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and Inter-Religious Encounters

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# **Content**

## **Session 1**

**The Rabbi and the Friar: a Marginal Gloss on Genesis 2:3 in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Bible of Moshe Arragel**

Luis M. Giron Negron, Harvard University

## **Session 2**

**'On the Spiritual Predicament of Spanish Jewry c. 1391 and the Factors of Conversion: Revisiting the Exchange Between Joshua Halorki and Solomon Halevi'**

Maurice Kriegel, Centre d'études juives (CEJ) (Centre for Jewish Studies), L'École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS)

## **Session 3**

**"And the Evil Hour Passed Away":**

**Folk-Legends of Conversion in Ashkenaz of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century**

Eli Yassif, Tel-Aviv University

## **Session 4**

**Polemic, Conversion, or Scholastic Disputation?**

Thomas E. Burman, University of Tennessee

## **Session 5**

**Wecekin the Convert**

Sara Lipton, State University of New York at Stony Brook

## **Session 6**

**Pro evitanda infamia et sedandis scandalis huiusmodi: The New Christians of Apulia obtain a Papal Bull to fend off accusations of Judaizing (2/26/1446)**

Benjamin Scheller, Universität Duisburg- Essen

## **Session 7**

**Conversions in Provence in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century**

Danièle Iancu-Agou, CNRS, Montpellier

## **Session 8**

**Married, with children: conversion, marriage, and inheritance in medieval England**

Joshua Curk, Wolfson College, Oxford

## **Session 9**

**The Institutionalization of Conversion in the Iberian Realms**

Ana Echevarria, National University of Distance Education

## **Session 10**

**Maimonides' Response to Obadiah the Convert**

Alan Verskin, University of Rhode Island

## Session 1

# ***THE RABBI AND THE FRIAR: A MARGINAL GLOSS ON GENESIS 2:3 IN THE 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BIBLE OF MOSHE ARRAGEL***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Between 1422 and 1430, rabbi Moshe Arragel of Guadalajara prepared an Old Spanish translation of the entire Hebrew Bible, with a running commentary in marginal glosses, in partial collaboration with a Christian friar, the Franciscan Bible scholar fray Arias de Enzina. Arragel's commented translation, preserved at a private library in Madrid in a rare illuminated codex of art-historical value, stands out as a monumental work of Hispano-Jewish scholarship and one of the most important vernacular Bibles of the European Middle Ages. Hispanists value this Bible translation with its learned scholia as both an Old Spanish literary classic and a linguistic treasure grove for Ibero-Romance philologists. Art historians deem its exquisite illuminations, with their hybrid blend of Jewish and Christian visual motifs, exceedingly rare in medieval European art. The exegetical glosses in themselves—over six thousand and three hundred commentaries of varying length, complexity and intellectual range—constitute, moreover, a veritable encyclopedia of medieval Jewish learning. The contrapuntal juxtaposition of Jewish and Christian materials in some glosses makes them as well an invaluable source on the history of Jewish-Christian relations: a collaborative effort without parallels in the literary archives of premodern Europe.

Our brief selection for the workshop is from an interpolated version of Arragel's exegetical gloss on Genesis 2:3. This rare cento of Jewish and Christian commentaries *ad locum*, provided *in tandem* by both the rabbi and the friar, is capped off with an apologetic Christian revision of a Jewish eschatological narrative: Nahmanides's hexameral interpretation of world history as summarized by Arragel. The Christian reelaboration of Arragel's Nahmanidean excursus is imbricated with competing claims about religious conversion and the eschatological hopes of both interlocutors. It should provide some interesting fodder for further conversation at the workshop.

## **TEXT- OLD SPANISH ORIGINAL**

2:3] **E bendixo el Señor el séptimo día e santificólo.** *Bendezir este día* fue que, en todos los días de la setmana, magná les descendía un almud a cada cabeça, e en el viernes la ración doblada les venía. [1]

**E santificólo.** La santificación es que obra en él non se fiziese. [2] Otros dizen que la bendición recude a los omnes que el sábado guardaren, qu'el Señor los bendeziría, e la bendición que así averían *animal* la ponen, conviene saber: que los omnes, los pensamientos humanales dexando, la ánima en sí cobra virtud. Contemplando con Dios, estudiando, orando, los sermones de Dios oyendo, sin dubda la ánima católica se faze, e con tanto, nuestro Señor Dios provéelo con

bendición. Considerar devemos que todas las festas en la ley *sábados* se nombran, e guardar se deven complidamente así como el mesmo sábado. [3]

† Nota, que dezir pudiera aquí: «cumplió el Señor en el séptimo día la su obra que fizo, etc.», e non más a Dios aquí ementar nin dezir. Pero vemos que dixo: «cumplió el Señor», «fizo el Señor», «crió el Señor», que tanto dezir quiere como lo que cumplió el Padre, cumplió el Fijo, cumplió el Espíritu Santo; lo que fizo el Padre, fizo el Fijo, fizo el Espíritu Santo; lo que crió el Padre, crió el Fijo, crió el Espíritu Santo; e todo es una esencia que tres vezes Dios aquí dixo, la Trinitat significando. [4]

Bien sabedes cómo este mundo en partes tres los sabios lo reparten; uno, e el mejor, el mundo do los coros de los ángeles son; el segundo, es el mundo de los celestiales cuerpos; el tercero, e más que los otros menor de todo en todo, digo en contidat e virtudes, por ser el mundo de la engendración e corrupción. E por cuanto el primero de aquestos tres mundos es el de los ángeles, e están segund fueron criados que en los ángeles mudança jamás en ellos non averá, por los cuales dixo: «cumplió el Señor en el séptimo día la su obra que fizo», que luego que criados fueron, perfección dada les fue. Dixo más: «seçó el séptimo día de toda su obra que fizo»; esto se entiende por el mundo de las esperas que también las esperas cuasi perfección ovieron, ya que non tanto como los ángeles sea. Dixo más: «por cuanto en él seçó de toda su obra que crió el Señor para fazer» que esto se dize por este mundo terrenal, por cuanto cada día en este mundo terrenal de nuevo en él se fazen e crían todas las cosas que se criaron al principio del criamiento, así omnes e bestias e árboles e herbas, por tanto dixo que «crió el Señor para fazer». E *fazer* nota que non *fazer* se entiende del perfecto tiempo, nin menos *fazer* por el futuro tiempo se entiende, e por el presente se entiende. [5]

Agora sabe que las obras que nuestro Señor Dios fizo en estos seis días non tan solamente significó las obras que vedes que en estos días dize que fizo en ellos, que sin dubda también en ellos significó lo que en el mundo avía de seer e de contecet, † e la Ley nueva e vieja, e el Mexías, e cómo todas las leyes an una de seer, conviene saber: que tú bien veyés que en los dos primeros días del criamiento el mundo lleno de agua estava: esto significava que, en los primeros dos mill años del criamiento, que en el mill primero Adán nació, que el mundo alumbró e idolatría en su vida non ovo. En el segundo día el firmamento fue criado, el cual división fizo de unas aguas a otras; significan ca esto fue que Noé a nacer avía e sus fijos, e que división d'ellos a los otros que en su tiempo ovo, qu'él escapó e los otros murieron en el diluvio, lo cual fue en el segundo millar. En el tercero día del criamiento la tierra fue parecida e fructo fizo de herbas e árboles; así en el tercero millar del criamiento del mundo Abraham, de 48 años seyendo, començó la fe de Dios, e fructo este justo fizo, muchos a la fe de Dios convirtiendo, (Abraham por su parte a los omnes, e Sarra, por la otra convirtiendo a las mugeres). E a los sus fijos encomendó que la ley de Dios guardasen fasta que los sus fijos la ley de Moisés recibieron en el monte Sinaí, e el templo de Dios edeficado fue, e estonce se cumplieron todos mandamientos de la Ley, los cuales el fructo del mundo ellos son para la eterna vida ganar. E debes saber que así como el sol inclina a noche, quiere seer cuasi el sol se poniendo, según opinión de algunos, del día siguiente es, e por ende dizen que las cosas comiençan un poco ante.

† En el miércoles, que el cuarto día es, sol e luna e estrellas en él criadas fueron. En el cuarto millar el templo de Dios edeficado fue, digo el templo primero 72 años, fasta el templo segundo 172 años, e en el tiempo aqueste el templo durante segundo, el Mexías nació, con que lux e estrellas al mundo fue e la ley cumplió, e el oreginal pecado por Él perdonado fue. El quinto día las aguas, al comienço del criamiento, en las aguas peces e en el aire bolantes aves criados fueron. En el quinto millar que 172 años después de la dixtruición del segundo templo, estonce ovo muchos emperadores e regiones que mucho perseguían a los de Cristo disciplos e en Él creyentes, e fazían d'ellos como peces, queriéndolos caçar si pudieran, lo cual bien manifesto fue en tiempo de Nero, emperador de Roma, e otros que mucho persiguían, sus redes echando, e



quien de Cristo curase pocos e perseguidos eran, fasta tanto que mártires por su amor murieron. El sexto día, ánima biva la tierra, en el comienço del día al comienço del criamiento, sacó por la mañana e bestias. Desí Adam en este mesmo día criado fue a la imagen de Dios, e en este mesmo día el poderío de Adam se publicó. En el sexto millar del criamiento, las bestias fieras vernán; por capitán la fuerte serpiente traerán, conviene saber: el Antecristo con las sus huestes que por el mundo se extenderán, en tentación el mundo poniendo. Pero nota que como Adam al mundo nació, e aún comúnmente es, en tanto que omnes andan, las bestias derraman e de miedo del omne se absconden, e el omne las caça e mata, bien así en este sexto millar el Cristo e Elías con todos los santos parecerán, e al Antecristo con sus huestes dixtruirán e matarán, como la católica fe publicada e enaltecida sea; e convertir se an las generaciones del mundo todo como en la católica fe bivan, e en aquel tiempo el Señor uno será e su nombre uno, e división de leyes non averá. El séptimo día el nuestro Dios Señor folgó e de su obra seçó, e el mundo complido e en folgança bivió; bien así el séptimo millar los omnes en folgança e contemplación con Dios, así los bivos como los que resucitaron por el Mexías como ángeles, sin malignas cobdicias corporales bevirán, que virtudes corporales non sentirán para que de pecados tentados sean jamás. Esto que dicho es, guárdalo, que sin dubda secreto es. [6]

## TRANSLATION

**And the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (Gen 2:3).** *To bless this day* means that an omer of manna was provided per head, and on Fridays a double ration. [1]

**And sanctified it (Gen 2:3).** Sanctification means that no work would be done on that day. [2] Others say that the blessing falls upon those who observe the Sabbath, for the Lord will bless them, and said blessing will be on their souls: that is, the soul itself will gain in virtue, once these men leave behind their worldly thoughts. Meditating on God, studying, praying, listening to sermons about Him, the soul undoubtedly becomes holy and thus the Lord our God bestows his blessing upon him. Know that the Law refers to all feasts as *sabbaths*, so they must be observed in full as if they were the Sabbath itself. [3]

† Note as well that Scripture could say in here: *On the seventh day the Lord finished the work that He had been doing*, etc., and no longer mention God or refer to him. Yet we see that Scripture says: *the Lord finished, the Lord made, the Lord created*, which means that what the Father finished, the Son finished and the Holy Spirit finished; what the Father made, the Son made and the Holy Spirit made; what the Father created, the Son created and the Holy Spirit created; it is all one essence, for God is mentioned three times in here, signifying the Trinity. [4]

You know well how the sages divide this world in three parts: first—the best of these worlds—the world inhabited by the angelic choirs; second, the world of the celestial bodies; third—the least among these worlds in all things, that is in quantity and virtues—the world of generation and corruption. The first of these three worlds is the world of the angels, and the angels remain therein as they were at the moment of their creation, since they will never be subject to any change whatsoever. Because of the angels, it was said: *on the seventh day, God finished the work that He had been doing* (Gen 2:2), for once they were created, perfection was bestowed upon them. It was further said: *He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done* (Gen 2:2); this refers to the world of the heavenly spheres for the spheres were almost perfect, but not as perfect as the angels. It was also said: *because on it God ceased from all the work that the Lord had created in order to do it* (Gen 2:3), which refers to the earthly realm, since all things that were created at the beginning of Creation—men and beasts, the trees and plants—they are all made anew and recreated daily therein. Hence it was said that *the Lord had created in order*

*to do [it]*. Know that *to do* should not be understood in the past tense, even less in the future tense, but rather in the present. [5]

Know that the deeds the Lord our God accomplished on those six days signified not only those particular works which, as Scripture says, He performed therein, but also what was bound to happen in the world, † and to the Law, New and Old, and to the Messiah, and how all laws will become one. That is, you can well see that in the first two days of Creation the world was full of water. This means that Adam, who shone his light on the world and whose life was free of all idolatry, was born in the first thousand-years period out of the first two millenia of Creation. On the second day, the firmament was created, separating water from water, which signifies the birth of Noah and his sons, and how they would be set apart from everyone else who lived at that time, for he and his sons were spared whereas all the rest perished in the Flood. It signifies the second millenium. On the third day of Creation, the land appeared and the plants and the trees began to sprout. This refers to the third millenium from the Creation of the world when Abraham was forty eight years old and first professed his faith in God; this *righteous shoot* (Jer 23:5) gave fruit, converting many to the same faith (Abraham attending to the conversion of men, while Sarah did the same with women). And he commanded his children to observe God's law until the time when his descendants would receive the law of Moses at Mount Sinai and God's Temple would be built, at which point all the commandments of the Law—which are the “fruits” of the world through which eternal life can be attained—would be affirmed. Know that some are of the opinion that when the sun leans towards the night, that is when twilight sets in, it is considered the following day; hence—they claim—things [Arr. *las cosas*; Nahm. *inyan kol yom*; ‘the subject of the day’] begin somewhat before it.

† On Wednesday, the fourth day, the sun, the moon and the stars were created. In the fourth millenium, God's Temple was built, that is [beginning] seventy two years [after] the First Temple until one hundred and seventy two years [after] the Second Temple.<sup>1</sup> During the time of the Second Temple, the Messiah was born, he who came to the world with the light and the stars and fulfilled the Law, and through which our original sin was forgiven. On the fifth day there were waters at the beginning of Creation and the waters [were teeming] with fish and the air with flying birds, which were created [that day]. In the fifth millenium, which began one hundred and seventy two years after the destruction of the Second Temple, there were many emperors that persecuted the disciples of Christ who believed in Him and many regions in which said persecutions took place, and they dealt with these disciples as if they were fish, trying to catch them whenever was possible; that was clearly the case at the time of Nero, emperor of Rome, and it was the case with other emperors who were as bent on persecuting Christians, as they cast their nets, seeking after the few who cared for Christ unto death as martyrs for Him out of love. On the sixth day, *Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature* (Gen 1:24)—at the beginning of that day, at the beginning of Creation, God brought forth the beasts on that morning. Likewise, Adam was created in the image of God on that same day, and on that same day Adam's dominion was made known. On the sixth millenium of Creation, the wild beasts will come forth with a powerful snake as their leader: that is, the Antichrist and his hosts will spread over the world and tempt everyone in it. But know that ever since Adam was born into the world (and through this day), when men walk, beasts scatter, hiding from them out of fear, but men hunt them and have them slaughtered. Likewise, in this sixth millenium Christ and Elijah will appear with all the saints and they will destroy the Antichrist and his hosts and kill them all, that the true<sup>2</sup> faith may be made known and upheld; and all the generations of the world will convert

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish text offers a garbled version of Nahmanides' point which is that the fourth “day” of Creation began seventy two years after the First Temple was built and ended one hundred and seventy two years after the destruction of the Second Temple.

<sup>2</sup> The text reads *la católica fe* but *católica* (lit. ‘Catholic’) is used equivocally throughout the glosses as a synonym of true and holy, sometimes applied to Christianity (as is the case in here) but also applied to Judaism, as explained by Arragel himself in his Glossary. We have rendered it *true* to convey, albeit imperfectly, this ambiguity.

that they may live in the true faith. At that time the Lord will be one and his name will be one and there will not be any division between the Laws. On the seventh day, the Lord our God rested and he ceased his work and the world was completed and it lived in rest. Likewise in the seventh millenium, men will live in rest and in the contemplation of God, the living as well as those who were resurrected as angels by the Messiah, devoid of all evil carnal desires since they can not feel their bodily faculties and hence can no longer be tempted to commit a sin. Keep to yourself all this that has been said, for it is undoubtedly a secret. [6]





## Session 2

# **‘On the spiritual predicament of Spanish Jewry c. 1391 and the factors of conversion: revisiting the exchange between Joshua Halorki and Solomon Halevi’**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **The letters of Joshua Halorki and Salomon Halevi.**

These letters are considered as a major source for the interpretation of the spiritual context of the conversions, especially among the elite groups in the Jewish community, in Spain in 1391.

The critical edition of this exchange is by L. Landau, *Das Apologetische Schreiben des Josua Lorki an den Abtrünnigen Don Salomon ha-Lewi (Paulus de Santa Maria)*, Anvers, 1906 (other editions : *Divrei Hakhamim*, Metz, 1849; *Otsar Nehmad*, Wien, II, 1857). The letters have been translated into French, German and Spanish. The translation into English, below, is taken from the dissertation by Judith Gale Krieger, *Pablo de Santa Maria : His Epoch, life and Hebrew and Spanish Literary Production*, 1988, p. 262-317 (including the Hebrew text and the English translation).

