides of blessed memory, or from the accounts of merchants who voyage across the sea — that at present most of our people are to be found in the lands of Babylonia and Yemen, where the exiles of Jerusalem settled at first, besides the exiles of Samaria who today are as numerous as the sands on the seashore and who dwell in the lands of Persia and Media. Some of these exiles live under the domination of a king who is called the sultan of Babylonia and of the Ishmaelites, some in districts where the yoke of no other people is upon them, such as those who live on the border of the lands of the Cushites which is called al-Habash adjacent to the Edomite prince called Prester John, who have a treaty with him that is renewed annually. And that is an irrefutable fact. And furthermore all the Jews who dwell in Christian lands are only descended from those who returned to Jerusalem [under Ezra and Nehemiah] who without doubt were not of the leaders of the Exile but rather of the humblest people. As the rabbis have said about them, 'Ezra did not ascend from Babylonia to Israel until he left Babylonian Jewry like pure sifted flour' [b. *Qiddushin* 69b]. Following this assumption, even if it were God's decree to destroy and exterminate all the Jews who live within Christendom, the people would remain alive and intact, so this should not lead to a weakening of faith.[134]

[133] Paris, BnF, MS Hébr. 712, fol. 44b.

[134] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 1–3:
או ראית באבדן מולדתנו ברוב הצרות המתרגשות עלינו עתה מקרוב באו אשר כולנו והממונו וכמעט הסתיר השם פניו ממנו ונתננו למאכל לעוף השמים ולחיתו ארץ ועלה בדעתך כי לא יזכר שם ישראל עוד: [...] ולא אומר כי אם באולי השיאתך הסבה השלישית רצוני לומר הפסד האומה כי למאי ידעתי בודאי לא נעלם ממך הדבר המפורסם אצלנו מספרי מסעות הולכי ארחות בארץ לארכה ולרכבה. גם מאגרות הרמב״ם ז״ל גם משמע הסוחרים עוברי ארחות ימים היות היום הזה עיקר אומתנו בארצות בבל ותימן מקום אשר היה שם גלות ירושלים בתחלת מלבד השוכנים בארצות פרס ומדי מגלות שומרון שהם היום עם רב כחול אשר על שפת הים שיש מהם תחת שעבוד מלך הנקרא סולטאן בבל וישמעלים במחוזות שאין עול אומה אחרת עליהם כאותם השוכנים בקצת ארץ הכושיים הנקראים אלכחש בעלי מצור עם השר האדומי הוא הנקרא פרישטי גואן וכורתים

Eventually, if only ironically, ha-Lorqi suggests that maybe ha-Levi had been convinced of the falsehood of Judaism by some prophetical revelation:

> Or perhaps there were revealed to you the secrets of prophecy and the basic principles of faith and their proofs, such as were not revealed to the pillars of the world amongst our people during all the days of our long Exile, and you concluded that our forefathers had inherited falsehood because of their limited understanding of the Torah and of prophecy and therefore you chose what you chose because it is true and certain.[135]

Ha-Lorqi addresses ha-Levi in a most sincere and respectful tone, 'as someone who is wholeheartedly with you, whose soul lies down in fear and rises in horror, and who is bound to you with cords of love'.[136] He portrays the ex-rabbi as a deep and reflective person, and eventually concludes that his conversion was due to a choice between different religious ideas after lengthy personal comparison and speculation. As Yehudah ha-Levi had already warned, the practice of philosophy can weaken one's observance of *halakhah* and attachment to specifically Jewish truths:

> Therefore only the last reason remains for us to consider and that involves the study and weighing of opinions regarding religions and prophecies, especially since I know that you are acquainted with the rarest of the books of the Christians — and their interpretations and their principles — since you are proficient in their language, books of which no contemporary scholar is familiar. In addition, about two months ago, the text of the letter which you sent to Yosef Orabuena in Navarre came into my possession via Saragossa; in it I saw that you believe of the man who came during the last years of the Second Temple that he is the Messiah for whom our people have waited from then until now, and that all the prophecies which speak of the Messiah and the redemption fully conform with his particulars; that is to say with his birth, his death, and his resurrection.[137]

עמו ברית בכל שנה, וזה דבר שאין בו שום ספק. וכי כל היהודים השוכנים בארצות הנוצרים אינם רק מאותם ששבו לירושלם ע״י עזרא ונחמיה שהם בלי ספק לא היו מגדולי הגולה רק מדלת העם. שהרי אמרו רז״ל עליהם לא עלה עזרא מבבל עד שהניחה כסולת נקייה: ולפי זה המונח האמיתי אף כי תהיה גזירת השם להשמיד ולאבד את כל היהודים אשר בין הנוצרים עדיין תהיה האומה קיימת ושלימה ולא יביא זה לחולשת הבטחון.

[135] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, p. 1: או באולי נגלה לך מסודות הנבואה ועקרי האמונות ובחינתם מה שלא נגלה לעמודי עולם אשר היו באמתנו מכל זמני הגלות וראית כי שקר נחלו אבותינו למיעוט הבנתם בכוונת התורה והנבואה ובחרת מה שבחרת על שהוא אמת ויציב.

[136] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, p. 18: כיש את נפשך ונפש יושב מחריד עומד משתומם. קשור בעבותות אהבתך.

[137] Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 3–4: לכן לא נשאר לי עליך רק הסבה האחרונה והיא הבחינה והשיקול בדעות הדתות והנבואות. ויותר כי ידעתי ראית מטמוני דפרי

Why ha-Levi's choice had triggered such deep questioning in ha-Lorqi will become evident from the latter's subsequent life (see next section). What matters here is that Shelomoh ha-Levi's conversion was presented by an external, even if personally involved, observer as a case of conscience, that is, in the same terms in which Herman of Cologne and Alfonso of Valladolid had presented their own conversions.

In a short reply to ha-Lorqi's lengthy letter,[138] ha-Levi addressed only the question of whether those born within false faiths such as Judaism and Islam have a moral obligation to investigate and search for true faith; of course he answers in the affirmative. In the conclusion to his letter, ha-Levi declares that only by liberating himself from the burden of levitical priesthood (i.e. his rabbinical rank) was it possible for him to contemplate the god of Israel in an unmediated way, as Moses and Aaron had done:

> Do not scrutinize the words, only the ideas, for, in truth, I have actually turned away from the Hebrew language and I am too occupied with my studies to find the time to produce something properly edited. From your brother the Israelite, once a Levite, who, owing to the disqualification of the first is seeking another Levitical role — and dearer is the latter than the former — to serve in the name of his God, his righteous Messiah, to be sanctified with the holiness of Aaron. Formerly in Israel when he did not know God, Solomon of the House of Levi, and now since his eyes have beheld God, he is called Paulo de Burgos.[139]

An interesting term of comparison for ha-Lorqi's detailed list of possible reasons for conversion is to be found in another letter written a century and a half earlier, around 1270, in Italian vernacular or Latin by a certain Maestro Andrea and subsequently translated into Hebrew by Ya'aqov ben Eliyyah, the

הנוצרים ופרושיהם ועקריהם בהיותך בקי בלשונם מה שלא ראה אחד מחכמינו בזמננו זה. מוסף על זה כי בא לידי דרך סרקסטא זה כמו ב› חדשים טופס כתב ידך שלוח לנאברא ובא ליד ר› יוסף אוראבואינה וראיתי בו היותך מאמין ענין האיש ההוא אשר בא בסוף בית שני שהוא המשיח אשר קוותה אומתנו מאז ועד עתה וכי כל הנבואות המדברות בעניני הגואל והגאולה נאותות ומסכימות בעניניו ר״ל בילדתו ומיתתו ותחייתו.

[138] Text in Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 19–21; translated in Krieger, 'Pablo de Santa Maria', pp. 311–17.

[139] Translated in Gampel, 'A Letter to a Wayward Teacher', pp. 425–26; Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi, *Das apologetische Schreiben*, ed. by Landau, pp. 20–21: אל תשת לבך לדקדק במלות רק העניינים כי באמת לבבי פונה היום מלשון העברי ואני טרוד בלמודי מבלי פנאי מספיק לדוציא מתוקן כראוי: [תורף החתימה.] נאם אחיך ישראל אחר לוי משום פסולו של ראשון ודורש ללויה שניה וחביב חביב אחרון. לשרת בשם אלהיו משיח צדקו להתקדש בקדשתו של אהרן. לפנים בישראל לא ידע שלמה לבית הלוי ועתה כי עיניו יחזו את האלהים נקרא פאוילו די בורגינש.

same one who addressed Pablo Christiani as a persecutor of the Talmud.[140] Maestro Andrea, a convert from Judaism, speaks with irony about the thoughts and expectations of the average convert to Christianity of the time, and identifies gluttony and distaste for kosher food as initial motivations for the process of conversion. This turns the soon-to-be convert into a nuisance for his whole household; he is therefore pushed further towards conversion in order to be able to pursue his inclinations openly. Into the psychology of the convert there then enters the conviction that by converting he will gain easy access to beautiful women — the same accusation that ha-Lorqi initially considered raising against Shelomoh ha-Levi. The deeper instincts of the convert further tell him: 'And if you will find it difficult and cumbersome to fast when they do, don't follow their deeds; rather celebrate with the Jews in their feasts and with the people of the new religion in theirs'.[141] A conversion motivated only by this base reason, as Maestro Andrea suggests, is of course not to be taken seriously.

Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi / Gerónimo de Santa Fe

Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi's reflection on the conversion of his former mentor Shelomoh ha-Levi reached a decisive turning point when, in 1412 in his native Alcañiz, he met Vincent Ferrer, an apocalyptic preacher sent by the antipope Benedict XIII (Pedro de Luna) to promote the conversion of the Jews in the imminence of the end of days. This millenarian context must be taken into account among the reasons for the wave of conversion among Iberian Jews beginning with the persecutions of 1391. Ha-Lorqi converted, assuming the name Gerónimo de Santa Fe, from which his ex-correligionists derived the defamatory acrostic *MeGaDDeF* ('blasphemer', with the M standing for 'Maestre'). There can be scarcely any doubt that his conversion 'had slowly matured during twenty years of uncertainty and self-conflict',[142] and that, as Benjamin R. Gampel puts it, 'he had acquired a profound sense, from a theological understanding of Jewish history both past and present, that God had indeed forsaken the Jewish people and had chosen a new Israel. It was his reali-

[140] Text in Neubauer, 'Maestro Andrea's Brief'.