For major interpretations of this exchange, in English : Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, Philadelphia-Jerusalem, 1992, p. vol. II, p. 143-150. Benjamin R. Gampel, « A Letter to a Wayward Teacher : The Transformations of Sephardic Culture in Christian Iberia », in : *Cultures of the Jews. A New History*, ed. by David Biale, New York, 2002, p. 389-447.

## TEXT

3. Letter written by Joshua Halorki to Pablo de Santa Marfa

Ever since I heard the news about your amazing change--news that has made ears ring--neither my thoughts nor my heart have rested or slept. How can I know who brought you here and what reason moved you to reinterpret the laws of Genesis and to be angry at us?

I said to myself--being that this does not rule our debate--that perhaps you desired to elevate yourself financially and socially, something which happens commonly. Perhaps your soul longed to eat forbidden foods and to contemplate the charm of the beautiful faces of foreign women. 9

Or perhaps philosophic rationalism caused you to turn the bowl on its rim and to consider adherents of religions to be vanity and mockery, and therefore you turned to more pleasant things in order to quiet your mind and be free of anxiety, terror and fear.

Or perhaps you say the destruction of our people in the misfortunes that have befallen us recently, misfortunes that have affected us so deeply that we are terrified and [it seemed as if] God had withdrawn his countenance from us and had fed us to the birds of the sky and the animals of the earth; and it occurred to you that Israel would be remembered no longer. Or perhaps the secrets of the

prophecies and the principles of faith and their proofs were revealed to you, that which was not revealed to the wise men of our nation in their dispersion; 10 and you saw that our patriarchs had inherited lies because of the inadequacy of their understanding of the purpose of the Torah and Prophecy; and you chose what you chose because it is right and just.

I shall allow my heart to determine which of the four parts is most characteristic of you, according to my conception of your nature and your habits.

In former times I drank of your knowledge and you satisfied me, your servant, from amongst the guests at your table. I knew your ways and your strength in the area of profound thought and truth. 11 You were reticent concerning ostentatious matters. I am reminded of an example of your honorable nature, when I went there to the wedding of Don Meir Benveniste, your dear friend. 12 You had begun then to be very busy with matters of state and had made for yourself a carriage with horses; and people were running to do your bidding. And you said to me secretly, "I regret that I continue with these outward trappings of success, because they are all vanity and mockery, nothing but a perversity of the heart. Oh, what I would give to be able to buy that little loft that was my study 13 in the beginning where I was day and night in diligent contemplation." Those were your precise words; and you had

uttered similar words often.

In addition, I have always known you to be a strict believer and to keep the Commandments faithfully, not satisfied with something without its roots. You were not lax in one single area, as is appropriate for every believer. Even with philosophical rationalism, you ate the fruit and discarded its shell.

And so, I shall throw out the first two reasons. And I do not think that the third reason could have moved you, meaning the loss of our nation, because I know that you must be aware--from the famous travel books which circulate amongst us, and from Maimonides' letters, and from businessmen who travel to the edges of the earth--of the existence today of our religion in the lands of Babylonia and Yemen, where our first Jerusalem exiles went. Also, of our people in neighboring Persia and Media, who are descendants of the exiles of Sumaria, who are today as numerous as the sands of the sea. Some of them are ruled by a king called Sultan of Babylonia and the Muslims. And some of them are in areas that are not subject to any other peoples, like those that live on the border of the land of the negroes, called Ethiopia. And they are on an isthmus with the Edomite prince called Presto John. And they make a yearly treaty with him. About this there is no doubt.

Because all the Jews that live in Christian lands are none other than those who returned to Jerusalem with Ezra



and Nechemia, who are, no doubt, not the magnates of the nation, but the common people, about whom our blessed rabbis said, "Ezra did not leave Babylonia until he left her like clean white flour." 14 And even if there were to be a decree from God to destroy all the Jews in the Christian lands, there would still be a Jewish nation--whole and complete--and this would not bring on a feeling of insecurity.

Therefore, only the last reason remains, and that is the examination and weighing of opinions about religions and prophecy. And in addition, you knew the proofs of the hidden treasures of the Christian books and their interpretations and principles. In your erudition you knew their language, that which was not seen by all of our wise men in our time. In addition, a letter which you wrote two months ago to Rabbi Joseph Orabuena in Navarre, fell into my hands in Saragossa; and I read in it of your belief in the man who came at the end of the Second Temple to say that he was the Messiah which our nation had hoped for since then until now. And that all the prophecies and references concerning the matters of the Redeemer and Redemption agree with his, meaning with his birth, his death and his resurrection.

If only I could, as in passed months, fly and nestle in the shadow of your room, and you would teach me and tell me of what was revealed to you from these strange matters, one

by one. Perhaps you will remain silent, and you will ignore my many doubts about these explanations. God knows that since your great change was made known publicly around four months ago, I have intended to meet with you face to face so that I could hear of the reasons and opinions which led you to go beyond the limits set by your ancestors, those who are holy and special in our faith. If the journey to you were not dangerous, I would come to you; but a hint is enough for a wise man. 15

Therefore, I thought to write to your honor the list of my doubts. My teacher and my rabbi, I must learn. After requesting forgiveness from you, as would be proper, I shall set before you a statement. I shall ask and you will answer. I shall make two generalizations with answers to follow. The first generalization has to do with the description of the Redeemer and matters relating to Him; and I shall make two claims in this regard.

1. The first claim of the first generalization

It is widely believed that the Redeemer descended from the seed of David; and on this point, there is no one of us who will object because of the many passages which testify to it. Now, if this man, as they say, was the son of God, and the husband of his mother, Joseph, who is not his father, was from the seed of David, if this is so, how could Joseph, who is not his father, be related to him? Joseph

did not know the mother of Jesus. And even though his mother be from the seed of the House of David, it has already been stipulated in the Torah that the mother's family line is without significance in regard to the matter of genealogy. As it is said in Num. 1. 20, "By their generations after their families by the house of their fathers."

2. The second claim of the first generalization

That the Messiah will be king, as it is said, "Behold, the days come, sayth the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous offspring, and he shall reign as king, and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, and in his days, Judah shall be saved (Jer. 23. 5-6). And Ezekial the Prophet said (37. 25), "And my servant David will be their prince forever." And all of this had been said about the Messiah. Because after Ezekial, as they said, there was no king from the seed of David, because the former lived in the time of the Babylonian exile. And when they [the Jews] left there, and the Second Temple was built, only the Hashmoneans ruled in Jerusalem. And they are from the seed of Aharon the Priest, from the tribe of Levy. And after them, King Herod and his descendants, who were not from the seed of Israel. And I sustain that his man, whom they called God, and who they said is the Messiah, did not merit being a prince, much less a king. But our adversaries

say that he called himself king of Israel. How could this description be made when Israel did not recognize him or receive him as king? And furthermore, he was cut down in mid life and did not leave a root or a branch.

The second generalization concerns that which can be deduced about Him, and I shall summarize it in eight claims.

1. The first claim of the second generalization

Is it not widely proclaimed in all sacred texts that the Redeemer will come to save Israel, God's people? Who can show me how this man saved Israel? For one thing, they did not believe in him and did not follow him except for a small group of people who were from the lower classes, and insignificant in number. And if you say that this name "Israel" refers to all people who follow his religion, no matter what their nationality, and that this name represents the saved nation. The prophet already stated that the saved will be Israel herself, as in the saying, "The seed of Abraham my friend . . .etc " (Isa. 41. 8). "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation" (Isa. 45. 17). "Happy art thou, oh Israel. Who is like unto thee, oh people saved by the Lord?" (Deut. 33. 29). And more, because it is written in their books [the Christians] that the remnants of Israel will be saved in the last days; they themselves say this about us. And more, why did the



prophets not make mention of other nations if the intention was to redeem anyone who believed in Him, be they pagans or Jews? And do not put me off by the saying from Zecharia 2. 15, that "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord that day and shall be my people." Because it is explained in the text that the majority will be Israel, and the others will accompany them. And it remains that today, and since His coming until now, the reality has been the reverse.

2. The second claim of the second generalization

That in the time of the Messiah, he will gather in the exiled Jews from amongst the rest of the peoples from the ends of the earth and cut from under the oppression of the pagans, as Isaiah the Prophet had said (49. 22), "I will lift up mine hand to the nations and will set up my standard to the people, and they shall bring your brothers, etc." And Ezekial says (27. 31), "I will take the children of Israel from amongst the nations and will gather around me the House of Israel, etc." According to this, at the time of His coming, Israel will be dispersed throughout the Diaspora at the edges of the earth, and He will take them out from there. This man came at the time of the Second Temple, when Israel was in Jerusalem under King Herod's rule, and the Temple was built on its site. And one cannot say that those prophesies and promises were fulfilled with the rebuilding of the Second Temple, because it is known that Israel was

not saved at that time. Rather, misfortune prevailed, and only a small portion of the Babylonian exiles were reunited.

And do not tell me that all of those who were reunited signified the exodus of the souls from Hell, because how could it be that one of the prophets could not reveal his meaning with some sign so that it might be understood that his words were a symbol for the souls of Hell? Also, they did not inform us of the descent to Hell of the souls of the righteous before the time of Jesus. And that man not only did not gather Israel from the ends of the earth. But also, within a short time after his coming, Israel was dispersed amongst the nations; and I almost need not add that those who were in the Babylonian exile and the Syrian exile in Halah and Habor, in the cities of Media and Persia, were not brought to Jerusalem.

### 3. The third claim of the second generalization

The settling of Jerusalem and the land of Israel after the coming of the Messiah, and Israel's successful existence forever, as the prophet Jeremiah promised (30. 18): "Thus sayth the Lord, in the days to come the city will be built on her own heap, etc." And Ezekial said (28. 25-6) that "They shall dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob; they shall dwell safely therein and shall build houses and plant vineyards." And in order to dispel all doubt or other interpretations, he hastened to clarify

(37. 25), "And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein even they, and their children forever; and David my servant shall be their prince forever." But everything was the opposite, because after his coming, Jerusalem was destroyed, even until today, and so too all the lands around her, which were settled in a way which had never before existed, like Alexander of Egypt and Damascus. And she is destroyed, even with her flowing milk and honey, like it is said in the Torah, Exodus 3. 8, "There is no Israel in her more than one from a city and two from a family." And where is that prosperity and how does a king and a prince from the seed of David rule over her? And one cannot accept the opinion that these passages are another parable, being that he [the prophet] explained all these things and said, "that I have to my servant Jacob, where his parents dwelled." And though the Christians who follow their Messiah call themselves "Israel", no matter from what nation they be, they have not ruled the land ever. And even if they are convinced that Titus and Vespasian and the rulers of Rome believed in the new religion--something I have never found written--and that they ruled in that land, can they be called princes of the House of David? And besides, they only ruled over the land for a short while during the time of the destruction, in opposition to what the prophets say.

My soul had not been consoled by this because the land

called "holy" and "tzvi" by all nations and peoples, and the land that Jesus chose--according to their words--to perform miracles there, 16 and to receive the flesh and the death and the resurrection. Can it be that the Muslims will inherit her and exalt her abundantly, and that the adherents of our faith will be cast to the edges of the west and the north? And it is more of a wonder that the Christians do not delay this, that they even think and believe that she is the land of promise that the prophets designated as the land of God's people, like the meaning of "Rejoice, oh daughter of Zion" (Zech. 2. 14). But they say that because of their [the Jews'] evil ways, they were expelled from the land and await the time that they will again rule her and capture the Temple.

#### 4. The forth claim of the second generalization

That after the coming of the Messiah wisdom, knowledge and the perception of God will hold sway so that all of those who come to this world will believe in his religion and follow his true ideas, and all will recognize God. Jeremiah said (31. 34), "And they shall teach no more every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." And Isaiah said (11. 9), "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But actually, things are just the opposite, because



immediately after the coming of the Messiah, only a very few followed him. And those who did, did so after hearing the discussions and debates of this disciples who went from district to district. And how has Isiah's prophecy (2. 4), "Neither shall they learn war anymore" been realized, or that of "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord." Because today, the majority of the world believes in Islam, except for the worshipers of sun, fire and wind, who are a vast nation called Cafar-al-Turakh, 17 and except for us, the believers in the Torah of Moses. And all these people, who constitute the majority of the world, are according to the Christians without knowledge of God.

##### 5. The fifth claim of the second generalization

According to Zecharia (6. 12) the construction of the Temple by the Messiah and the return of worship to its place under the guidance of the priests of the House of Levi with, "Behold the man whose name is Zerah," and "He will build the temple of the Lord." And Malachai said (3. 3), "And he shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." It would seem from this that at the time of the coming of the Messiah, the priests and the levites would not be distinguishable in their purity from the people, and he would purify and separate them, and set them to the task

of making sacrifices. It seems that the opposite is true because in the time of Jesus's coming, the Temple was already constructed on its spot and the priests were performing their services and the levites were with their songs; and after His coming, everything was destroyed and the sons of Levy became like all the rest of the people, without morality, hierarchy or holiness, remaining in name only. And the followers of Jesus made priests and cantors out of anyone who came to fill those offices.

6. The sixth claim of the second generalization

The proliferation of divine prophecy in the world after the coming of the Messiah, like the prophet said (Joel 3. 1), "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men will see visions, etc." And he continues with this until he says in hyperbolic language, "And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." And the purpose is that even the more materialistic amongst men will be knowledgeable in his time, and influenced by true ideas, until they shall be ready to receive divine abundance and prophetic spirit, as was the case with our faith in the time of our master, Moses. But we have found the opposite after the coming of Jesus, because all prophecy stopped. And

let not our adversaries say that God's purpose in imbuing the prophets with spirit and prophecy was just to announce this matter of the coming of Jesus, because the existence of the perfect and complete prophecy is well known and the most honored of men followed after the best, the disposition of nature, <sup>18</sup> custom and God's will, <sup>19</sup> tradition and righteous doctrine that the prophets inherited and passed on to a few of their contemporaries when they saw that they were worthy by their nature and temperament to receive this knowledge. And these are the ones called "sons of the prophets" ; and to this the passage in Deuteronomy (34. 9) alludes, "For Moses had laid his hands upon him." And concerning the will of God, in Numbers 11. 17, <sup>20</sup> it was alluded, "And I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and I will put it on them." And so, how can anyone suppose that in the time of the salvation--the purpose of which is to fulfill men with total integrity, and the most honorable of men, until they shall be deserving of inheriting eternal life--prophecy will be stopped and lost from the world, that was so dear a thing in all past times?

7. The seventh claim from the second generation

That is the settling of the world in general and the spread of peace after the coming of the Messiah, to the point that Isaiah said that the wolf shall dwell with the

lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, etc (11. 6). 'And they shall not hurt not destroy in all my holy mountain.' 21 If this were a parable, as all say--well, he already had continued and said, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, etc . . ." and "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2. 4). And here, we see the contrary, because since his coming till the present, there have been wars to the point of being uncountable in the world, and that they [the Christians] rose up against the followers of Islam, who are much more numerous than the other nations, and their whole desire is to strengthen their religion by the sword and lance.

8. The eighth claim of the second generalization

What prophecy says regarding the miracles that will occur after the coming of the Messiah, and what will take place in his kingdom, like the war between Gog and Magog and the section that says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee" (Zech. 14. 1). And what he says at the end of the section, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (14. 16). And Isaiah said (66. 23), "And it shall come to pass that every new moon,

and every sabbath, etc, to worship before me." And all of those things never happened. Well, they are not trivial matters. And if they had happened at some point, it is impossible that they would not be found in some book.

Now that I have finished discussing the designated claims of the two generalizations, I shall discuss briefly other doubts that I have. We were ordered to keep the Torah of Moses in tact, as is, without adding to it or retracting from it, like it is said, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 4. 2). Even the last of the prophets at the end of his prophecy said, "Remember ye the Law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, for all Israel" (Mal. 3. 22). And do not try to tell me that with the word "remember" it was being suggested that only a memory of the religion would remain and not the fact, because laws and judgments were specifically stated. And also in many places in the Torah it says, "Eternal Law for your generations." 22 And here we see that man changed and cancelled the majority of the commandments of the Torah and added commandments that did not exist before. And if you say that after he became the Messiah, he had to create holidays in order to remember the miracles that he brought about, like Mordechai and Esther did at Purim, establishing it in memory of the miracle; and he also instituted baptism



as the covenant of his new religion so that it might compare to the laws of the Torah of Moses, at the end of which is a covenant. But why did his followers abolish circumcision? Aside from the fact that he did not abolish it--he himself was circumcised and baptized--he stated specifically, "I did not come to lessen the religion, but rather to fulfill it." If so, how is it that he abolished the commandments--which act incurs divine punishment--such as a leavened bread at Passover, and eating on Yom Kippur? And how did he permit that forbidden foods like milk and blood be together, with the great punishment that that brings; and lying with an impure woman, that like circumcision, common sense dictates? And even if these things were not written in the Torah, they would merit being recorded, because of the great benefit to body and soul ensuing from them. And as a matter of fact, the Torah was very precise and detailed. It did not use parables and riddles. And how is it that he forbade arayot 23 when he did not? And, lo, if he is the Messiah about whom the prophets augured, and he was also born by the word of God without the intervention of a man, and was also resurrected after death, and the rest of the wonders, which are also accepted by the Muslims. About all of this I remain silent, because there are things that God controls through miracles and changes in nature.