[141] Translated in Shatzmiller, 'Jewish Converts to Christianity', pp. 310–11; Neubauer, 'Maestro Andrea's Brief', p. 75: אם יכבד עליך לישא הטורח והמשא. לענות את נפשך כאשר הם מענים את נפשותיהם. אל תעשה כמעשיהם רק תשמח עם העברים במועדיהם. ועם אנשי הדת החדשה בחגותיהם.

[142] Thus Orfalí, 'The Portuguese Edition', p. 240.

zation as well that all the biblical prophecies about the messianic future were indeed bound up with the person of Jesus'.[143]

Almost immediately after his conversion, Gerónimo sent to Benedict XIII, to whom he was a physician, the tractate *Ad convincendum perfidiam Iudaeorum* (*Persuading the Incorrect Faith of the Jews*). The following year, he composed the compilation *De Iudaicis erroribus ex Talmut* (*About Jewish Errors from the Talmud*). Both works were meant as preparatory dossiers for the public conversionist catechesis to the Jews that was to be held in Tortosa and San Mateo between 1413 and 1414.[144] The Jewish side was represented by a group of outstanding rabbis and scholars, among whom were Profiat Duran and Yosef Albo. The goal of both of Gerónimo's works was to bring the Jews to the Christian religion by proving that the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament had already arrived, and by illustrating and criticizing the errors contained in the Talmud. The first point was discussed in the first sixty-two sessions of the catechesis (held in Tortosa from 7 February 1413 to 4 April 1414); the second was discussed in the last seven sessions (held in San Mateo from 15 June to 13 November 1414).

Just like the *Extractiones de Talmut*, which served as the handbook for the prosecution in the Paris trial of 1240, Gerónimo's *De Iudaicis erroribus*, aimed at the sessions that would be held in San Mateo, is entirely devoted to criticism of rabbinic literature.[145] It is a compilation of mostly aggadic materials taken from the Talmud and Midrashic literature, from Rashi's and Maimonides' commentaries, and from the liturgy. In a short historical introduction, Gerónimo, who was evidently well versed in rabbinic literature, again raised the issue of the dating of the Talmud, already broached in Paris in 1240 and Barcelona in 1263. He dated it to 435 years after Christ's Passion and ascribed it to Rabina and Rab Ashi, corresponding to Nahmanides' dating in the Barcelona disputation and probably depending on it.[146] The accusations against the Talmud can be recapitulated as follows, according to the six chapters of the *De Iudaicis erroribus*:

[143] Gampel, 'A Letter to a Wayward Teacher', pp. 426–27.

[144] Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', pp. 166–67.

[145] For the history of the text, see Orfalí, 'The Portuguese Edition'. The rabbinic sources are collected, translated, and discussed in Gerónimo de Santa Fe, *El tratado 'De Iudaicis erroribus'*, ed. by Orfalí.

[146] § 8 of Steinschneider's edition (1860), reprinted in Mosheh ben Naḥman, *Kitve Rabbenu Mosheh ben Naḥman*, ed. by Chavel, I, 302–20.

1 Things contrary to charity, humanity, and natural law.
2. Things contrary to the service of God and his perfections.
3. Things contrary to Mosaic Law and the Law of the Prophets.
4. The absurdities, prejudices, and immoralities it contains.
5. Intolerable claims about the Catholic faith and Our Saviour Jesus Christ.
6. Things that appear prejudicial to Christians living together with Jews.

Many of the criticisms that Gerónimo makes against the Talmud, and the passages from the Talmud and Midrashic literature that he cites, are already to be found in earlier polemical literature (e.g. the allegation that all the rabbinic passages hostile towards Samaritans, idolaters, and Gentiles are actually meant against Christians;[147] criticism of excessively anthropomorphic representations of God; the claim that the Jews cannot be trusted because according to b. *Nedarim* 23b they are not required to maintain oaths made before non-Jews; etc.). Moisés Orfalí has observed that, of the 115 sources discussed in Gerónimo's tract, 24 are already present in the *Pugio fidei* of Martí and 60 in the *Extractiones de Talmut*.[148] Yet, in Orfalí's opinion, these two compilations cannot be taken as direct sources for Gerónimo's work 'because the Latin translations of the rabbinic texts and the series of passages which Jerónimo quotes are not found in the works mentioned above [Martí and the *Extractiones*]. Since the most important allegations were in large part already known, we must deduce that Jerónimo searched for new proof in order to strengthen the older theories repeated in the anti-Talmudic literature'.[149] When it suits his aims, Gerónimo dealt with *aggadot* as if they were sources of dogma,[150] even though according to the Sephardi tradition of his time they had no doctrinal value, and he himself even admitted this in the course of his discussion.[151] The issue was

[147] Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', p. 164 n. 24.

[148] Though, according to Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', p. 167, Yehoshua'/Gerónimo had no direct access to the *Extractiones*.

[149] Gerónimo de Santa Fe, *El tratado 'De Iudaicis erroribus'*, ed. by Orfalí, p. 247.