And also, regarding the matter of the Trinity. Though theologians admit the delicacy of the miraculous event and



the divine union, it should be said that the idea is old. It existed also in the time of the prophets, whomever may have believed in it. And in particular, I saw a text of Aristotle's, at the beginning of his The Heavens and the World. And this is the gist of his words: "And in truth we have taken this [ternary] number from nature; and we have maintained it as a law for ourselves. And according to this number we are obligated to exalt God, the unique one, the Creator, the one who excels amongst all the properties of all creatures until now." 24

All these things, that the descendants of Abraham do not believe, are believable to those who give themselves over to them. But what do you say in your soul about the fact that they say that the Messiah is flesh and blood, and that He eats and drinks, and will die and be resurrected. And that He Himself is the true God, Who is the reason of all reasons, and the height of all heights, Who with His great strength makes celestial bodies move; 25 and the nobility of His existence makes intelligences exist separately, which are neither flesh nor strength in flesh, "Except the Gods, Whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dan. 2. 11).

How can one assure their eternal existence [of the Trinity] from the moment that He [Jesus] becomes eternally real? This is one of the matters affirmed by scholars for which there is not natural proof. And they say that He

[Jesus] is like the embodiment of God, himself or they have come up with a similar finding. The truth is that this is a matter which reason cannot comprehend; and it would not occur to one to examine one's doubts when one is totally perplexed and has no possibility of comprehending the way.

In addition, His followers have said that the main reason for His coming to the world was to atone for the first sin committed by the first man. Is God without justice? Was man not already punished for his sin when he was expelled from the Garden of Eden, and the land was cursed because of man, and he could eat only by dint of hard work, sorrow and the sweat of his brow, etc? This punishment is sufficient to expiate his sin, the first time having been warned only once. And if this is not enough, there will be other punishments for his soul in the next life. But his descendants--what sin did they commit? Should the Patriarchs eat bitter fruit and the teeth of their children shall break? The Torah said, "The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers (Deut. 24. 16).

And if it is as they say, that because of that iniquity all the souls of the righteous went to Hell until Jesus died, and then the sin was expiated, it would seem that His main purpose upon receiving the flesh was to receive death in order to expiate that iniquity. And if so, how was His death so difficult in the matter 26 to the point that He

fled and hid and begged His father to distance Him from this death? And how is it that they mourn this death, and they hate us because of it to the point that they say that because of the evil of the death we are in this extended diaspora, and it will never be expiated? Did they not, after killing Him, fulfill God's purpose and reap great salvation on earth?

My thoughts concerning the history of this man thus draw to a close. So many doubts about His birth, death and resurrection are etched in the chambers of my heart. And questions about His relations with mankind, His disciples and the wise men of His generation. And the considerable difference between the great miracles performed by the prophets with a high hand in broad daylight in public places, and the wonders which are not even worthy of being recorded because of the great number of doubts therein, and only should they be passed if God so disposes.

I have another question here about which you must enlighten me with your eminent answer, 27 and that is, is one obligated or is it desirable for a religious man--from a religious standpoint--to question and investigate the depths of his religion and faith as to whether it is true or otherwise? Or is he not obligated or permitted as such? There are consequences to both divergent ideas. 28 Let us say that he is obligated and permitted as such, in other words, to investigate by weighing the ideas of his religion

and faith as against the ideas of another religion until truth subjects him to reason. And this was your examination process, whereby with the weighing of your ideas, questions and investigations you found the truth, and because of this you did what you did. 29 And it follows according to this, that no religious man can ever be sure of his beliefs, but rather that he will forever remain in doubt and be perplexed. And every person will be obligated to subject his religion and beliefs to the test of truth, and will not be able to accept the tradition of the prophet who gave the religion, except that which his deliberations deem acceptable. And so it will not be right to call any of them a belief according to the meaning of the word. And it follows that you are now thus perplexed because though you have already subjected to the test the religion of the Christians, you still are obligated to discriminate between it and between the religion of the Muslims and between it and the others of which you know. 30 Because it is possible that it may occur that none of the three is divine and that divinity is something else, and this will go on without end. And it will follow that many of the distanced ones and the abolished ones will obligate.

Or from another standpoint, if it is correct to hold the other opinion, and that is that one should not make this investigation and one is not permitted at all, one of two matters will pertain. Either every religious man will be

saved within his faith--and one faith is not superior to another--or God twists justice and punishes unfairly. That is, a religious man--after not being allowed to investigate the main tenets of his religion and to compare it with others is forced to believe in the religion into which he was born--whether it be true or not. And being that he is obligated thusly, and worships God according to the commandments of this faith, it follows that he will be saved and successful in it. And if this is not so, the ways of the Lord are not just, God forbid. Because how could God punish someone who follows the wrong path if he is obligated to do it and he has not the means of converting to a better path? It follows from this that you--your honor beyond question--did not act justly and were not authorized in so much as you were a believer.

And another question. Let us situate the believer nations in their places and lands where they are today; and let us situate the believers in Christianity at the edges of England, far from the earshot of Jews and Muslims. And it follows that everyone of these people was born and raised in the tenets of his religion and never heard anything different, and was happy with it. And he did not think that any of the others was possible, and did not see them as traditions, but rather as enlightenment. And he worships God according to his understanding. Now undoubtedly, one of them may be on the wrong path and has inherited falsehoods



from his ancestors. And who could give me to know on what grounds a religious man who thought differently from him would believe and say that God should punish him <sup>31</sup> for not converting to the true religion when the roads to conversion were closed to him, to the point that the Christians have said that whoever is not baptized can in no way be saved? And the truth, in light of reason, is a strange thing. How can God punish with eternal damnation the many poor people who cannot even understand a book or a number, who have existed in error but were unaware of it?

These things have entered my thoughts since your change has become known. And about the last two questions, I have spoken and asked the scholars of our tradition and also Christian scholars, and have asked them to quiet my tortured heart. <sup>32</sup> And knowing that the magnitude of your knowledge about the books of both laws was greater than that of any other wise man of our time, I knew that you would quench my thirst, and I raised my eyes to you. And as time has seen fit to situate me in the remote part of this land, in an area not safe for travelers, <sup>33</sup> I cannot write everything that is in my heart. So I shall beseech your eminence to answer me at length concerning the details of my letter. Also, if perchance your clear intelligence has composed some new material on these matters, please let it reach me through the mail. May God open to you His great treasure, the treasure of intelligence and wisdom, in order



to see the pleasantness of truth, and to see in which direction precious light is projected. Whatever you may desire, the person who sits, anguished, stands terrified, and is linked with the chains of your love to your worship. I shall not be too weak to swallow my saliva.

Joshua Halorki ✓

#### 4. Pablo de Santa María's response to Joshua Halorki

These remarks address the eight questions which you asked me concerning the coming of the Messiah. My intention is not to answer you about them item by item for the reason stated. <sup>34</sup> My only purpose not is to clarify in what way it is desirable for every religious man to investigate the tenets of his faith. Those who believe in the Law of Moses, may he rest in peace--one of whose tenets is the coming of the Messiah--are obligated to investigate Scripture and tradition as regards the Messiah, [to provide] of He [Jesus] is the designated one. This investigation is not contrary to the faith, but rather it strengthens it. This investigation is the gate of hope through which I penetrated the tradition of the covenant, I, with my friend. "This is the gate of the Lord, into which the righteous enter" (Ps. 118. 20). And it follows that one is not obligated to investigate the religion of the Muslims. This investigation is not one of the tenets of the Law of Mohammed.

A second decree: that no false religion requires internal obligation, in other words, spiritual, which fact I am sure is clear to you. <sup>35</sup> And it follows that anyone born into a false religion is obligated to investigate every angle of it [to prove] if it is true or not in reference to all the aspects and divisions earlier mentioned. This is

not a spiritual sin. It is rather an obligation.

And after the coming of the Messiah, the entire world is obligated to behave in accordance with His law, as was said, "And the isles shall wait for His law" (Isa. 42. 4).

Perhaps you will say, and how does one know if the religion into which one is born is amongst the false ones or not, being that every one of these religions considers itself divine? The answer to this is found in Maimonides--blessed be his memory--in part 2. And look carefully at it. And with this reference, you [Jews] judge. According to this--given the tenets of the religion of the Christians who live in England--as you alledged, he [a Christian] is not obligated to examine or investigate the religion of the Messiah, which obligates all men.

And in regard to what you wrote, "If only I could know it and find it . . . " and "The truth, that according to the weight of logic, etc . . . " Answer: Common sense demands the existence of a true and divine religion which leads to eternal life. And regarding this, a few great thinkers revealed their knowledge and gave credence to a religion of philosophical science. But surely they erred, as wise men have proven; and there is no such thing.

Those that are without faith can be divided into two groups. There are the groups that are snuffed out, for example, as happens with the very young who die before reaching the age of reason. They are not to blame for their

lack of faith, except in one area; and they do not deserve to live out their lives in sorrow, though Providence will leave these people without salvation, just as salvation does not exist for your teacher, Averroes, who decrees in reference to the souls of the insane that they have no immortality because of their lack of intelligence. But if we are talking about circumstances analogous to those of adults, who have reached the age of reason, in them, a lack of faith is a great sin. Because in the heart of every man is planted the tendency to attempt all possible conjecture. And it is the opinion of all the wise men of our faith that every intelligent man should judge intelligently and investigate the faith in which one is saved with truth and a full heart. And man should try to do this to his utmost, without any shirking, because God--Who knows all--will illuminate his face. And even if he be at the ends of the earth. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous" (Job 36. 7) And He will influence his heart with His faith and love, and this will suffice for the salvation of his soul. And even if this person does not come on holy days because of a lack of understanding, he will be purified in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. But if in this he be negligent, he is evil and will die in his iniquity. And the paths of the Lord are perfect; they are straight, the paths of the Lord; and the righteous will walk on them.

Do not pay attention to the grammar of the words, just

to the matters at hand. Because truly, my heart these days turns away from the Hebrew language and I am deep in my studies, with no free time to correct this as I should.

A word from your brother, Israel, the former Levite, who because of having renounced the first, seeks a second priestliness. The latter will be pleased to serve justice in the name of God, the Messiah, so that he might sanctify himself in the holiness of Aron. Formerly in Israel, without knowledge of God, Solomon Halevi, and now that he eyes see God, he calls himself Paulus de Burgos.





### Session 3

## **"And the Evil Hour Passed Away": Folk-Legends of Conversion in Ashkenaz of the 13th Century**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The four stories included in Ms. Jerusalem, copied in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

However, as I tried to prove somewhere else, includes one of the most important collections of tales from the Middle Ages, from 13<sup>th</sup> century Ashkenaz. One of the basic reasons for this appreciation is ostensible in this selection of tales: the centrality of R. Judah the Pious, his community of Regensburg, and the atmosphere of authenticity that, as far as it is possible at all in legends, arises from them. The four stories we will discuss, appear in the manuscript in almost a perfect succession. However, in a collection of 99 tales written down almost without any logic or order, it is outstanding. It points at the fact that the author/collector was aware of their common theme as well as their importance.

The importance of our small sample of legends of conversion is their origin and audience: while this theme in the learned religious circles of medieval Judaism was and is studied from almost every possible angle, we have only very few discussions of it in Jewish folk culture. While we know what was the attitude and responses of the religious leaders or authors to conversion, their arguments and warnings, we hardly hear the voices of the larger, unlearned layers of society to it. The reason is clear: they did not write, and could not leave any indications for the way they considered this central part of Jewish life.

It is true that on the face of it, even the four "conversion legends" in front of us, place in their center the figure of the religious leader and his reactions to conversion. However, all four legends are typical folk-tales (as proven by their narrative character, the saint's legends genre, so popular in this period in Europe – to which they strongly belong, and the fact they were told repeatedly in the following centuries of Jewish folklore). They tell a story, and do not attempt to wrestle with theological arguments; they present the typical tension between the elite learned circles – R. Judah and his students – and the larger segments of Jewish society. The question, how far these legends, represent the attitude of R. Judah himself to conversion or do they represent the attitudes of the folk – the larger segments of society to it – should be dealt with in depth.

Another question, which should be asked in a forum of historians is, in what capacity these legends reflect real events. As the legend is the most "historical" of all folklore genres, this question was asked repeatedly in research both by folklorists and historians. This is even more relevant regarding these legends, as they are all typical realistic tales (except the one about the flowering rod, to which we'll return). They reflect a segment of reality of that time and place, without (almost) any involvement of supernatural deeds or powers.

If we'll attempt to classify these legends according to their central theme, it seems that three legends share one central theme: the prevention (or attempts to prevent) Jewish youths from conversion to Christianity, and one legend (the one on the flowering rod) telling about an apostate who repented and returned.

In addition to these, our discussion of the legends will attempt to confront two main questions: the first is the built-in tension – that is very ostensible in these legends – between conversion as a **predestination**, and conversion as a **deliberate** choice. While the theme of predestination is very clear in the legend about the circumcision, in all the other legends, the question why did these Jews decide to convert is unclear, and it reflects, it seems, the confusion of the audiences telling and listening to these tales, regarding the decision to convert. The second question emerging from these texts is the limits of the reaction of the Jewish community to conversion, in face of the dangers of the Christian reaction to it. The violent reaction of the religious leader in at least two legends out of the four, should point at the centrality of this question. In order to put this question in its wider context, we will turn to Miri Rubin's *Gentile Tales: the Narrative assault on late medieval Jews*, (New Haven, Yale U. P. 1999). It will show to us that the dialogue about conversion between Jews and Christians did not take place only in the learned level, through books or public debates, but also among the larger layers of Christian and Jewish society, through a "dialogue of narratives", that was no less important or interesting.

## TEXT

### ועברה השעה הרעה:"

#### סיפורים עממיים על המרת דת באשכנז במאה השלוש-עשרה

כ"ט. מעשה באחד שהביא בנו אצל הרי"ח ללמד לפניו. ואמר לו הרי"ח, הולך עמך בנך לביתך שאיני רוצה ללמדו בפעם הזאת ובשנה זו. אבל אם תביאהו אצלי לאחר שנה זו אלמוד עמו ואיעצך עיצה טובה. והיה האיש בהול על אמירת הרי"ח שדיבר לו כך ושאל לו, למה לא תלמד אותו בשנה זו? השיב לו הרי"ח, אני יודע בטוב למה. ושאל לו פעמים ושלוש שאלתו ראשונה. השיב לו הרי"ח, בני (ולבנך) אומר לך למה לא אלמוד אותו בשנה זו. (א"ל הרי"ח) יום אחד יהיה בשנה זו שירצה [בנך] ללילך לתרבות רעה להשתמד, אם תוכל לשמרו אותו יום אז לא יעשה עוד הדבר הרע הזה ויתחרט בו ויקח כפרה ויעשה תשובה מיד אחר אותו יום. והיה אותו איש צער מאוד. מ"מ [= מכל מקום] לקח עיצה מהרי"ח וביקש ממנו עצתו היאך יעשה.

וא"ל הרי"ח, עשה כיפה אחת של אבנים תחת הקרקע במקום שאין בני אדם יכולים לשמוע בר"ה [= ברשות הרבים] אם יהיה בו שום צועק או אם יהיה שום מרתף תחת הקרקע בביתך שאינו נוטה לר"ה [= לרשות הרבים] תחזיק מנעליו ודלתותיו, ותשכירו לו מלמד שילמוד בנך בביתך באותו כיפה או במרתף. והזהר שלא יצא בנך מפתח בתיך [!] לא לבית הכנסת ולא לשום מקום עד אחר אותו יום. ומיד אחר אותו יום תוכל להניחו בכל מקום שירצה.

ועשה האיש כיפה של אבנים תחת הקרקע בביתו, והשכיר לו מלמד בביתו. וכשהגיע אותו יום כאשר אמר הרי"ח ורבו רצה להגיד ההלכה אמר לרבו, איני יודע ללמוד ואיני רוצה ללמוד יותר. ואמר שהיה עצב מלימודו שלמד. א"ל רבו, ומה יום מימים ומה המעשה? השיב לו, למד[ת]י הרבה. והיה מבעט ברבו.

ונתוועדו כל כך יחד עד שאמר לרבו שדעתו לצאת לתרבות רעה. ומיד עמד הרב וסגר הדלת של הכיפה במנעול. וצעק התלמיד והטיח דברים כלפי מעלה וכפר בעיקר והודה שם ע"ז [= עבודה זרה] והזכירה לגנאי. ורבו הגיד כל העניין לאביו ולאמו. לקח אביו ואמו ואחיו וגיסיו ורבו ופתחו הדלת ונכנסו אצלו ורצו לשדלו בדברים ולא הואיל, וצעק אחר הגלח לטנפו. ואמר שאם היה יכול לצאת מפתח ביתו יגרום שיהרגו לכל שונאי ישראל, על שרוצים לאבד ולפחות אמונת יש"ו. וכשראו שלא הואילו כל דבריהם שדברו לו, עקד ידיו ורגליו בעבותות ובחבלים והניחיהו אסור כך בכיפה כל אותו יום וכל אותו לילה ויצאו הם וסגרו אחריהם ולא הלכו אליו עוד עד למחר. וכשנכנסו אצלו למחרת התחיל לבכות והיה מתחרט מקילקולו וביקש מאביו ומדודיו שיוליכוהו אצל הרי"ח ליקח כפרה. והוליכו אותו אל הרי"ח ונתן לו כפרה. ומאותו יום ואילך לא שכב לא על כרים ולא על כסות, והחמיר על עצמו ולמד לפני הרי"ח ונעשה ראש ישיבה בעירו.