[150] Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', p. 172: 'fuentes de dogmas'.

[151] Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', p. 178 n. 105, quotes from the tenth session of the Latin proceedings of the catechesis (Pacios López, *La disputa de Tortosa*, II, 65): 'The Jews consider unauthoritative, nor susceptible of being declared such, this authority and many others of the same kind that are found in several passages of the book *Talmud*, as if they were fables [...]. Indeed, the Jew utters some protest, then answers he is by no means bound to trust such words nor the like' ('Hanc enim auctoritatem, et quam plurimas alias similes, quas in pluribus locis

once more about the Talmud as *auctoritas*, namely, the rabbinic obligation to use it in its entirety as authoritative, against the Christian practice of excerpting it as a mere repertoire of disconnected sources to serve polemical purposes. Gerónimo adopted the stance that Ramón Martí had taken a century and a half earlier at the beginning of his *Capistrum*, in which he opposed the Jewish perspective that one must either accept the Talmud as *doctrina* in its entirety or reject it in its entirety (a stance still accepted, as we saw, by Petrus Alfonsi):

> As often as we might adduce something true from the Talmud against them, to overcome some wickedness or to refute some objection of theirs, or even to establish a certain truth in earnest, they argue extensively that we ought not to, nor can we fairly adduce something from the Talmud on our behalf against them, unless we were to believe in the entire Talmud and accept it all.[152]

Having dealt with other major themes of anti-Jewish polemics — whether the Messiah has already come, whether Mosaic law should be deemed abolished, and whether Israel's election has been superseded — in the *Ad convincendum perfidiam Iudaeorum*, Gerónimo does not repeat them in *De Iudaicis erroribus*. What bothers him most about the Talmud now are three things. First (according to the Latin proceedings of the catechesis), he claims that the Talmud does not conform to principles of reason, truth, and clarity, since it contains 'many frivolous and captious things, deceits, heresies, baseness and countless errors'. According to the *De Iudaicis erroribus*, '*falsehoods that cannot be disentangled*, base and frivolous and abominable things that go against the law of God, against the law of nature, and against the written law'.[153] Second, it constitutes the ground of the arrogance by which 'these sages of the Talmud glorify themselves'.[154]

libri Talmut, velut fabulosas, iudei nec auctenticas nec auctorizabiles iudicant [...]. Et ymo, protestacione premissa, respondet [*sic*] iudeus quod huic verbo vel simili, nullatenus fidem prestare tenetur').

[152] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', p. 177 (Martí, *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, ed. and Spanish trans. by Robles Sierra, II, 280–81: 'Quotienscumque siquidem verum aliquod de suo Talmud inducimus contra eos, ad ipsorum malitiam aliquam confutandam, vel nequitiam repellendam, vel etiam ad veritatem aliquam comprobandam serio multum causantur non debere nos, nec iuste posse de Talmud aliquid inducer pro nobis contra eos, nisi toti Talmud credamus et totum admittamus').

[153] Quotations taken from Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', pp. 158 and 160 n. 13 (italics mine): 'plures vanitates, cavillationes, deceptiones, haereses, turpitudines et errores innumeri'; 'intricabilia mendacia, turpia, fatua, abominabilia: contra legem Dei, contra legem naturae, contra legem scriptam'.

[154] Quotation taken from Gerónimo de Santa Fe, *El tratado 'De Iudaicis erroribus'*, ed. by

Third, it is the stumbling block preventing the Jews from adhering to Christian truth or even to their own original Law: 'they are so rooted in the tradition of [the Talmud's] wrongful meaning that they believe in such nonsense more than [they believe in] Moses or Christ'.[155]

Alfonso de Zamora

Born *c.* 1474 and baptized only in 1506, many years after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, Alfonso de Zamora was the curator of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible and published an introduction to Hebrew grammar (*Introductiones Artis Grammaticae Hebraicae*, Alcalá de Henares, 1526), which includes as an appendix a letter to the Jews of Rome. The sixth part of this appendix is devoted to the Talmud and criticism of the Talmudists. One of the main complaints is the lack of clarity, order, and defined juridical decisions that ensues from the clash of different opinions. It is the same typically Aristotelian objection to Talmudic logic that had already been raised by Alfonso, and here it is revived in humanistic garb; it would ultimately lead to Yosef Caro's attempt to establish legal decisions and codify them in his *Shulḥan Arukh*. In Eleazar Gutwirth's opinion, de Zamora 'sees Jewish opposition to the Talmud as part of a process which would ideally culminate in Jewish rejection of the Talmud and conversion to Christianity';[156] he therefore approves eagerly of the burning of the Talmud during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, 'because many Jews who were their servants reported the Talmud to them: *For your overthrowers and your destroyers will come from amongst you* (Isaiah 49. 17b) [...] and had they completely burned it [the Talmud] they would have done you a great mercy so that you might find tranquillity for your soul'.[157]

Orfalí, p. 60: 'Item glorificantur isti Talmudistae in se ipsis'. Orfalí, 'Jeronimo de Santa Fe', p. 169, quotes in this respect Amemar's saying: 'The *ḥakham* is superior to the prophet' (b. *Bava Batra* 12a: וחכם עדיף מנביא); cf. Urbach, 'Halakhah u-nevu'ah'.