ל. 'מעשה מהרי"ח שעמד בעלייתו בחלון שננטה על דרך ר"ה [= רשות הרבים] ועמדו תלמידיו כנגדו, וראה יהודי אחד למרחוק שהלך במהירות. אמר הרי"ח לאחד מתלמידיו, תמהר ותתגרה עם זה היהודי ואל תניח אותו לילך לשום מקום עד שאקרא אותך או אחד מבני חבורתינו, ואל תשאל אותו למה הולך במהירות. והלך התלמיד ורץ אחר זה וקרא לו ואמר לו, עמוד עד שאבא אצלך. ולא רצה לעמוד ורץ אחריו וגירה בו.

א"ל, אנה תלך? א"ל, מה יש לך עמי שאתה שואל מהילוכי? השיב לו התלמיד, אני רוצה לידע מקומך לאן אתה הולך. ודברו כל כך זה עם זה עד שהכה זה עם זה וגירו יחד שעה גדולה, שלא רצה התלמיד להניח אותו האיש להפרד ממנו. ואמר הרי"ח לאחד מתלמידיו לך וקרא לחברך וקראו. שאלו הנשאים אצל הרי"ח, למה עשית דבר זה? השיב להם, עתה תראו העניין למה. וכשחזרו התלמידים לרבם הלך המוכה עמהם ובא לפני הרי"ח ועמד לפניו בבכיה גדולה. שאלו, למה אתה בוכה? ושאל [היהודי הממהר] כדי שישמעו התלמידים למה אמר להכותו ולהתגרות בו. השיב [רי"ח], האיש הזה היה רוצה לילך [!] לתרבות רעה והיה דעתו לכפור בבורא, ועברה השעה הרעה ומתחרט מדעתו שחשב ורוצה ליקח כפרה, ועשה תשובה. אמרו לו תלמידיו, אשריך רבינו שמנעת זה האיש מעבירה הגדולה, ושבחוהו תלמידיו.

ל"א. מעשה במשומד שהרשיע הרבה ובעונינו בגרמתו נהרגו כמה נפשות מישראל. יום אחד בא לפני הרי"ח וביקש ממנו שיפתח לו תשובה, וגילה המשומד לכל קילקלתו ועיותו שעשה אל הרי"ח. והיה מקל אחד ביד הרי"ח, אמר הרי"ח לאותו משומד, כמו שיוכל המקל הזה שבידי לפרוח כך תוכל לשוב בתשובה. כלומר, לא יועיל לך שום תשובה. ופירש המשומד ממנו והרשיע יותר ממה שעשה קודם לכן. והרי"ח לא שם על לב מאותו משומד ומאותו מקל. לאחר ימים התחיל המקל להוציא פרח ותמה הרי"ח מזה וזכר מן המשומד שהיה אצלו, ושלה הרי"ח בכתבים אחר המשומד שיבא אצלו. והלך המשומד ובא אצל הרי"ח וא"ל, זכור אתה מה שדברנו יחד? והשיב לו, כן. והראה לו הרי"ח המקל שהוציא פרחים, ופתח לו הרי"ח בתשובה ואמר, מאחר שנעשה לך נס גדול כזה תגיד לי אם עשית שום תשובה או שום טובה ליהודי בימי שמדותך?

השיב לו שלא עשה ולא דיבר טובה על היהודים, והרשעתי להם הרבה, לבד מפעם אחת היה בעיר אחת גדולה ובה קהל גדול ואנשי אמת ויראי השם. והעלילו עליהם עלילה שקר משקץ אחד שנהרג והושלך ברחוב היהודי 'ונתקבצו כל העיר עליהם למרדם ולהרגם ואמרו, מיניה וביה נישדי בהון נרגא 1-- ויעיד המשומד עליהם שיצא מהם שצריכין לדם ואז לא יוכלו במקומות אחרים לדבר עלינו שום רע, 2 אז נתמלא רצונינו מהם. ושלחו אחר המשומד ושאלו אם הוא יודע שצריכים דם. השיב להם בשבועתי ובאמונתי הארורה והטומאה 3 שאינם צריכים שום דם. והגיד להם היאך היהודים מדיחים בשרם ומולחים אותו מדם. ונתבטלה אותה גזירה על ידי. אמר לו הרי"ח, א"כ [= אם כן] הוא אני ערב בדבר שיהיה חלקך בג"ע [=בגן עדן] אם תשוב בלב שלם.

1 על פי בבלי סנהדרין לט, ב", והיינו דאמרי אינשי: מניה וביה אבא ניוזיל ביה נרגא: "מתוך העץ עצמו יצא הגרון) שיגדע אותו. (כלומר, המשומד שיצא מתוכם הוא שיביא לאובדנם.  
2 כלומר, שהעלילו לשוא על היהודים.  
3 כלומר, נשבע להם באמונה הנוצרית.

ל"ג. מעשה ברעגנשפורק שעומדין נגד התינוקות כשנושאים בב"ה [= בבית הכנסת] כשמלין אותן. פעם אחת נשאו תינוק אחד לבית הכנסת למולו ועמדו כל הקהל נגדו והרי"ח ישב למקומו על ספסל שלו ולא עמד נגדו. אמרו לו, מורינו למה לא עמדת נגדו? א"ל, לפי [ש] אליהו אינו יושב במקומו על כסאו אצל בעל הברית. והראה לאותן שהיו ראויין לכך שאליהו ז"ל ישב אצל חלון אחד פתוח לבית הכנסת. ושאלו לו להרי"ח למה אינו יושב על כסאו? השיב להם, לפי שסופו של תינוק שיצא לתרבות רעה.

## TRANSLATION

29. It happened once with one who brought his son to R. Judah the Pious to teach him. And R. Judah the Pious told him, "Take your son with you to your home as I don't want to teach him this time and this year. However, if you'll bring him to me after this year, I will teach him and give you a good advice". That man was alarmed because of R. Judah the Pious's words, and he asked him, "Why would you not teach him this year?" R. Judah the Pious answered to him, "I know well why". And he asked him twice and thrice the same question, and R. Judah the Pious answered to him, "My son, I will tell you why I shall not teach him this year. One day, during this year, your son will want to take a wicked pass [*tarbut ra'ah*] and convert. If you could guard him that day, he will not do that wicked deed again; he will regret and do atonement and will repent right after that day". That man was in deep distress. He took R. Judah the Pious's words, and asked him what he should do. R. Judah the Pious told him, "build a dome [*kippa*] of stones underground, in a deserted place where no one can hear, if he will shout; or in an underground basement in your own house if you have one, and strengthen its doors and locks, and hire for him a teacher who will teach your son in that dome or basement. Moreover, beware that your son shall not come out from there not to the synagogue, nor to any other place until after that day. And right after that day you can leave him wherever he wants to.

The man built a dome out of stones underground his house, and hired for him a teacher there. When the day R. Judah the Pious spoke of came, and his teacher wanted to teach him the *Halacha*, he told him, "I cannot learn, and do not want to learn more", and added that he was weary by his studies. His rabbi said to him,

"Why is this day different from any other day? What happened?" He answered to him, "I have learned too much". Moreover, he started kicking his rabbi. And they argued much longer, until he said to his rabbi that he wants to take the evil pass.

Immediately the rabbi locked the door of the dome. And the student cried aloud, and hurled things at the almighty, and denied the core (of Judaism) and accepted the name of idolatry and pronounced it for naught. His rabbi told all of it to his father and mother. His father and mother, and brothers and brothers in law, opened the door and entered [to his place] and tried to convince him with words, but did not succeed. And he shouted loudly and demanded the priest to come and befoul him, and he said that if he could go outside, he would have committed all Jews to death, because they dismiss and deny the belief in Jesus. And when they saw that all their arguments failed, they bound up his hands and feet with ropes, and caged him thus in that dome all that day and night. And they went out, and closed the door and did not come back until the day after. When they entered the day after, he started to cry, regretted his transgression, and asked his father and uncles to bring him to R. Judah the Pious to provide him with penance. They took him to R. Judah the Pious and he provided him with penance. From that day on he did not sleep on pillows nor on quilts, and he reprimanded himself, and studied with R. Judah the Pious, and he became afterwards head of a Yeshiva in his own town.

30. It happened once with R. Judah the Pious. He stood on the upper level [of his house], at the window, which opened to the public space, and his students, were in front of him. And he saw a Jew far away, running fast. R. Judah the Pious said to one of his students, "Hurry and dispute with this Jew and do not let him go anywhere until I or another of our group will call you back. And do not ask him why is he in such a hurry. That student went and ran after him, and called him, and said to him, "Stay there until I will come to you". He did not want to stay, and he ran after him and provoked him. He said to him, "where are you going?" He answered him, "why is it your business where about I am going?" The student answered to him, "I want to know the place you are going to". And so they argued until they beat each other and quarreled for a long time, as the student did not let him go and depart from him. Then R. Judah the Pious said to one of the students to go and call his friend back, and so he did. The remaining students asked R.

Judah the Pious, "Why did you do this thing?" He answered to them, now you'll see the reason why. When the students returned to their rabbi, and the one who they quarreled with came also with them, he stood in front of him weeping deeply. He [R. Judah] asked him, "Why are you crying?" And he asked him thus, because he wanted the students to hear why he said to beat him and provoke him. And he [R. Judah the Pious] answered, "This man wanted to take the evil pass and decided to deny the almighty. And the evil hour passed away now, and he regrets his thought, and wants to take atonement, and he repented. His students said to him, "Blessed be you, our rabbi, that you have prevented this man from a great sin", and they praised him.

31. It happened once with an apostate [*meshumad*] who acted very wickedly, and because of our sins, he committed many Jews to death. One day he came to R.

Judah the Pious and asked of him to open for him [a way for] repentance.

Moreover, the apostate revealed to R. Judah the Pious all his wicked deeds and abominations. R. Judah the Pious had a stick in his hand, and he said to that apostate, "When this stick in my hand will blossom, then you'll be able to repent.

It means, no repentance will help you ever". And the convert went from there, and acted wickedly even more than before. R. Judah the Pious forgot about that convert and that stick.

After a time the stick started to blossom. R. Judah the

Pious was amazed, and he remembered that apostate who came to him, and he sent a message to the apostate to come to him. He came to R. Judah the Pious, and he [R. Judah] said to him, "do you remember what we have spoken?", and he answered to him, "Yes". And R. Judah the Pious showed to him the stick which grew flowers, and R. Judah the Pious opened for him repentance. He said to him,

"As such a great miracle was done for you, tell me if you have done any repentance before or a good deed to a Jew during your apostasy?" He answered to him that he did not speak well of Jews, and was very wicked with them. This is true, except one time, in a big town with a great community of righteous and pious people [Jews]. A false libel was told about them, after a *sheketz* [Christian child] was killed and was thrown in the Jew's street. And all the town gathered there to disturb and kill them. They [the rioters] said, "From the tree itself comes the handle [of the ax, which cuts it down]. The apostate, who came from them, will attest that they use blood [for their ritual]. Thus we shall not be spoken evil things in other places [claiming that we lied], and at last our wish of them will be done". They sent after the apostate and asked him if he knows that they use blood. He answered to them, "By my oath and my damned impure belief [I swear that] they use no blood". And he told them how the Jews are purifying and salting the meat [they eat] from any blood. "And that libel was canceled because of me".

R. Judah the Pious said to him, "If so, I guaranty your place in heaven, if you will repent with full heart".

33. It happened in Regensburg that [the community] was standing when they brought the babies to the synagogue for circumcision. One time when they brought in the baby into the synagogue to circumcise him, and all the community stood, R. Judah the Pious [continued] to sit on his bench, and did not stand in front of the baby. They said to him, "Our teacher, why don't you stand in front of him?" He said to them, "Because Elijah is not sitting in his place on his chair next to the covenant". They asked R. Judah the Pious, "Why doesn't he sit on his chair?" He answered to them, because this baby will end taking the evil pass".





## Session 4

# Polemic, Conversion, or Scholastic Disputation?

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## INTRODUCTION

I translate below portions of two thirteenth-century Latin-Christian works: 1] The *The Quiver of Faith* by the converted Jew and Dominican friar, Thibaud de Sézanne, of around 1240,<sup>1</sup> and 2] a quodlibetal question by the Franciscan friar, Roger Marston.<sup>2</sup> The former work, while little discussed by modern scholars,<sup>3</sup> is, on the surface at least, an obvious work *adversus Judaeos*—it seems designed to polemicize against Jewish unbelief in Christian doctrine in order to convert them. The latter work, one in whole series of such questions composed by a Franciscan theologian, on the other hand, while it deals incidentally with Jewish unbelief, might best be seen as a work of Christian theology and philosophy designed for other Christian thinkers, and responding to issues specifically under discussion in Christian theological circles. This, at least, is the argument that Diana Copeland Klepper has compellingly made in her *The Insight of Unbelievers: Nicholas of Lyra and Christian Reading of Jewish Text in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

Yet it seems to me that if we look closer, these two works are not nearly so different as they seem on the surface. Most notably, the largest part of the *Quiver of Faith* is an argument attempting to show that the Messiah has already come using only Hebrew-Bible passages—exactly, that is, what Marston’s quaestio is attempting to do. Roger does seem to set up his quaestio as a debate about epistemology—a question, that is, about how we know what we think we know—but he does address Jews directly, and, as the excerpts I have translated suggest, it is otherwise very like the *Quiver*. Is it legitimate to maintain that his scholastic quaestio is not arguing *contra Judaeos* if we assume that *Quiver* is? Vice versa, if Marston’s quaestio clearly is not *contra Judaeos*, does that not mean that the *Quiver* is essentially a scholastic treatise written for other Christian scholastics as well?

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<sup>1</sup> This work is unedited, and I have worked from an early printing, Theobaldus <de Saxannia>, *Errores Judaeorum in Talmud [et Pharetra fidei]*, [Augsburg, before 1473], despite the fact that its text is clearly problematic at many points.

<sup>22</sup> Roger Marston, Quodlibet II, questio III [Utrum per prophetias possit probari Christum iam incarnatum fuisse.], ed. G. F. Etzkorn and I. C. Brady, in *Fr. Rogeri Marston O. F. M. Quodlibeta quatuor ad fidem codicum nunc primum edita* (Quaracci, Florence, 1968), 104-44.

<sup>3</sup> See principally G. Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au moyen âge* (Paris, 1999), 414, 426-27, 461-64.

<sup>4</sup> See pp. 63-69.

## TEXT

Thibaud de Sézanne, **The Quiver of Faith** (c. 1240)

{5r} Take up your quiver and bow for slaying<sup>5</sup> the foxes that demolish your vineyards and the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God, as is it read in the testimonies (of scripture): Haughty Goliath, that is the people of the Jews, will be vanquished by his own sword (cf. 1 Sm 17:51). This little work is divided into two parts. In the first part are set out<sup>6</sup> those things which pertain to the faith or which pertain to proving the Catholic faith . . .

### [Part 1] Proof of the advent of Jesus Christ

Moses prophesied concerning the advent of Jesus Christ in *adaberim*, that is in the fifth book of Deuteronomy . . . chapter 18 where it is said: *the Lord, your God will raise up for you a prophet like me<sup>7</sup> from among the nations and from among his brothers; you will hear<sup>8</sup> him* (Dt 18:15) . . . This cannot be understood as relating to Joshua who was the successor of Moses and leader the people because he was not a prophet and neither prophesied nor was said to be similar to Moses, because it is said later in the same chapter: *Take, Joshua, the man in whom is the spirit of God, and you will give the commandments to all living people and a portion of your glory, though not all* (Nm 27:18, 20). Therefore, he was not similar (to Moses), and no other of the prophets gave a law besides Moses and Christ . . . {5v} That the Lord says, *I will be the punisher of the one who does not want to hear the words of that one, which he spoke in my name*, has this not been fulfilled among the Jews, as is clear in the destruction of the Jews [wrought] by Titus and Vespasian, and in the scattering<sup>9</sup> of them throughout the world? Daniel, chapter 9, predicted this punishment: *Christ will be killed and his people who will deny him. And the people, that is the Roman people, will destroy the city and the sanctuary with the leader who is to come* (Dn 9:26), that is Titus.

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<sup>5</sup> The Latin text seems to be corrupt here, *ad roborandum* meaning ‘to strengthen,’ quite the opposite of the clear sense of the passage.

<sup>6</sup> Reading *ponunt* as *ponuntur*.

<sup>7</sup> *sicut me* is missing from the Latin text here.

<sup>8</sup> Reading *audies* in place of *audiens*, as the Biblical text requires.

<sup>9</sup> Reading *dispersionem* not *dispersionum*.

That Christ will have already come is proved through the words of Jacob in Genesis, who says: *The scepter will not pass from Judah until he is to be sent comes, and he will be the expectation of the nations* (Gn 49:10). It is certain that until the rise of (Jesus) Christ, a king was not wanting among the people of the Jews until Herod who was foreign born. Under him Christ was born, who is the expectation of the nations. The Jews, therefore, speak falsely when they say that the Messiah (*Christus*) has not come. They say some king or other from the tribe of Judah in farthest East still holds ruling authority, but this lie of theirs is easily refuted because no temple, no altar, and no sacrifice continues to be done . . .