[155] Quotation taken from Gerónimo de Santa Fe, *El tratado 'De Iudaicis erroribus'*, ed. by Orfalí, p. 24 n. 16: 'Sic traditi sunt in reprobum sensum, ut plus his nugis credant quam Moysi aut Christo'. Orfalí, 'The Portuguese Edition', p. 245, translates the last part as follows: 'The Jews, acting in this manner, fell into their own trap: by believing their own lies and by considering the Talmud a revealed Law they gave more credit to their own lies than to Moses or Christ'.

[156] Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', pp. 120–21.

[157] Translated in Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', with modifications: 'quia detulerunt eum Iudaei multi qui erant servi eorum quia dissipantes te et destruentes te ex te exibunt

Conclusions

Beyond the obvious explanation provided by persecutions, two different reasons have been suggested to make sense of the great number of conversions to Christianity among Spanish Jews in the Middle Ages.[158] Yiṣḥaq Baer argued that they resulted from the Averroistic tendencies operative in different levels of medieval Spanish Jewish society. Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, by contrast, thought of conversions as a phenomenon parallel to, or influenced by, contemporary Spanish Catholic mysticism as exemplified, for instance, in the preaching and asceticism of Vincent Ferrer — whose direct influence, as we saw, had a considerable bearing on Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi's decision to convert. These two different tendencies shared their hostility to the established rabbinic leadership, seen, as Gutwirth put it, as 'unjustly claiming pre-eminence, being socially unproductive and corrupt'.[159] In this respect too, the schism of the Spanish antipope Benedict XIII may have influenced this tendency among the Christian majority: on Gutwirth's interpretation, Benedict promoted missionizing and conversion, even forced, among the Jews as a means of institutional consolidation for his anti-Roman Church.

Gutwirth observed that both Baer's and Ben-Sasson's models lend themselves to the same criticism: there is no evidence of converts from Judaism to Christianity who had previously been Averroists or displayed mystical or ascetic inclinations comparable to those at work in contemporary Spanish

et ego dico vobis quod si combus[s]issent eum quod fecissent vobis misericordiam magnam ad inveniendam requiem animae vestrae'. The edition of Alcalá de Henares (1526) is reproduced on the websites of the Biblioteca Digital de Castilla y León (<http://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/i18n/consulta/registro.cmd?id=13264>) and of the Biblioteca Virtual del Patrimonio Bibliográfico of the Spanish Ministry of Education (<http://bvpb.mcu.es/es/catalogo_imagenes/grupo.cmd?path=35037>) [both accessed 18 November 2015].

[158] Recapitulation of the history of research in Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity'.

[159] Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 121. For his anti-Talmudism, de Zamora can be compared to his German contemporary Johannes Pfefferkorn (1469–1523), baptized in Cologne in 1505. Pfefferkorn composed four anti-Jewish tracts, among which is *Der Judenspiegel* (*The Mirror of the Jews*, 1507), according to which the Talmud was the main reason why the Jews had failed to accept the Christian faith. In 1509, the Emperor Maximilian I assigned Pfefferkorn the task of withdrawing from circulation all Jewish books except the Torah and the Prophets. The prince elector of Mainz, charged with settling the controversy, had various scholars investigate the question, of whom only one, the humanist Johannes Reuchlin (1455–1522), came out in favor of the restitution of the Talmud and other writings, defending the Jewish cause (in 1511). Due to the stand he took, Reuchlin was subjected to a long inquisitorial trial — at Pfefferkorn's request.

Christendom. Gutwirth therefore suggested an alternative explanation, extensively analysing a wide corpus of Jewish anti-rabbinic, and especially anti-Talmudic, literature produced on the Iberian Peninsula from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, mainly by authors who remained Jewish (e.g. Ibn Janāḥ, Ya'aqov Anatoli, Meshullam da Piera, Shelomoh Al'ami, Abraham Bibago), but also by some who converted to Christianity (e.g. Alfonso de Zamora). Gutwirth's conclusion is that a rationalist, anti-rabbinic, and especially anti-Talmudic tendency was operative for a long time in the 'Hispano-Jewish mentality', particularly among intellectuals,[160] a tendency similar to the contemporary anti-ecclesiastical feelings that pervaded the Christian majority, thus leading to the Reformation: 'Ecclesiastical authority was being challenged and confronted with Scripture, there was criticism of excessive sophistry, of pursuit of power, and of ecclesiastics functioning as temporal rulers or as judges'.[161] Jewish intellectuals with such inclinations who eventually converted to Christianity were targeted by the authoritative Spanish Rabbi Shelomoh ibn Adret (1235–1310) — in an explicit polemic against Ramón Martí — in an attempt to destroy their credibility on religious grounds in the eyes both of the Jews and of the Christians:

> Who recounted this *aggadah*? A Jew or a Christian or a heretic (*min*) who behaved like a Jew and believed like a Christian? Now if he was truly a Jew, then he did not make the statement in the fashion you indicate, for then he would not have been a Jew. If he was a Christian, then I need not believe in what he said regarding this matter. Let him say whatever he wishes. If he was a heretic, then neither we nor you need believe in what he says. One does not bring proof from a heretic.[162]

[160] It also emerges in the *Zohar*'s depiction of Talmudists as 'dogs barking day and night' (Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 104).

[161] Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', pp. 104–05.

[162] Translated in Szpiech, 'From *Testimonia* to Testimony', pp. 144–45 and 286, from Ibn Adret's *Perushe Haggadot*, in *R. Salomo b. Abraham b. Adereth*, ed. by Perles, p. 42 of the Hebrew: מי היה המגיד אותה הגדה ישראלי או נצרי או מין שהיה נוהג כישראלי ומאמין בנצרי אם ישראלי היה באמת לא אמרו על הצד שאמרת שא"כ לא ישראלי היה ואם נצרי אין לי להאמין בו במה שאמר בזה ויאמר מה שיאמר ואם מין לא לנו ולכם להאמין במה שיאמר ואין מביאין ראיה מין המינים. I am grateful to Ephraim Shoham-Steiner for calling my attention to the fact that the final words of this quotation from Ibn Adret are an allusion (clear to Talmud-trained readers) to the discussion in b. *Shabbat* 104b, where the Sages call Ben Stada / Ben Pantera (i.e. Jesus) 'a fool' (*shoṭeh*) and state — in a polemic against Rabbi Eli'ezer — that 'One does not bring proof from a fool' (אין מביאין ראיה מן השוטים). (For a discussion of the Talmudic passage, see Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, pp. 15–18.)

This intellectual conversionist trend is comparable to the one that Sarah Stroumsa identified among Jewish intellectuals who converted to Islam in the medieval near East,[163] and must be taken into account 'when analyzing the factors that led to the unparalleled number of conversions in late medieval Spain'.[164] In several cases it coincided with an interest in non-Jewish philosophy and with adhesion to rationalism of the Maimonidean type. For instance, 'Azaryah ben Yosef ibn Abba Mari of Perpignan wrote in the introduction to his translation into Hebrew of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* (1432):

> I know that the common mass of foolish rabbis will find me guilty and will mock me because of this translation, but if these ignorant individuals, who pretend to be the true Jews and who pretend to be devout with their absurd devotions, would read Maimonides, who translated many books by non-Jewish scholars, especially Galen, [...] they would apologize to me.[165]

Again in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese ethical writer Shelomoh Al'ami voiced Alfonso de Valladolid's and Alfonso de Zamora's same criticism against the Talmudists and the clash of their opinions in his *Iggeret musar* (*Epistle of Moral Instruction*, 1415): 'What the one reveals the other conceals, what one permits the other forbids, till it is as if there were two Torahs and not one'.[166] Along the same lines, some sixty years later, the Aragonese philosopher Abraham Bibago, in his *Derekh emunah* (*The Path of Faith*, *c*. 1480),[167] criticized the Talmudists for their anti-Maimonideanism, which he blamed on their being accustomed to rejecting any non-literal interpretation of the Torah and the Talmud. Bibago — who personally suffered opposition because of his radical Aristotelianism — maintained that the Talmudists' attachment to rabbinic tradition, and especially their interpretive literalism, made them blind to the deeper meaning of Talmudic wisdom itself. He therefore defined *them* as the

[163] Stroumsa, 'On Jewish Intellectuals'.

[164] Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 121.

[165] Translated in Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 110 (from 'Azaryah ben Yosef ibn Abba Mari, *Boezio, De consolatione philosophiae*, ed. by Sierra, p. 28: ובעבור זה ידעתי כי יאשימוני וילעיגוני סכל המון העם הרבנים באשר העתיקתיו אמנם אם עמי הארץ המתיהדים והמתחסדים בחסידות של שטות יקראו בספרי הרב המורה צדק ע״ה אשר העתיק כמה וכמה ספרים מחכמי הגוים ובפרט דברי גאלינוס אשר סכל לדבר נגד אדוננו משה ע״ה [...] אז היו מתנצלים אותי).

[166] Translated in Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 109, with modifications; Al'ami, *Iggeret musar*, ed. by Jellinek, p. 24: מה שזה מגלה זה מסתיר, מה שזה אוסר זה מתיר, עד שנעשית תורה אחת כשתי תורות במחלקתם.

[167] See Zonta, *Hebrew Scholasticism*, p. 39 and n. 28.

real sinners and those who endanger communal cohesion, not the philosophers whom they called heretics and unbelievers:

> Fear of God is the kind of knowledge of the Godhead by which those who have it become real God-fearers: whereas the pseudo-sages of our people, deprived of any imagination or certainty, think that divine wisdom diverts man from true happiness. And this is a blatant falsehood, since divine wisdom actually completes the intellect and brings man undoubtedly to happiness, because through divine wisdom man becomes similar to God. [...] And if they say: 'Sages can be found among my people!', then they dissociate themselves from the community (*yaṣ'u min ha-kelal*). It is they who are the evil, the sinners, the turncoats! We will reply to this as is becoming for a sage: that we too see others who are utterly incapable of perceiving, or have no demonstrative knowledge whatsoever, yet are called sages because they delved in Talmudic wisdom according to its literal meaning (*ki-khtavah*), while they have not understood the inner meaning of the particular propositions that constitute the real knowledge of the Godhead. These are evil sinners that dissociate themselves from the community; even more so, thus are those who do not declare nor repeat this all.[168]