And neither is the prophet Hosea a liar who says, *The children of Israel will remain without king, without sacrifice and without manifestations* (Os 3:4), all of which clearly appear to have been fulfilled among (the Jews). But the Jew objects, “if the Messiah, that is, Christ, already has come, when were those things fulfilled which Isaiah predicted in chapter 11: *And (a branch from the root of Jesse) will go forth* (Is 11:1), and later, *The wolf will live with the lamb, and the panther will lie down with the kid, and the cow and the lion and the sheep and the dog will dwell together* (Is 11:6), and *they will occupy themselves with warfare, and they will forge their swords into ploughshares* (Is 2:4).” Regarding this it should be said that by cruel beasts are to be understood men, but not just ones, and by the simple and tame (beasts) are to be understood the just and good whom God orders to be at peace with each other and with Christ. The prophet declares that he wants this to be understood regarding men when he adds that *the earth has been filled with the knowledge of the Lord* (Is 11:3). Now he did not say this in regard to the brute animals because they are not able to have knowledge or understanding of the Lord. What he said there {6r}—*they will not occupy themselves further with warfare* (Is 11:6)—was fulfilled in the time of Christ among the people from among whom Christ was born. . .

### Proof that the Messiah (*Christus*) is to be Born of a Virgin

That the Messiah (*Christus*) is to be born of a virgin is proved through Isaiah the prophet in the seventh chapter: *The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be called Emmanuel* (Is 7:14). But against this the unhappy and unfaithful Jew objects that that word which Isaiah employs there, that is *alma*, does not properly mean ‘virgin.’ Rather it means ‘corrupt young girl.’ To this the faithful Christian should respond that such a scoffer is ignorant of the valences of the words of the Hebrews, for no woman, whether she be young or old, is called ‘old’ as long as she is a virgin. Now as long as she is young, whether virgin or corrupt, she can be called ‘a young girl,’ for *alma* is sometimes used, whether she be young and a virgin. Likewise he predicted as much through Isaiah to Ahaz: *Seek a sign for yourself from the Lord your God* (Is 7:11), but if he was able to give as a sign that a corrupt girl gave birth, would it not be ridiculous . . . ?”

Roger Marston, Quodlibet II, Quaestio 3: **[Whether through (Hebrew-Bible) Prophecies it is Possible to Prove that Christ has Already been Incarnate]** (1283)

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2] {p. 125} It seems not since, in order that this most notable prophecy of his advent be nullified—that is indeed Gn 49:10, which says, The sceptre will not pass from Judah nor the leader from between his legs until the one to be sent comes—the Jews explain it thus: The sceptre will not pass from Judah, that is, the right of the scepter, that is, of ruling or lordship. Now if the text speaks of practical (actualis) lordship, it is clear that at the time of the Babylonian captivity they did not have lordship, nor indeed in the time of the Maccabees, in which times, even according to our (Christian) faith, Christ had not yet come. It is necessary therefore that the promise of the scepter passing refer to the right of (or lordship) not the fact (of lordship). But this right of lordship has not been removed from them, say the Jews, although they have lost it in fact.

3] Against (the above): The Catholic faith holds the contrary, and the evangelical and apostolic words which (come) through the prophecies and law and the rest of the scripture of the Old Testament prove that the promises made to the fathers have already been fulfilled in Christ.

4] I respond:

a] Just as in the acquisition of natural knowledge through teaching, it is impossible that a human who is turned away from natural light toward fantasies not to err or to be unpersuadable to the understanding of truth, while he clings to them, even with that teaching (*ipsa*) demonstrating on behalf of the true and understood things. For indeed fantasies to which it is clung with too much desire (*amor*) are the origins of error. Thus a man not only deprived of faith, but deformed by the error of depravity, cannot be persuaded of those things which are of the Christian faith, and especially of the highest mystery regarding the incarnation of Christ . . .

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¶4 {p. 113} **Fourth part of the first article.** Fourth, [that the Jews have lost ruling authority] is clear through the destruction of the people which we see and their scattering throughout the whole earth. For in the fortieth year after the passion of Christ, Titus and Vespasian occupied all of Judea, and, capturing Jerusalem, demolished and destroyed it to the foundations, so that they did not leave in it any *stone upon a stone* (Lk 19:44; Mk 13:2), and by public edict it was commanded that no Jew of Judea should inhabit its boundaries any further.

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{p. 115} Daniel expressly alludes to this destruction of the Jews and this consolation of true justice that was to be brought by Christ at a certain, determined time in Daniel 9:24-27 where (the angel) Gabriel is speaking:

*.. And after 62 weeks Christ will be killed, and the people who will deny him will be no more. And the people will destroy the city and sanctuary with the leader who is to come, and his goal will be devastation and, after the war, desolation will be established.*

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¶ {p. 119} **First part of the second article. First argument.** Isaiah 7:14 alludes openly to the truth of [the Messiah's] humanity where it says {120}: *Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be called Emmanuel* (Is 7:14). This prophecy is impossible to understand other than as referring to (Jesus Christ). For it cannot be that this Emmanuel be the son of Isaiah, since about this Emmanuel it says later in 8:8: *His wingspan, that is of the army of the king of Babylon, fills the breadth of your land, O Emmanuel*. The son of Isaiah never ruled over the land of Judea...

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**Third argument.** Likewise, that this verse cannot literally be understood as referring to the wife of Isaiah, as the Jews want, is shown therefore because this sign, even according to the opinion of the Jews, had to be very great, just the surrounding passage indicates. Although it was worthy of admiration that a virgin... conceives and gives birth to a male child, it does not seem as great as if the Lord offered to give himself. For (Isaiah) said to Ahaz that he should seek a sign from heaven or hell, and in like manner the letter says *The Lord himself will give you a sign* (Is 7:14; 8:6-7). Such a sign had to have been something that was able to be displayed by God alone. The natural conception of a single young woman is not such a thing, for such a conception does not exceed {p. 121} the laws of nature. Indeed we read that both the daughters of Lot were virgins according to the statement of their father in Genesis 19:8: *I have two daughters* (Gn 19:8) who are virgins. Yet these two daughters conceived male children in their first lying with the father, just as is clear in the same chapter (cf. Gn 19:32-38)....

**Fifth argument** . . . {p. 123} And if you say that in Hebrew *becula* is not written, which means 'virgin,' but *alma*, which means 'adolescent girl,' Jerome responds . . . saying that "*alma* (means) not only girl or virgin, but a hidden and secret virgin who has never been exposed to the glances of men, but has been guarded with great parental diligence," and farther on, "As much as {p. 124} I wrestle with my memory, I never, I judge, have read *alma* in connection with a married woman, but (only) in connection with some woman who was a virgin, and not only a virgin, but a virgin of young age and in adolescent years." Such a one was Abishag, who in I Kings 1:3 is called 'a young adolescent' and 'virgin' when the ministers of David were saying, *Let us seek for our lord and king a beautiful, young adolescent virgin*. . . .



[**Conclusion.**] { p. 144} I firmly believe, therefore, and by no means doubt that it can be proven through (Old-Testament) scriptures that Christ has already come, not only probably, but entirely sufficiently, and that these twelve arguments placed above comprise (such a proof) which, in small amount of time, even a dull intelligence is able to grasp. I judge these arguments to be similar to the twelve oxen who hold up the bronze sea (cf. Jr 52:17,

20) Because of both the firmness which they contain in themselves and because of the rustic quality of the unsophisticated (Biblical) discourse which displeases bombastic and puffed up men. Such men as these I ask that, when these (arguments) come into their hands, they, taking up the polishing file of eloquence, attempt zealously with others to make them clearer, not doubting, if they are handled well, that they contain solid truth. Therefore I concede that the incarnation of Christ can be proved through the (Old-Testament) prophets.



## Session 5

# Wecelin the Convert: Introduction

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**The Text:** Alpert of Metz, *De Diversitate Temporum*, Lib. I, cap. 7 and Liber II, caps. 22-24 in MGH Scriptores IV, ed. G. Pertz (Hannover, 1841), pp. 704 and 720-23.

## INTRODUCTION

In Book One, chapter seven of his chronicle of the Low Countries (ca. 1025), Alpert of Metz briefly notes that in the days of “King Henry” (almost certainly Henry II of Germany, r. 1002-1024), a Christian cleric named Wecelin converted to Judaism. The king, deeply disturbed, ordered one of his own clerics, Henry by name, to oppose the “false words” of the apostate. In Book Two of his chronicle Alpert reproduces both Wecelin’s rather brief critique of Christianity and Henry’s fuller rebuttal.<sup>3</sup> The epistolary exchange has been discussed by several scholars, most notably by Anna Abulafia, who published a translation of the text in 1981.<sup>4</sup> Abulafia’s accompanying discussion considers the likely location and date of the conversion (suggesting the Rhineland, ca. 1006), surveys prevailing hypotheses about the identity of the convert, and then situates the exchange within the tradition of Jewish-Christian disputation.

While Abulafia’s analysis of the polemical themes at issue is thorough, many questions remain. She does not delve deeply into the historical context of the episode (or of Alpert’s text). The possible motivations for the alleged conversion are not addressed. And scholarship on both Salian Germany and Jewish-Christian relations has advanced considerably since 1981.

I propose to re-examine the text in light of recent historiography, to situate it firmly within early eleventh-century Germany and Lotharingia, and to revisit its intellectual/cultural content in light of new scholarly concerns and methodologies. I draw especially on the renewed attention paid to the *practice* of religion, as opposed to its theological tenets. I am particularly struck by the prominence assigned the faculty of *sight* in the exchange. Wecelin’s critique of his former religion focuses on the visibility of God, the usefulness of visible signs of faith (such as circumcision), and the Christian cult of saints’ relics. All of these issues, as well as Henry’s responses to them, echo contemporary debates taking place within Christian circles, and suggest that the exchange was prompted at least in part by anxiety over new visual devotional practices evolving in early eleventh-century Christianity.

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<sup>3</sup> Alpert is our sole source for Wecelin’s conversion and for the epistolary exchange.

<sup>4</sup> Anna Abulafia, “An Eleventh-century Exchange of Letters Between a Christian and a Jew,” *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981): 153-174.

reges in<sup>a</sup> interioribus Germaniae partibus, qui sunt Winidi vocati, suae ditioni tributarios effecerit, et Mettim in Belgis diu contra se male cogitantem, et compluribus annis 1012? obsessam, pene ad internitionem<sup>b</sup> vastaverit, et tandem multis incommodis illatis sibi subegerit; set quia domnus Adelboldus Traiectensis episcopus haec omnia pleniter in uno volumine luculento sermone comprehendit, a nobis pars quae aliquando nostris scriptis necessario occurrit praetereunda visa est, ne historia tantis et tam venustis documentis edita a nobis tanquam ab insipientis latratu obfuscaretur.

6. *De viso comete, et fame, et mortalitate.*

Post hinc triennium quam rex in solium regni sublimatus est, commetes horribili specie flammis hac illaque iactans, in australi parte coeli visus est. Sequenti anno fames et 1005. mortalitas gravissima per totum orbem factae sunt, ita ut in multis locis prae multitudine mortuorum et taedio sepelientium vivi adhuc spiritum trahentes, vi qua poterant renitentes<sup>c</sup>, cum mortuis obruerentur.

7. *De Wecelino apostata.*

Istis etiam diebus, videlicet Heinrichi regis, qui postea benedictione apostolica imperator effectus est, quidam Wecelinus, qui fuerat Cuonradi ducis clericus, illusionem diabolicam seductus, errori Iudeorum consensit. Hoc audiens rex, nimia, ut iustum fuit, conturbatione commotus est, atque illius iussione unus discipulorum suorum nomine Heinrichus, aequivocus regis, praedictum apostatam veracissimis sacrae scripturae testimoniis, ut eius epistola affirmat, falsa verba in Christum eiusque sanctos dixisse devicit; et 20 quia haec longiusculo sermone protracta sunt, in fine istius libelli ea ponere decrevimus.

II.  
22. 23.

8. *De adventu Nordmannorum<sup>d</sup>.*

Wicmannus, sortita coniuge, ut supra diximus, praefecti filia, sibi in omnibus obtemperare fidemque illi et amicitiam<sup>e</sup> servare constituit, et frequenter alter ab altero adscitus<sup>f</sup> convivio, communem sibi causam fecerant. Cumque iam senio confectus et 25 aegritudine ita deprehensus esset praefectus<sup>g</sup>, ut vix pedibus incederet, pyrae ex diversis insulis<sup>h</sup> oceani cum magna multitudine navium emersi, per flumen Meriwido<sup>i</sup> 34 magna celeritate vecti, usque ad portum Tylae<sup>35</sup> pervenerunt. Populus vero qui circa littora Wal fluminis habitaverunt, comperto tantae multitudinis adventu, spem omnem salutis in fuga ponentes, sua pene omnia praeter pecuniam, quia mercatores erant, 30 alienissimis reliquerunt. Praefectus vero prudens consilio, veritus ne agri hominibus destituti hostibus facilius pateret ingressus, vi qua poterat ascenso equo fugientem vix retinuit populum. Hostes usque Thylae venientes, vela deposuerunt, et portum nullo resistente ingressi, copiam victus magnam reppererunt. Qua celeriter exportata, vicum incendio vastaverunt. Monasterium quoque sanctae Walburgae irrumpentes<sup>k</sup>, vestesque 35 sanctas a quodam comite Waltgero, constructore ipsius loci, et sua coniuge Deo digna<sup>k</sup> Alberada ibidem collocatas auferentes, et altare spoliato<sup>l</sup>, et praeterea quam plurimis rebus ecclesiasticis exportatis, ecclesiam quidem incolomem relinquentes, ad classem se recipiunt; statimque nunciis a praefecto in omnes partes dimissis, postero die summo mane maxima multitudo convenit. Et quia praefectus exercitui praeesse non poterat, 40 Balterico, de quo supra diximus, itemque Unruoch<sup>m</sup> comiti, strenuo viro, qui in exercitu tercii Ottonis imperatoris Italia in re militari opinatissimus habebatur, bellum committitur. Nostris visis et celeri eorum adventu hostes perterriti, naves quam citius solventes recedebant, adeo ut similis fugae recessus videretur. Nostri insequentes, et ex utraque parte fluminis levibus praeliis factis, et utrimque<sup>n</sup> paucis aut<sup>o</sup> vulneratis 45 aut occisis, ne cupiditate praedae a ripa longius hostes vagarentur, prohibebant. Vicis vero iuxta litus<sup>p</sup> quos adire poterant exustis, nona hora diei omnes de navibus desilierunt, aciem confertissimam<sup>q</sup> instruxerunt, nostris<sup>r</sup> potestatem pugnandi praebuerunt. At nostri loco se continuerunt, et quia plurimi ex agris coacti convenerant, cum his ad usum belli imperitis et superioris anni propter sterilitatem inopia familiaris rei vexatis, 50 praelium committere non audebant. Ubi barbari neminem ad pugnam procedere con-

a) deest in c. sed adest apud Sigebertum a. 1003. b) internitio c. c) remittentes c. d) NORMANNORUM l. e) amicitiam c. f) adsitus c. g) pfectus c. h) locis corr. insulis c. i) meri uuido c. k) irrumpentes c. k\*) digne c. l) spoliata c. m) ita E. recte ex cap. 16. emendavit; in c. locus syllabae un vacat. n) ita E. utrique c. o) ac c. p) litus 2. q) confestiss. c. r) nostram l.

34) hodie de Merwede, Rheni sive Vahalis brachium. 35) in dextra Vahalis; cf. Ann. Colon. SS. I. p. 99.



1018. tudinis, cum suis stabat stupefactus; fortissimi quoque, quorum cor ut leonum erat, ita pavore solutum est, ut loco in quo constiterant se movere non possent. Acciditque — nescio quod divino iudicio — quasi inauditum miraculum, adeo<sup>a</sup> ut Frisii ex significatione oppidanorum evocati accurrerent et eos quasi saxi immobiles stantes interficerent; et ita Dei iussu sunt in suis membris obligati, ut nemo ex tanta copia clarissimorum virorum manum stricto gladio ad resistendum erigeret, vel scutum ad se protegendum opponeret. Quibus peremptis, celeri cursu pervenerunt ad litus, et cum plures, qui per crepidinem littoris in aqua manibus reptabant, iaculis confodiunt. Alii namque, dum ducem solum stare conspicerent, circumsistunt; set ille, consumpto spiritu, fortiter restitit, et missa pila excipit, unum tantum<sup>b</sup> a tergo se inpetentem aversa hasta traicit. Quo exanimato, reliquorum impetum paululum repressit. Interim praedones ex oppido iam laeti de victoria subito erumpunt, omnia cadavera mortuorum perequunt, illuc ubi ducem a multitudine circumdatum cernebant contendunt. Quem cognitum, et iam in adversum os vulneratum et pene desperatum, statim ex periculo eripiunt, et cum paucis captis in castellum perducunt, pedibusque eius provolvuntur, eique se dedunt, obsecrant, ut rebus suis consulat et apud imperatorem et episcopum Adelbaldum pro eis de negotio confecto interveniat. Quibus cum dixisset, omnia quae ab eo postularent sese facturum, tantum ut ipsum et ceteros qui superessent et capti erant illaesos abire permetterent, responderunt, magnas inimicitias parentum et propinquorum illorum qui occubuerant ipsos incurrisset; si impunitatem illius facti iuramento sibi confirment, ut nullam umquam vindictam ab ipsis exigant, sese facturos, quae postulet, ostenderunt. Cumque dux haec laudaret, constituunt diem et locum, quando haec omnia fieri debeant. Illos autem qui capti fuerant usque ad inducias conductas in vinculis retinent; ducem abire permittunt. Quo abeunte, irruerunt super occisos, et obliti omnis humanitatis, omnia corpora vestimentis exuerunt, ut nec pannum quidem relinquerent quo verenda tegerentur. De his quoque haec feruntur, quod quaedam corpora horum longe in altum ab incolis propter foetorem expulsa, ab avibus et bestiis et marinis feris, quae cupidissimae humanorum cadaverum sunt, illaesa et intacta permanserint. Et dum iterum ad litus per aestum proicerentur, per duo miliaria aut amplius candor eorum visus est, quasi litus candidissimis linteis esset expansum. Hoc quoque in eius rei testimonium dicatur, quod 30

Dec. 1. novem corpora illorum Kalendis Decembris, simul adhuc conligata, in quadam ripa sunt reperta, ita integra ut pene nulla putredo in eis investigari posset, quamvis caedes 4. Kal. Augusti facta fuisset.