Thus, seemingly without considering the option of conversion for himself, Bibago revived the polemical stereotype of exegetical literalism as irrational — and contrary to the spiritual, truly rational understanding of the sources of tradition — that Petrus Alfonsi and Herman of Cologne had already used against non-converted Jews in the twelfth century.[169]

Any analysis of the phenomenon represented by conversions cannot be based only on their circumstantial or instrumental causes. One must also con-

[168] Translation mine from Bibago, *Derekh emunah*, p. 45d: ויראת יי› היא חכמ› האלהות אשר היודע אותה הן הוא ירא יי› באמת לא כמו שחשבו מתחכמי אומתינו הנעדרים מכל ציור ואמות, החושבים כי החכמה האלהית מסירה האדם מן ההצלחה האמתית והוא שקר מבואר כי היא משלימה השכל ומביא[ה] אותו אל ההצלחה בלי ספק כי בו יתדמה לש״י [...] ואם אמור יאמרו נמצאו חכמים באומתי יצאו מן הכלל והמה אנשים רעים וחטאים וממדו› מגונות, נשיב בזה כתשובת החכם כי גם אנחנו נראה אחרי› בלתי משיגים ובלתי יודעים בידיעות המופתיות ידיעה כלל, ונקראים חכמים בעבור קשר העמיקו בחכמת התלמוד הקדושה ככתבה עם שלא הבינו תוכיות חכמים המאמרים הסגוליים אשר הם חכמת האלהות באמת והנה הם אנשים רעים וחטאים יוצאין מן הכלל גם כן ומכל שכן מי שלא קרא ושנה. Gutwirth, 'Conversion to Christianity', p. 119, thought that the expression *la-ṣe't min ha-kelal* means that the Talmudists converted to Christianity. In my opinion the expression is not that specific and only alludes to the fact that the rabbis, by rejecting ideas that were rationally tenable and by then widespread among the Jews, were practically alienating themselves from the majority. See Hacker, 'Meqomo šel R. Avraham Bivagch', pp. 158–59. While taking upon myself all responsibility for any misunderstanding of Bibago's passage, I thank Silvia Di Donato for discussing it with me.

[169] Gutwirth, 'Conversions to Christianity', p. 119 n. 66.

sider the whole context of interaction between the convert's 'before' and his/her 'after' — the 'social and cultural intimacy' between the religious society from which s/he came and the one to which s/he moved. David Malkiel and Asunción Blasco Martínez have demonstrated that in medieval Ashkenaz and in fifteenth-century Aragon respectively, interrelations between Jews and ex-Jews were by no means less frequent or less 'normal' than between Jews and Christians.[170] It is obvious, though, that religious change necessarily has other deep reasons that are difficult to fathom. (Joseph Shatzmiller has defined conversion as a 'spectrum' at one end of which are those who convert after lengthy soul-searching and suffering, and at the other end of which are those who do it out of convenience.)[171] What I find of interest is the intellectual context of the conversions I have investigated, and the tradition they came to constitute, from Alfonsi until the Tortosa catechesis and Alfonso de Zamora. In each case, the convert was critical of rabbinic literature and/or the rabbinic establishment, a fact that must be seen as relevant not merely to Jewish–Christian relations but also to inner-Jewish ones. As I have tried to show, the instances are numerous, and — as Jacob Katz already observed in 1961 — relevant from the perspective of social history as well.

Let us consider the features that all the cases I have described have in common. In the context of medieval polemics between Judaism and Christianity, some learned Jews, well versed in rabbinic lore, became critical of rabbinic leadership, its claims to authority, its arrogance, and the unresolved clash of opinions that characterized rabbinic legal debate. Some of these intellectuals inclined towards rationalistic philosophy and thought that reason should not be hierarchically submitted to tradition in establishing or explaining truth. They thus turned to criticism of the Talmud for a variety of reasons: the rabbis used it as the ground and justification for their doctrinal and communal leadership; it presented — and therefore justified — mostly unresolved divergences over Halakhic questions, thereby making it difficult to manage communal life and promoting fragmentation of opinion; further, its aggadic parts were full of traditions and utterances that did not comply with reason. Such criticism was common among intellectuals who remained Jewish.

Abraham Bibago blamed some Talmudists for becoming Christian notwithstanding the increasing diffusion of philosophy and of Maimonideanism within their own communities. This, if Jeremy Cohen's thesis is correct, may have been the case with Pablo Christiani. Yet, in regard to France and Iberia in the Middle

[170] Malkiel, 'Jews and Apostates'; Blasco Martínez, 'Judíos y conversos', pp. 224–27.

[171] Shatzmiller, 'Jewish Converts to Christianity', p. 303.