## 22. De clerico Iudeo facto.

Lib. I. Superius me promisi relaturum de illo apostata, qui relicta religione clericatus in 35  
cap. 7. perfidorum voraginem incidit Iudeorum. Set in ipsa promissione exsolvenda totus contremesco, et horrentibus pilis capitis terrore concutior, diabolum potuisse homini persuadere, ut tantas sordes ausus esset contra Christum et sanctos eius iactasse. Scripserat enim funestis litteris infelicissimus ille:

## 23. Scripta ipsius apostatae.

Quid contradicis iusto insipiens? Lege Abacuc prophetam, in quo Deus dixit: „Ego sum Deus et non mutor.“ Si ille secundum vestram maledictam fidem mutaretur et mulieri commisceretur, principium verborum suorum non esset veritas. Dixit Dominus ad Moysen: „Non enim videbit me homo et vivere potest.“ Quem filium hominis praetermisit? Dicit enim David propheta: „Nolite confidere in principibus, in filiis hominum, in quibus non est salus;“ et Ezechiel: „Maledictus homo, qui confidit in homine et ponit carnem brachium suum, erit enim quasi miricae in deserto, et non videbit fructum, cum venerit bonum.“ Quid contra hincis animal? Quem filium hominis praetermisit? Num Petrum et Iohannem atque Martynum et alios demones, quos sanctos vocatis? In omnibus locis legitur Deus Israel, et non est Deus gentium. Ubi est vester sensus? Dicit David: „Memor erit Dominus in seculum testamenti sui, verbi, quod mandavit in mille generationes, quod disposuit ad Abraham, et iuramenti sui ad Ysaac,“ hoc est lex sua sancta et circumcisio, quam dedit Moysi servo suo.



24. Heinrici epistola ad Wecelimum.<sup>a</sup>

Respondere calumpniae tuae, o Iudee incredule, quam ex blasphemio ore in Christum eiusque sanctos nunc noviter evomisti, cuique in militia christiana instructo facile esset, si non facilius esset, saxa in mollitiem posse converti, quam corda vestra ad recipiendam  
 5 veritatem discindi. Quippe cum et illa auctorem suum morientem scissa recognoverunt<sup>b</sup>, et tamen adhuc insensibilitas cordis vestri, quamvis elisa, quamvis prostrata, in duricia inveteratae iniquitatis perseveret, et licet per coaeternam Dei sapientiam, qua mundus et mirabiliter est conditus et mirabilius reformatus, obstructum est os loquentium iniqua, et iniquitas vestra mentita sit sibi, toto seculo verbisque prophetarum et exemplis sanctorum cluceat,  
 10 quam sit dampnata infidelitatis vestrae caeca impietas, et quam glorificata assumptae in Christo mortalitatis infirmitas: tamen, quoniam adhuc non desperat de machinationibus suis Iudaicae malignitatis obstinata improbitas, et ad confutandam christianam religionem scelerato fastu innumurat, et per exempla patrum dictaque prophetarum stantem florentemque ecclesiam ipsa iam tociens devicta et omnino prostrata iterum ad certamen  
 15 provocat, aggrediamur<sup>c</sup> eos, dante et iuvante ipsa Dei sapientia, verbo Dei, Dei filio, eoque primum lapide lapidea corda feriamus, quem Daniel propheta, ut dicitis vester, immo noster, vidit sine manibus de monte concidi et implere universum mundum. De quo etiam et David dicit: „Eructavit cor meum verbum bonum.“ Idemque: „Dominus dixit ad me: Filius meus es tu, ego hodie genui te.“ Idemque: „Omnia in sapientia fecisti.“ Et Salomon:  
 20 „Dominus possedit me initio viarum suarum.“ Set quoniam non de aeterna Christi nativitate, in qua semper fuit patri aequalis, set de temporali, in qua, sicut David clamat, minoratus est paulo minus ab angelis, cum Iudeo nobis sermo est, audiamus quid dicat, et obiectioni eius consequenter respondeamus. Dicis Iudee: „Quare contradicis iusto insipiens?“ Primum velim mihi respondeas, quem dicis iustum, te aut prophetam? Si prophetam, assentior,  
 25 tamen in eo, quod illi me non contradicere ostendam, te mentitum esse iure convincam. Si vero te dicis iustum, quem constat prius esse mentitum, nescio quo pacto obtinebis iusticiam, quem mendacii polluit macula. Neque legis tuae congruenter simul poteris esse assertor et praevaricator dicentis: „Non loqueris contra proximum tuum falsum testimonium.“ Quod si, uti praemisi, prophetae non contradicam, cum ipse pro me dicat, et  
 30 quae tu tibi contra me comparaveris arma, his tibi letalia infligam vulnera; quoniam intulisti proximo tuo falsum testimonium contra legis praeceptum, legis incurres reatum; reatus autem trahet te ad poenam; poena vero perducet te usque ad mortem. Set videamus sequentia. Infelix Iudee<sup>d</sup>, quem vocas insipientem? Non nos credentes in Crucifixum, qui factus quidem est vobis lapis offensionis et petra<sup>e</sup> scandali? Quoniam quidem  
 35 „lapidem quem reprobaverunt aedificantes, hic factus est in caput anguli. A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris.“ Ergo nos insipientes, et vos sapientes estis? Tamen per stulticiam praedicationis iam mundi superbia<sup>f</sup> cecidit, et in frontibus regum crucis videtis tropaeum. Quia quae stulta mundi sunt, elegit Deus, ut confundat fortia.  
 40 Ac per hoc libenter amplectimur stulticiam crucis Christi, quoniam credimus nos perventuros ad gloriam Christi. Set quid surdo narro fabulam? aut quid caeco appono lumen? vel Iudeo euangelium praedico? Redeamus ad sequentia. Inquis: „Lege Abacuc prophetam,“ non in quo, ut tu dicis, set per quem ipse Deus dicit: „Ego sum Deus et non mutor.“ Praemisi tibi, Iudee, testimonio Abacuc nullatenus me contradicere, et non solum Abacuc, set et omnium prophetarum et legis documenta me dico suscipere; quia eum colo, qui non  
 45 venit legem solvere set adimplere. Dixit Deus per Abacuc: „Ego sum Deus et non mutor;“ et hoc firmiter credit christiana religio. Quod vero subsecutus es: „Si ille secundum vestram maledictam fidem mutaretur et mulieri commisceretur, principium verborum suorum non esset veritas;“ quid<sup>g</sup> mirum est, cum caecus sis, si non vides lucem illam, quam non vident, nisi qui mundo sunt corde; immo cum etiam more frenetici contra  
 50 medicum resiliat, et sanare te volenti maledicta et convitia<sup>h</sup> obponas? Tam enim excelsa et profunda sunt incarnationis Christi misteria, quomodo Verbum Dei incommutabiliter apud Deum Patrem semper manens, carnem de virgine sumpsit naturamque nostram suae univit, quod nemo haec capit, nisi qui spiritualiter sapit; nemo sapit, nisi Deo donante

Dan.  
2, 34.  
Psal.  
44, 2.  
2, 7.  
103, 24.  
Prov.  
8, 22.  
Psal.  
8, 6.

Exod.  
20, 16.

Math.  
21, 42.

1. Cor.  
1, 27.

a) rubricam adieci; v. supra I, 7. b) recognouert c. c) Agrediamur c. c\*) Hic alique plures versus nonnisi prima  
 55 cuiusque vocis littera scripti sunt. d) iudex 1. e) petri c. f) sapientia corr. superbia c. g) qđ c. h) cumuita c.



Isa. 7, 9. *capiat; quo donante credit qui nondum capit. „Nisi enim credideritis“, inquit propheta, „non intellegitis.“ Ergo credenti colligitur meritum, videnti reddetur praemium; quoniam si vides, non est fides; quamdiu enim peregrinamur in huius mundi tenebris, fide mundantur corda eorum, qui Deum visuri sunt. Hac itaque fide, qua Dei filius etiam hominis filius praedicatur, quosdam vestrorum mundandos longe ante Deus praedixerat per prophetam 5*

Act. 2, 17. *Ezechiel, dicens: „Et erit in novissimis diebus, effundam de spiritu meo super omnem carnem, et effundam super vos aquam mundam, et mundabimini ab omnibus inquinamentis vestris, et ab universis idolis vestris mundabo vos, et dabo vobis cor novum, et spiritum novum ponam in medio vestri, et auferam cor lapideum de carne vestra, et dabo vobis cor carneum“, et caetera; quibus evidenter ostenditur, in quibusdam vestrum abstulisse Deus 10*

Ezec. 36, 25, 26. *de cordibus velamen, ut spiritu Dei agente fide praepararentur corda multorum ad suscipiendam aquam salutarem, in emundationem omnium peccatorum; quosdam vero obcaecari, et infidelitatis errore remansuros; sicut per alium prophetam scriptum est: „Excaecans excaecabo corda eorum, ne videant lumen.“ Unde, ó Iudee, cum tu palpabilibus tenebris obcaecatus sis, quomodo te putas posse advertere, qualiter Deus sine ulla sui commutatione 15*

Isa. 6, 10. *mulieri, non ut tu, perfide, garris, commisceretur, set de carne mulieris corpus sibi fabricaret, quoniam divinitas verbi Dei in unitatem sibi personae assumeret, ita ut nec divinitas in carnis passibilitatem, nec humanitas in divinitatem transiret, essetque tamen et filius Dei homo propter assumptum hominem, et filius hominis deus propter assumptum Deum. Praedixerit tibi propheta: „Nisi credideritis, non intellegitis.“ Crede, et intellegis; et roga 20*

Isa. 7, 14. *Deum, ut tollat velamen, ut auferat cor lapideum. Rogamus etiam et nos pro vobis, invitis vobis. Set quoniam Iudeus nec rationem recipit nec praedicationem, nisi Deus<sup>a</sup> tollat velamen — scio enim eius cervicem durissimam —, occurramus ei oraculis prophetarum, ut vel sic credat, vel sic confusus recedat. Quod<sup>b</sup> carnem Christus<sup>c</sup> de virgine esset sumpturus, praedixit Esaias: „Ecce virgo concipiet in utero, et pariet filium, et 25*

Isa. 11, 1, 2. *vocabitur nomen eius Emmanuel,“ id est nobiscum Deus. Quod de tribu Iuda esset nasciturus et spiritu Dei replendus, idem ipse ait: „Exiet virga de radice Iesse et flos de radice eius ascendet, et requiescet super eam spiritus Domini, spiritus sapientiae et intellectus, spiritus consilii et fortitudinis, spiritus scientiae et pietatis, et replebit<sup>d</sup> eam spiritus timoris Domini.“ Quod inter homines conversari deberet, praedixit Iheremias: „Hic Deus noster 30*

Bar. 3, 36, 38. *et non aestimabitur alius praeter eum“, et post pauca: „Post haec in terris visus est, et cum hominibus conversatus est.“ Quod pro nobis pati deberet, item Esaias: „Vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras.“ Et multa alia de illo protulerunt, quibus aperte edocetur, omnem dominicam conversationem inter nos a tempore incarnationis usque ad ascensionis concordare testimoniis illorum. Quod contra haec dicis, scelestes? nisi forte opponas mendacium, 35*

Ioh. 8, 44. *quod ex patre tuo diabolo est; sicut idem dominus noster Iesus Christus dixit: „Vos ex patre diabolo estis, et opera patris vestri facitis.“ Ecce quoniam ratione et exemplis responsum est tibi breviter, quod Deus immutabilis permanet, et tamen carnem sumpsit ex virgine. Nunc ad sequentia redeamus. „Dixit Deus ad Moysen: „Non enim videbit me homo et vivere potest.“ Hic interrogo, Iudee, qui semper sequeris occidentem litteram et non vivificantem spiritum, quomodo 40*

Matth. 5, 8. *putas posse hominem videre Deum, an non posse putas? Si posse, utrum corporalibus oculis, an mente? Si corporalibus<sup>e</sup> oculis, absurdum satis videtur; siquidem cum ille incircumscrip- tus spiritus nec mole distenditur, nec loco continetur, nec tempore movetur, atque omnia late patet, quam infirmus sit humanus intuitus. Si mente, non videtur impossi- 45*

Ps. 104, 4. *bile, si tamen munda. Promissum nobis enim est: „Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.“ Si non posse, quomodo erit verum, quia dictante veritate David dixit: „Quaerite Dominum et confirmamini, quaerite faciem eius semper.“ Num non hominibus loquebatur David, quorum mentes ad exquirendam Domini faciem excitabat? Num quidnam veritas et praeco veritatis dissentient? Non plane quidem intellegendis. Item quaero, si videre homo Deum possit et vivere, annon? Si videre potest et vivere, quomodo erit verum, 50*

Gen. 32, 20. *quod Deus dixit: „Non enim videbit me homo et vivere potest.“ Si vero non potest, ut hoc verum esse possit, quomodo erit verum, quod Iacob dixit: „Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem, et salva facta est anima mea;“ et Esaias: „Vidi Dominum Sabaoth oculis meis.“*

Isa. 6, 5. *Quomodo praedicabunt contraria et veritas et prophetae veritatis? Set quoniam stoliditas*

a) n. D. bis scripta e. b) Qd e. c) xpo e. d) repleuit e. e) manu 2.



vestra in vetustate litterae et non in novitate spiritus ambulabat, ex eo caeci incurritis offendiculum, unde luminis possetis habere ducatum. Ac per hoc nos, qui aeterni luminis suscepimus veritatem, Iudaicae caecitatis discindamus errorem, ut et fidelibus mentibus propositae quaestionis pateat veritas, et illi audientes non intellegant, et videntes<sup>a</sup> caeci fiant.

5 Dixit Deus ad Moysen: „Non enim videbit me homo et vivere potest“, quod ita intellegi potest: Quamdiu homo in isto mortali corpore, quod corrumpitur et aggravat animam, vivit, Deum videre non potest sicuti est in natura divinitatis, nec corporeis oculis nec ipsa etiam mente, quamvis munda et ab omni pene vitiorum labe purgata. Quae etsi in divina iam sit contemplatione, minus tamen habet ad summam, quod aliquam maculam

10 contrahit ex mortalitate, et ideo homo Deum non potest videre et vivere, quousque secundum hominem vivit, et secundum Deum<sup>b</sup> minime, et sibi non moritur, ut vivat Deo. Set quomodo in regione mortis, ut ita dicam, mortaliter vivens, Deum, qui vera vita est, et homo videret aut quaereret, nisi misericorditer inclinata vita ad mortuos descendisset? Mortui enim eramus, ex quo a facie Dei ex illa prima praevaricatione in Adam omnes cecidimus.

15 Quapropter, miserata mortalitatem nostram<sup>c</sup> diabolica fraude deceptam, ad nos vita velata carne descendit, quia non aliter inaccessibilem lucem infirmitas carnis ferre valeret, nisi eadem vita carne se velaret, per oppositionem carnis monstraret nobis lucem Deitatis, quod quasi iam factum Esaias<sup>e</sup> ante praedixit: „Habitantibus in regione umbrae mortis lux orta est eis.“ Hanc ergo lucem uterque Iacob et Esaias non corporalibus oculis, set spiritua-

20 libus vidit. Atque ex hac visione in vocem exultationis alter<sup>d</sup> eorum prorumpit, dicens: „Vidi Dominum facie ad faciem, et salva facta est anima mea.“ Intellexerat enim, Deum dixisse ad Moysen: „Non enim videbit me homo et vivere potest“; quasi de salute animae suae desperasset, si non per prophetiae misterium<sup>e</sup> Deum, qui ab homine videri non poterat, per assumptionem carnis videri posse cognosceret. Unde quia vidit, clamavit: „Vidi Domi-

25 num facie ad faciem, et salva facta est anima mea“, et inde spem salutis assumpsit; unde per assumptae mortalitatis speciem salutem, expectationem mundi, per carnis suae probationem venturam mundo cognovit. Quod etiam in benedictione filiorum praedicendo expressit, dicens: „Non auferetur sceptrum de Iuda et dux de femoribus eius, donec veniat, qui mittendus est, et ipse erit expectatio gentium.“ De quo etiam Esaias ait: „Super quem continebunt reges os suum; ipsum gentes deprecabuntur.“ Nunc quid<sup>f</sup> contradicis, Iudee, cur

30 vocas nos animalia? Ecce nos animalia eius, de quo dixit Abacuc: „In medio duum animalium cognosceris.“ Non, ut tu improperas, hiscimus, set ut rationalia animalia respondemus. Quod vero prosecutus es, dixisse David: „Nolite confidere in principibus, in filiis hominum, in quibus non est salus“, ac per hoc nullum filium hominis praetermisisse, ut ex prophetae testimonio iniuriam clam videaris facere Christo — set aperte servos eius blasphemias, quasi non iniuria servi ad contemptum respiciat Domini —, respondemus ad

35 haec dicentes cum propheta: „Muta fiant labia dolosa, quae locuntur adversus iustum iniquitatem in superbia et in abusione.“ Et spem nostram in hominem non ponimus set in Deum et in Christum eius, quem Deum et hominem veraciter credimus, eumque Deum

40 et Dei filium esse, prophetarum vestrorum<sup>g</sup> testimoniis comprobavimus<sup>h</sup>. Petrum vero et Iohannem atque Martinum non demones, set expulsores demonum fideliter confitemur, et hoc verum esse certis indicis usque hodie cernimus, non in eis spem nostram ponentes, set spem nostram apud Deum eorum intercessionibus commendantes. Quod vero dixisti: „In omnibus locis legitur Deus Israel et non Deus gentium“, refellit te Deus per David, dicens

45 ad filium: „Postula a me, et dabo tibi gentes hereditatem tuam et possessionem tuam terminos terrae“; idemque ad Abraham: „In semine tuo benedicentur omnes tribus terrae.“ Si vero gentes hereditas Dei sunt, nescio, qualiter non sit Deus earum, cuius hereditas sunt. In hoc namque, quod sub requisitione nostri sensus innectis, memorem fieri dominum testamenti sui, verbi, quod mandavit in mille generationes, quod disposuit ad Abraham, propinquius tuo noster

50 sensus veritati concordat. Quomodo hic intellegis: „in mille generationes?“ Si replicas generationes ab exordio mundi, non invenies mille. Set quia in scripturis sacris saepe finitum pro infinito ponitur, mille generationes omnes generationes accipiendae sunt, ut consequenter verum sit iuramentum ad Abraham dispositum: „Quod in semine tuo benedicentur omnes gentes“, id est in Christo.