Ages, it seems to have been much more frequent — as I have tried to show — that Jews who eventually converted to Christianity were first critical of rabbinic-Talmudic tradition and leadership: some (like Donin) in order to criticize even more harshly the tradition from which they came, others (like Abner of Burgos/Alfonso de Valladolid) in order to share with their ex-coreligionists the truth they had acquired. In another geographic region, they might have turned to Qaraism;[172] in another era, they might have become full-fledged and socially independent freethinkers like Uriel d'Acosta, Spinoza, or the *Wissenschaftler des Judentums*. But in a society 'expressed almost entirely in religious terms' like medieval western Europe,[173] the choice of *apiqorsut*, free thinking, was not yet an option for learned Jews opposing rabbinic tradition and its claim to authority; nor was adhesion to Qaraism, since there were no Qaraites in western Europe at the time and its intellectual influence was minimal (only in the early eighteenth century did actual adhesion to Qaraism become perceived as a practicable means of opposition, even if it still occasioned excommunication).[174] Conversion to Christianity was the only feasible alternative to — or consequence of — criticism from within the Jewish community, though it was a radical choice.

The cases and typologies of Jewish conversion to Christianity delineated by medieval authors (for example those in Ibn Kammūna and Yehoshua' ha-Lorqi/Gerónimo de Santa Fe) and by modern scholars (such as Katz, Shatzmiller, Gampel, Blasco Martínez, and Malkiel) can be usefully broadened to include converts belonging to the intellectual class.[175] The number of intellectual con-

[172] Blumenkranz, 'Jüdische und christliche Konvertiten', p. 282, studying the cases of four converts from Judaism who became anti-Jewish polemicists (Alfonsi, the anonymous author of the *Bellum Domini adversus Iudaeos* (*War of the Lord against the Jews*), Herman of Cologne, and Donin), two (Alfonsi and Donin) 'are pushed towards Christianity presumably only because they had been expelled from Judaism, that is, in this case, from Rabbinism. The existence, around them, of the powerful Christian Church facilitated their choice. Following their first impulse they could have remained Jewish as well and develop their opposition in sectarianism and heresy alone' (trans. mine).

[173] The expression in quotation marks is Katz's, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, p. 75.

[174] See the accusations of Qaraism in early eighteenth-century Amsterdam in Kaplan, *An Alternative Path to Modernity*, pp. 234–69, where they are linked to the Protestant discovery of Qaraism; Marina Rustow, 'Karaites Real and Imagined', later demonstrated that those accused could not possibly have been Qaraites, and the Qaraite connection was probably in the minds of their accusers.

[175] As of 2011, the only essays specifically dealing with conversions of intellectuals alone are, to my knowledge, Cohen, 'The Mentality of the Medieval Jewish Apostate' (on Alfonsi, Herman of Cologne, and Christiani); and Stroumsa, 'On Jewish Intellectuals'. (See, though, note 1 at the beginning of this essay, above.)

versions may have been statistically irrelevant, but, as Jacob Katz saw, 'it was the loss of these, even though they might number a few only, and not the loss of those of dubious character and position, that caused the community to be in a state of permanent defence against Christianity'.[176] And indeed, it is for this reason that the intellectuals mattered: before becoming converts, they were an inner-Jewish problem. It is my contention that the boundaries between Jew, non-Jew, and convert are less important than those between pro- and anti-rabbinic/anti-Talmudic or, indeed, anti-ecclesiastic, which traversed religious affiliation, be it inherited or chosen. In intellectual history as in social history, conversion appears as a continuous negotiation,[177] a sometimes oscillating border, and in many instances an intellectually osmotic barrier. To be sure, there is more to converting from one religion to another than to signing for the Red Sox after playing for the Yankees, or for Real Madrid after playing for Barcelona. The 'before' and the 'after' of many conversions — in this case, Judaism or Christianity — were not delimited once and for all: such, for example, seems to have been the case of Bonet ben Goron, a friend of Profiat Duran's who converted with him, then decided to return to Judaism and leave for the land of Israel, but on the verge of boarding the ship contacted Shelomoh ha-Levi/Pablo of Burgos and decided to remain a Christian.[178] I agree with Joseph Shatzmiller's understanding of Jewish conversion to Christianity as a spectrum, in that the black and white extremes are connected by a wide range of different shades of grey.[179] For today's historians it is more useful to consider such intellectual conversions as processes to follow, not as givens established in advance. Perhaps this methodological hypothesis can also be profitably applied to the study of the general phenomenon of religious conversion.

[176] Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, pp. 75–76.

[177] Cf. Malkiel, 'Jews and Apostates', p. 34.

[178] Gampel, 'A Letter to a Wayward Teacher', pp. 428–30.

[179] Shatzmiller, 'Jewish Converts to Christianity', p. 303 (see above). On the psychology of converts, and the frequent continuity in their family and social relations with their former coreligionists, see Blasco Martínez, 'Judíos y conversos', p. 224 (in fifteenth-century Aragon 'some converts continued living as Jews, whereas others turned into actual proponents of the Christian religion and eagerly embarked on persecuting their former coreligionists'), and Toaff, *Ebraismo virtuale*, pp. 74–76 ('More than occupying himself with his new faith, the convert would often strive with all his might to denigrate the camp from which he came [...]. Perhaps he should be considered a traitor — and his former coreligionists branded him as such — but I would rather consider him as an unyielding and furious opponent from within [*oppositore interno*] who had decided to align himself with the opposing party and from it expected his due reward', trans. mine).

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