Isa.  
9, 2.Gen.  
49, 10.  
Isa.  
52, 15.  
11, 10.Ps. 30,  
19, 20.Ps. 2,  
8.  
Gen.  
22, 18.

a) uidentibus corr. uidentes c. b) vox ab Eckh. inserta. c) nra. c c\*) esaias c. d) aliter 1. e) testimonium 1.  
55 f) qđ c. g) uestrarum c. h) cum prob. c.



### III

## An eleventh-century exchange of letters between a Christian and a Jew

*A determining factor in the relations between Jews and Christians in the middle ages was the attitude adopted by these two groups towards each other's religious beliefs and customs. One of the most important types of sources we have to gain insight into these attitudes is the reports of disputations held between Christians and Jews. The significance of one such disputation will be examined here: the correspondence between Wecelin, a convert to Judaism, and Henry, a court cleric of Henry II of Germany, contained in the well-known De diversitate temporum of Alpert of Metz. In the course of this examination new ideas will be offered on the method of study necessary for a correct interpretation of Jewish-Christian polemics. An annotated translation of the exchange of letters between Wecelin and Henry follows.\**

### I

The existence within Christendom of settlements of Jews was always felt by the medieval

Church to pose a challenge to the validity of its teachings. The status of Israel was all the more complex since Christianity had developed out of Judaism. As for the Jews, they were vastly outnumbered and were eventually engaged in a ceaseless struggle to maintain their identity in the face of the growing influence of the Church. If a full picture is ever to be drawn of the relations between Christians and Jews in the middle ages more needs to be learnt of what these two groups knew about each other's religious beliefs and customs, what they thought of them and to what extent they felt threatened by each other's conceptions.

One of the most important types of source that can be used to gain such knowledge is the disputations between Christians and Jews. But these sources must be used with caution; for not all *disputationes* handed down to us reflect discussions that actually took place. These are nothing more than treatises on the subject of the Jewish-Christian debate, moulded into the form of a dialogue. A good example of such a 'fictitious' disputation is Peter Damian's *Antilogus contra Judaeum et dialogus inter Judaeum requirentem et Christianum a contrario respondentem* (1068–72) in which Damian shows by the questions he has the Jew ask that he knows little of Jewish customs in post-biblical times (MPL 145:41–68). However, among them are reports of discussions that were really held, and they offer us the opportunity of seeing an actual exchange of ideas between Christians and Jews on the subject of their faiths. In these 'real' disputations one must take care to separate, as well as one can, the elements that have been added by the medieval editor from what was actually said.

One such disputation is an early eleventh-



### III

century correspondence between the cleric Wecelin, who had become a Jew, and Henry, a court cleric of Henry II of Germany, tucked away in the *De diversitate temporum* of Alpert of Metz. How Alpert came into possession of this exchange of letters and why he included it in his chronicle on the history of the German Empire remain mysteries. Alpert is the only source we have that mentions the conversion of Wecelin and supplies us both with the letter he wrote attacking his former religion and with the answer to it by a faithful son of the Church.

In the following pages I shall examine this correspondence, try to identify the persons in question and to find out when it took place and where. After giving a rough sketch of the nature of disputations between Jews and Christians in general, I shall examine the contents of these letters and try to determine to what extent they are a useful source for gaining information on how Jews and Christians debated with each other about their respective beliefs in the eleventh century. In an appendix, an annotated translation of the letters will be given.<sup>1</sup>

### II

*De diversitate temporum* is especially known as a unique source for the history of the northern Low Countries. Highlights it offers include the *vita* of Ansfried, bishop of Utrecht (995–1010); the power struggle between Count Wichman and Count Balderik, the husband of the Lady Macbeth-like Adela (Romein 1932:34); a description of the morals and customs of the merchants of Tiel; and the battle of the Merwede in 1018, in which the imperial army under the

command of Godfrey of Lower Lorraine was defeated by Count Diederik III of Holland. Alpert dedicated his work to Burchard, bishop of Worms (1000–25).

We are introduced to Wecelin in the seventh chapter of the first book of *De diversitate temporum*. In this chapter Alpert relates that the cleric Wecelin, a former clerk of Duke Conrad, became a Jew in the days of King Henry. The king was horrified by his apostasy; he commanded one of the clerics at his court, who also bore the name of Henry, to refute the words that Wecelin had written against the Christian faith after his conversion. In chapter twenty-two of book two, Alpert returns to the subject. In chapter twenty-three he gives the contents of Wecelin's fulmination against his original creed; the following chapter contains the answer the cleric Henry composed to this by order of the king. The reason Alpert saved the disputation between Wecelin and Henry for the very end of his *De diversitate temporum* is that he thought it too lengthy to include it in the first part of his work where he broaches the subject of the apostate cleric.<sup>2</sup> A number of questions immediately arise. Who are the persons concerned? When did Wecelin's conversion, or should we say apostasy, take place? And finally, where did it happen?

The Wecelin incident is mentioned by Alpert for the first time in book one, between chapters six and eight. Chapter six tells of the appearance of a comet, famine and mass mortality. These *calamitates* took place in 1006. Chapter eight speaks of the Norse attack on Tiel; this also occurred in 1006. The first book of *De diversitate temporum* was, in all probability, chronologically arranged by Alpert; one can therefore assume that Wecelin became a Jew in 1006.



If we date Wecelin's conversion in 1006 the king in question is Henry II (1002-24). The Duke Conrad of whom Alpert speaks is in all likelihood Conrad of Carinthia, the uncle of the future Emperor Conrad II.<sup>3</sup> The former Conrad was duke of Carinthia from 1004 to 1011, possessing a complex of allodial lands, fiefs and privileges in Rhenish Franconia. There Worms was the centre of his power. He was even called duke of Worms although no such duchy actually existed in this area (Bresslau 1879:5-6; Waitz 1955:98).

Locating the place where Wecelin abandoned the teachings of the Church is a problem. Alpert is the only source we have on Wecelin and he gives us nothing definite in this matter. One can only surmise that Wecelin probably became a Jew in one of the territories ruled by his sometime employer Conrad, that is Carinthia or Rhenish Franconia. The choice between these two is relatively easy. We know of a number of flourishing Jewish communities along this stretch of the River Rhine: Worms, Speyer, Mainz. Wecelin could easily have come into contact with Jews in any of these cities and adopted the Jewish faith. Of Jews in Carinthia we know nothing before the year 1128 (*Germania Judaica* 1934:140).

It is a common belief that Mainz is the place where Wecelin became a Jew (for example, Graetz 1894:245-6; Aronius 1902: nos. 144, 147). This belief is based on the supposition that some connection exists between the apostasy of Wecelin and the expulsion of the Jews from Mainz, which was probably decreed by Henry II in 1012. The expulsion is only mentioned in the *Annales Quedlinburgenses: expulsio Judeorum facta est a rege in Moguntia*.<sup>4</sup> Scholars assume

that the expulsion was decreed either as an immediate act of retaliation upon the Jewish community for the fact that Wecelin had become a Jew – and consequently date his conversion somewhat later than we have done (Aronius 1902: no. 144; Geissler 1976: 37) – or as a deferred reaction to the incident (Graetz 1894:245-6; Blumenkranz 1960: 168; 1963:247 n. 2). The apostasy of Wecelin would have caused the ill-feeling prerequisite for such an edict. Blumenkranz even suggests that Wecelin had gathered a following after his conversion in 1006 and that the decree of the king was meant to put a halt to his campaign against the Church.<sup>5</sup> But why Henry should have expelled the Jews from Mainz, and how long the expulsion lasted, remain obscure. Graetz was of the opinion that one can deduce from the lamentations of R. Gershom ben Yehudah and R. Simeon ben Isaac that persecutions against the Jews did take place in Mainz at that time (1894:246). Tykocinski, however, considers the wording of their poems too unspecific to draw such conclusions. R. Gershom and R. Simeon complain in general that Jews are being harassed; neither time nor place is mentioned. Furthermore, Tykocinski shows that the date of a Ketubbah (Jewish marriage contract), 30 January 1013, proves that Jews were living in Mainz in that year. As the *Quedlinburg annals* do not mention that the measure of Henry II was revoked in 1013, Tykocinski suspects that only a segment of the Jewish population was expelled from the city in 1012 (1916:2). He sees no connection between Wecelin's actions and the persecution (1916:4-5). Baron suggests the possibility that the persecution should be seen as a delayed reaction to alleged Jewish involvement in the persecu-



### III

tions of Christians in the Fatimid empire (1957a:66–7; see also his interesting remarks 271–2 n. 85).

It seems to me that the assumption that a connection exists between Wecelin's conversion and the persecution in Mainz in 1012 is unwarranted. We have been able to show that Wecelin was most likely converted in 1006; moreover, the reasoning that Mainz must have been the place where Wecelin became Jewish because the Jews were expelled from there afterwards, is a clear example of a circular argument. We can go no further than to hazard the guess that Wecelin embraced the Jewish faith in one of the Jewish centres in the Rhineland.

One more point needs to be raised. Could Wecelin have remained in Germany as an apostate cleric? Alpert again refrains from giving us the necessary information to answer this question, but I would suggest that it seems highly unlikely that he could have, especially if we take into account the outrage he caused by attacking the principal teachings of the Church. We can be almost certain that he fled soon after his conversion. Whither, one can only conjecture. Moorish Spain is a possibility. That, at least, is where Bodo, a cleric at the court of Louis the Pious, went when he decided to become a Jew (Blumenkranz 1960:48–9; 1963:184ff.).

Before passing on to a discussion of Jewish-Christian disputations in general and the contents of that between Wecelin and Henry in particular, I would like to call attention to N. Golb's theory on the identity of Wecelin, a theory characterized by bold and original thinking (1963/4).

Golb believes that Wecelin was a Slovene living in Carinthia, who became a Jew at the end of 1005, as a result of his fright at the

appearance of a comet. After writing a polemic against the Christian faith which in due time reached the royal court and was refuted by one of the court clerics at the order of the king, Wecelin fled from the German Empire to Syria, in the spring of 1006 or 1007. There, he preached his newly acquired religion. People came to find him to try to convince him to return to the Christian fold. Wecelin refused and went on to Damascus where he was received into the Jewish community. On the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles he journeyed together with the Jews of Damascus to Jerusalem. Persecuted there by the Christians on account of his past, Wecelin decided to flee to Egypt. A letter of recommendation was given to him for the Jewish community of Fustat in Cairo. After his arrival in Cairo we lose all trace of our convert (1963/4: 101–2).

Golb was able to reconstruct the history of Wecelin in this fashion because he saw a connection between the Wecelin incident reported by Alpert of Metz and a letter found in the Cairo Genizah. The document is a letter of recommendation addressed to an important person in the Jewish community of Fustat and concerns a proselyte who escaped to Syria, preached there against Christendom, was accepted into the Jewish community in Damascus and finally wished to go to Egypt because he was being persecuted by Christians in Jerusalem, where he had come to celebrate the feast with his brothers from Damascus. Golb dates this missive – not altogether convincingly – to between 1002 and 1009. Because Golb is of the opinion that Wecelin became a Jew in 1005, that it would have been impossible for him to remain in the German Empire



after having attacked the tenets of the Church, and because all Latin sources are subsequently silent about him, he concludes that it is very possible that Wecelin and the proselyte of the letter are one and the same person (1963/4:77-87; 101).

There is, however, no reason to suppose that Wecelin was a Slovene living in Carinthia. Golb makes this assumption because he believes Wecelin to be a Slovenian name and because many Slovenes lived in Carinthia (1963/4:101). But Wecelin is a common name, as one can easily see by glancing at the name index of such contemporary sources as, for example, the chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg or the *Vita Meinwerki* (Trillmich 1957:514; Tenckhoff 1921:161). And even if Wecelin originally came from Carinthia, he could still have travelled with Duke Conrad to Rhenish Franconia. Furthermore, the dating of the Genizah letter is somewhat doubtful; the proselyte is not named in the letter and the letter does not mention that the proselyte in question came from the German Empire. Nevertheless, Golb's attempt to link Hebrew and Latin material is courageous, for the study of Hebrew documents can often contribute to our understanding of the Latin sources.

### III

The disputation between Wecelin and Henry takes its place among the many disputations held between Christians and Jews on the principles of their respective religions from the earliest times of the history of the Church. Why did Jews and Christians partake in these discussions? What goal did they hope to achieve? Was it

to convert the opposite party to their own religious beliefs or was it rather to strengthen their own faith and that of their co-religionists? In short, what was the spiritual atmosphere in which these discussions of religion took place?

Both Christians and Jews are convinced that they profess the one and only true religion. Natural to such a religious conception is the desire to convert those having disparate beliefs to one's own. Bernhard Blumenkranz has shown us that this also holds true of Jews; at least until the end of the eleventh century, Jews did create proselytes. Not only would they receive into their midst those who expressed the wish to become Jewish, they indeed stimulated such conversions. Only later, owing to outside pressure, did they cease to be willing to do so (Blumenkranz 1960:159ff.).

What complicates the attitudes of Jews and Christians towards each other's beliefs is the fact that Judaism and Christianity originate from the same source of tradition. Jews and Christians alike consider themselves the descendants of the people of Israel, whose history is recorded in the books of the Old Testament. It is the radically different interpretations given by Jews and Christians to this descent that indeed explains a great deal of the discussion that took place between protagonists of both religions (Katz 1961:3).

The Jews viewed themselves as the physical descendants of the Israelites of the Bible; they were thus, even as their forefathers had been, the children of the covenant, the Chosen People. In their eyes, Christians took no part in this covenant (Katz 1961:3).

The Christians did not deny the physical



### III

descent of the Jews from the biblical Israel but attached a negative sense to it. In their eyes, the covenant between God and Israel had ceased to exist after the coming of Jesus Christ; God had made a new covenant with those, Jews and Gentiles alike, who recognized Jesus as the Messiah (Katz 1961:4). Their descent from Israel was therefore not physical but spiritual; they worshipped Him whose coming had been prophesied in the Old Testament. They, and not the Jews, were now the Chosen People.

This Christian attitude had far-reaching consequences, for in this line of thinking it was a prerequisite that the Old Testament be interpreted in the light of the New. On the one hand all the promises made by God to Israel were fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Christ; on the other hand this fulfilment could only be comprehended through the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Church was, in other words, dependent on its interpretation of the Old Testament for a proper understanding of itself and its teachings (Lampe 1969:155-7).

Because this meant that the Old Testament must be a book about Christ, this interpretation became to a great extent allegorical. Every passage of the Scriptures was expounded in such a way that it could be applied to Christ and His Church. According to this reasoning, everything the Israelites had experienced had taken place solely as an illustration of what would happen in the future (Lampe 1969:164-5).

But besides expounding the Bible allegorically, the Church also used the figurative method. Many passages of the Old Testament, especially those of a juridical nature, containing for instance the commandment of circumcision or the dietary

laws, were given a figurative meaning. The Church was more or less compelled to do this in order to justify its detachment from these commandments. That the Christian position on this matter did not go unchallenged, even within the Church, is illustrated by the fact that heretics often insisted that Christians should observe all, or at least part, of these laws. Christianity was, as Blumenkranz so aptly puts it, engaged in an "internal . . . fight to overcome the Jewish inheritance within the Church" (1964:125).

A knowledge of the Christian methods of expounding the Holy Scriptures is of paramount significance for an understanding of the Jewish-Christian debate, for it is fundamentally opposed to the methods used by the rabbis. The rabbis insisted on the importance of the literal meaning of the Bible; the literal sense was never allowed to be superseded by an allegorical or figurative interpretation. As the Church increasingly concentrated itself on the spiritual sense of the Bible, the rabbis expounded it all the more literally. They did this with two express intentions, namely: 1. to present each generation with an interpretation of the Bible; and 2. (more important in the context of our study) to defend the Jewish faith against Christendom and Islam, the two religions that claimed to have taken the place of Judaism (Rosenthal 1969:252-4).

The need the rabbis felt to defend Judaism against the two new dominant religions has to be seen in the context of the situation in which Jews lived. In Western Europe, the area we are concerned with, their position was unsure. They comprised a small religious minority in society. They were completely dependent for their existence on the Christian authorities of the place where they lived.



These were not always willing to protect or capable of protecting them against the rest of the population. The Church was steadily strengthening its grip on society. In the eleventh century – the time of the correspondence between Wecelin and Henry – heathendom had more or less disappeared; all spheres of society were permeated with some sort of Christian ideology. The Jews were the only group who steadfastly refused to submit to the Church.

On the basis of what has been said, the following conclusions can be drawn: up to and including the eleventh century, the urge to proselytize was a factor in disputations between Christians and Jews. For the Christians it was, of course, easier to put this desire into effect: they were in the majority and had political power.

On the other hand, one can say that the feeling of a need to consolidate one's own religious beliefs must have been equally strong or even stronger. The problem the Church had in absorbing its Jewish heritage had to be solved. It was to the immediate advantage of the Church that clear answers were formulated to the questions, originating in Jewish tradition, that were being asked about its teachings.

The Jews, on their side, had to do everything in their power to be able to resist the increasing pressure put on them by the Christian world in which they lived. As the Church grew more influential, the possibility for them to gain proselytes became continuously smaller.

The motives of Jews and Christians to engage themselves in disputations about each other's religion must therefore have been a combination of the hope of making converts and the need felt to consolidate

their own religious convictions. The latter must have weighed more and more heavily for the Jewish disputant as the position of his people grew more and more precarious. The incentive for the Christian partaking in any particular discussion will have depended on the circumstances in which it took place.

Thus, certainly until the end of the eleventh century, a spiritual climate existed in which, notwithstanding the tension involved, some sort of free discussion was possible. Disputations in which Jews were forced to partake in order to be humiliated in public do not take place in this period.<sup>6</sup>

The themes discussed between Christians and Jews were almost always the same. They can be arranged in three categories:

1. Is the Law of Moses still valid? The question arises from the problems the Church had with its Jewish heritage. The debate leads to a discussion on the literal and spiritual sense of the Bible.
2. Is Jesus the Messiah? This question leads to a discussion of the incarnation, the Trinity and the monotheism of Christendom.
3. Have the Christians replaced the Jews as the Chosen People? As a parallel to this question a comparison is drawn between the minority position of the Jews and the majority position of the Christians (Blumenkranz 1960:214–89; 1948:134–47).

The arguments used by the disputants are based on *auctoritas*, that is to say, the Bible. Disputations between Christians and Jews are actually a string of citations from the Bible. As the Old Testament is common ground to both parties, it is used more often. However, Christian disputants do include



### III

in the Old Testament books considered apocryphal by the Jews (for example Baruch, The Wisdom of Solomon). From the eleventh century onwards *ratio* starts playing a greater role alongside *auctoritas*: an attempt is made to place arguments in a logical-philosophical framework (Blumenkranz 1960:217–20). This will be apparent when the contents of Henry's letter are examined.

### IV

Although a translation of the disputation between Wecelin and Henry follows in an appendix, the complexity of the material does, I feel, call for a short summary and some explanatory remarks here.

In the conspicuously brief letter of Wecelin – I shall return to this shortly – the above mentioned classical themes of Jewish-Christian polemics are broached:

1. *The incarnation.* This cannot have taken place because God does not change (Malachi – not Habakkuk, as Wecelin, and in fact Henry too, wrongly assume – 3:6). If Jesus were God, then God would have changed into a human being. Furthermore, no man can see God and live (Ex. 33:20). People saw Christ, therefore He is not God, but was just an ordinary human being.
2. *The Chosen People.* God has made His covenant with Israel and not with the nations, that is to say, not with the Christians. The Christians have consequently not supplanted the Jews as the Chosen People. The covenant between God and Israel remains till a thousand generations (Ps. 104(5):8–9). This covenant is the Holy Law; the sign of it is circumcision; in other words:

#### 3. *The Law of Moses is still valid.*

In addition to these themes, Wecelin launches an attack on the veneration of saints by Christians. According to David (Ps. 145:2–3 (146:3)) one may not put one's trust in any man; Christians do this, for they worship saints. As attested by Ezekiel (actually Jeremiah 17:5–6) they are consequently damned. Saints are evil spirits. Blumenkranz claims that this is the first instance that the veneration of saints is brought up for discussion in a Jewish-Christian disputation.<sup>7</sup>

Henry begins his reply with a tirade against Wecelin in particular and Jews in general. The Jews had acknowledged Jesus to be God at the crucifixion (Matt. 27:54: "Now the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: indeed this was the Son of God"), nevertheless they persist in their disbelief. And although the synagogue has so manifestly been vanquished, the Jews continue to challenge the Church to discussions. Henry then takes up the fight, strengthened by the help of Christ. He attempts to refute Wecelin's arguments one by one by: *a.* showing that Wecelin has presented the Christian view incorrectly; *b.* proving Christian doctrine to be true by quoting various passages from the Bible; *c.* placing arguments, extrapolated from the Bible and from philosophical conceptions, in a logical framework to prove that Wecelin has misinterpreted the passages he quotes from the Scriptures.

#### 1. *The incarnation.*

- a. The problem whether God has or has not changed.* Henry argues that Christians

too believe that God does not change; Christ, the Word of God, was not, as Weccelin insinuates, born naturally out of a woman. He became flesh out of the Virgin while continually remaining, unchanged, with God the Father. His divinity was not corrupted by man's mortal state; His humanity not influenced by His godliness. Christ was at the same time God and man. This divine and impenetrable mystery can only be understood by those who believe.

- b. *Jesus is the Messiah.* Henry then proceeds to show, by citing various passages from the Bible, that everything the prophets had prophesied about the Messiah had come about in Jesus. Did not Isaiah prophesy that He would be born out of the womb of a virgin (7:14) and grow from the stock of Jesse (11:1); and Jeremiah that He would live among men (Bar. 3: 38. This book was considered by the Jews to be apocryphal, but by the Church to be a continuation of the prophecies of Jeremiah)? Isaiah had proclaimed, moreover, that He would suffer for our sins (53:5).
- c. *No man will see God and live (Ex. 33:20).* To begin with, Henry asks Weccelin what he understands 'to see' to mean here: perceiving with the eyes or spiritual perception? The former he eliminates; since God has no defined shape, it is impossible for a man to see Him with his eyes. But, the perception of God with one's spirit is another matter; that is possible. For Matthew has said: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God"

(5:8), and David: "Seek the Lord and be strengthened, seek His face always" (Ps. 104(5):4). But this does not solve the problem; for Jacob has said: "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been spared" (Gen. 32:30(1)) and Isaiah: "I have seen the Lord of Hosts with my eyes" (6:5). These are clearly cases not of spiritual perception, but of seeing with one's eyes. Since one passage of the Bible cannot contradict the other, "no man will see God and live" must not be interpreted literally, as Weccelin does, but spiritually. The quotation means, in fact, that owing to original sin, man cannot see God in His godly form, neither with his eyes, nor with his spirit. Because this is so, God enveloped Himself in flesh before descending down to man. He came to man to save him from the bonds of death, that had fettered him ever since the fall. For the words of Jacob and Isaiah make it manifest that man can gaze upon God in His human form.

2. *The Chosen People.* Henry propounds that the Christians have replaced the Jews as the Chosen People by quoting the blessing of Jacob for Judah: "the sceptre shall not be taken from Judah, nor the prince from his loins, before He comes who is to be sent; He shall be the expectation of the nations (Gen. 49:10). Jesus has come; the sceptre has, therefore, been taken from Judah, that is to say the Jews, and given to the Christians. Weccelin's argument that all passages of the Bible use 'God of Israel' and not 'God



### III

of the nations' does not prove that the Jews are still the Chosen People. For God has given His Son the nations as His inheritance (Ps. 2:8) and has promised Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed in his seed (Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

3. *The validity of the Law of Moses.* "God recalls His covenant till eternity, the promise He has made to a thousand generations, the covenant that He made with Abraham" (Ps. 104(5):8-9) does not prove that the Law of Moses is still valid. In the first place, "a thousand generations" must not be taken literally: not a precise number of generations is meant, but all generations. In the second place, "the covenant" does not refer to the Law, including the commandment of circumcision, but the promise made unto Abraham. This promise was made to Abraham before there was any question of the Law; therefore, now the promise has been fulfilled in Christ, the Law has expired. The promise has precedence over the Law.<sup>8</sup>

In reply to Wecelin's accusation that Christians put their trust in humans instead of in God, Henry remonstrates that this is untrue. Christians only trust in God and His Christ, who is Himself God. No hope is placed in saints; Christians recommend themselves to God through their intercession. They are not evil spirits; on the contrary, they drive evil spirits away.

### V

Perhaps the most striking feature of the polemic between Wecelin and Henry is the

fact that Wecelin's contribution is so small, less than one-tenth of that of Henry. Although Wecelin summarily puts forward all the points one would expect to find in a Jewish attack on Christianity in a Jewish-Christian disputation, he fails to expand upon any of these. Henry, however, carefully takes up each of Wecelin's points and develops an elaborate argumentation in his attempt to refute them. Can this discrepancy be explained?

It may well be the case that the complete text of Wecelin's letter has not been handed down to us. What has been transmitted could be a condensed version of the original. Both Manitius and Blumenkranz are of this opinion (1923:281; 1966:269). But who would then have been responsible for its contraction? Alpert? Henry? Someone else? Unfortunately, an answer to this question cannot be given. Motives for condensing Wecelin's letter are, however, not difficult to conceive. Wecelin's letter could have been so damning to Christianity in its original form that no-one would perhaps have cared to publicize it so. It is also possible that it was simply not considered necessary to copy all of Wecelin's arguments, since their nature could more or less be deduced from Henry's reply. A shortage of parchment could have led to such a decision. In any case, the remarkable fact that both Wecelin and Henry attribute a text of Malachi to Habakkuk ("I am God and do not change") does, I feel, suggest that Wecelin's letter was revised by Henry, or else someone who had Henry's words before him.

It is, of course, equally possible that the letter Alpert attributes to Wecelin was not written by the apostate cleric. Henry, or even Alpert himself, could have composed



it: Henry in order to create grounds to formulate a set of arguments against the generally known objections Jews had to Christianity; and Alpert possibly as a way to fit Henry's letter in the structure of his *De diversitate temporum* – in which case we must then assume that it was known to Alpert as an independent piece of work.<sup>9</sup> For it is odd that Henry does not once condemn Wecelin for being an apostate. It is as if he is addressing himself to someone who has always been a Jew, or to Jews in general: "You Jews . . . taking issue once again with the erect and flourishing Church", "Why am I preaching the Gospel to a Jew?", "Ask God that He take away the veil, that He remove your heart of stone. This is even being asked by us for you, even though you do not want us to." A third possibility is that the whole correspondence, including the letter by Henry, was invented by Alpert or someone else.

Of the three explanations that can seriously be offered for the brevity of Wecelin's letter, the first is perhaps the most plausible. Although it remains a mystery why in Henry's text no mention is made of the fact that Wecelin is an apostate and is fulminating against the religion of which he himself had even been a cleric, it seems very unlikely that the correspondence, either with regard to Wecelin's letter or in its entirety, is a fabrication. For the way Alpert introduces the exchange of letters carries conviction of their authenticity. He narrates explicitly that a cleric, Wecelin by name, became a Jew and wrote a letter attacking the Christian faith. In his introduction to Wecelin's letter he says later: "It makes my hair stand on end and I tremble with fear at the thought that the devil was able to

persuade a man to dare to fling such dirt at Christ and His saints". Just as explicitly Alpert relates that the cleric Henry, by commission of the king, composed a reply to Wecelin's words. As yet, I can see no reason to doubt the truthfulness of this report, even though it is partly phrased in clichés. Although Wecelin's letter was, for some reason, probably revised, I believe we are nevertheless dealing here with an exchange of letters that actually took place.

The next thing that arrests attention in this correspondence is the fierceness in which it is conducted. Wecelin starts his letter off by calling Henry a fool; further on he says: "What is it you are barking back at me, animal?"<sup>10</sup> Nor does Henry behave less rudely. He, too, calls his opponent a fool. Furthermore, he says that Wecelin is perfidious and prates and is a scoundrel.

On first glance one might be tempted to draw all sorts of conclusions from this fierceness of language about the relationship between Jews and Christians in general and the way in which they were wont to dispute with each other in particular. But one must be cautious. Disputations between Jews and Christians are part of the literary genre of disputations, that was frequently used in the middle ages, as indeed it had been in classical antiquity. People were accustomed to mould treatises on the most varied subjects into the form of a dialogue. Sound conclusions on the linguistic usage in an eleventh-century Jewish-Christian disputation can, therefore, be made only on the basis of some knowledge of the features of this literary genre in the period. We must take care not to consider things to be peculiar to disputations between Jews and Christians that are, in fact, characteristic



### III

of all disputations of that time. Now, much research still remains to be done on disputations as a literary genre in the eleventh century – the century in which the cultural and intellectual revival of Europe was set into motion; research on the relationship between Jewish-Christian disputations and disputations in general has yet to be done.<sup>11</sup> However, the work of A. Cantin on the literary genre of eleventh-century disputations does permit us to advance a few suggestions about the importance of the rude language used by our correspondents (Cantin 1975).

Disputations of the eleventh century were, according to Cantin, characterized by the fierceness in which they were conducted. They bore, in fact, great similarity to duels. Everything was geared towards achieving victory; a joint effort to seek the truth through an interchange of queries and answers was out of the question. It was presumed one possessed the absolute truth in matters of faith; therefore, two uncompromising theses stood, at the beginning, opposite each other. At the end, the thesis of the disputant who would commit the disputation to writing remained unimpaired and the loser was expected to subscribe to it. The consequences for the argumentation in such disputations were twofold; in the first place the arguments of the opposite party were not taken seriously; in the second place, the opponent was treated with as little respect as his ideas (Cantin 1975). Seen in this light, there is nothing remarkable about the language used by Wecelin and Henry, and it does not reflect on the relationship between Jews and Christians in this period. Their mode of discussion conforms with the conventions of their times. One could even

propound that a polite tone of voice should have surprised us more than the rude one we encounter in this correspondence.

It is clear that because the letter of Wecelin is so short, the correspondence between him and Henry only introduces us to a few Jewish arguments against Christianity. The importance of the exchange of letters is that it gives us the opportunity to gain some knowledge of the manner in which a representative of the Church answered a Jewish attack on the tenets of Christianity in the eleventh century. For information on the way Jews in their turn defended themselves against Christian attacks on their faith in this period we must look elsewhere. Important sources include the extensive Jewish-Christian disputation *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani* of Gilbert Crispin, abbot of Westminster, at the end of this century,<sup>12</sup> in which much space is allotted to the Jewish case against Christianity. Another vital source is the Jewish Bible exegesis from this period, that consists partly of counter-arguments to Christian statements about certain passages in the Scriptures; the greatest Jewish Bible exegete of the eleventh century is R. Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi) of Troyes, who lived from 1040 to 1105. A study based on the correspondence between Wecelin and Henry in the *De diversitate temporum* of Alpert of Metz, the *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani* of Gilbert Crispin and the Bible commentaries of Rashi, can, in other words, produce a wealth of information about the manner in which Jews and Christians entered into discussions with each other on the principles of their respective faiths in the eleventh century.<sup>13</sup>



### *Appendix*

#### **Translation of the correspondence between Wecelin and Henry and of Alpert's introductory comments to it.<sup>14</sup>**

##### *Concerning the apostate Wecelin [De diversitate temporum 1.7]*

Now in those days, that is to say when Henry, who later was consecrated emperor by the pope, was king, a certain Wecelin, formerly a clerk of Duke Conrad, was led astray by a fiendish delusion and went over to the false doctrine of the Jews.<sup>15</sup> When the king heard of this he was justly seized by a great rage and at his order one of his court clerics, named Henry, even as the king, completely refuted the false words the above-mentioned apostate had uttered against Christ and His saints, by means of the most veracious testimonies of Holy Scripture, as his letter affirms. But since their discussion turned out to be a fairly lengthy discourse, we have decided to place it at the end of this little book.

##### *Concerning the cleric who became a Jew [2.22]*

Above I have promised to tell<sup>16</sup> of that apostate who abandoned clerical orders and fell into the bottomless pit of the perfidious<sup>17</sup> Jews. But now I must fulfill my promise<sup>18</sup> I quake from head to toe; it makes my hair stand on end and I tremble with fear that the devil was able to persuade a man to dare to fling such dirt at Christ and His saints. For this wretched creature had written the following pernicious letter.

##### *The writing of that apostate [2.23]*

Why do you contradict the truth, fool? Read Habakkuk the prophet, in whose book God has said: "I am God and do not change" [Mal. 3:6]. If according to your accursed faith He did change and was produced by mingling of a woman,<sup>19</sup> then the beginning of His words would not be the truth [compare Ps. 118(9):160]. The Lord has said to Moses: "No man shall see me and be able to live" [Ex. 33:20]. Which son of man has He passed over? For the prophet David says: "Put not your trust in princes, in children of men, in whom there is no salvation" [Ps. 145:2-3 (146:3)]. And Ezekiel<sup>20</sup>: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm; for he shall be like a tamarisk in the desert and not see the fruit when good shall come [Jer. 17:5-6]. What is it you are barking back at me, animal? Which son of man has He passed over? Surely not Peter, John or Martin or the other evil spirits whom you call saints?

In all places it says "God of Israel" and not "God of the nations". What is your explanation of that? David says: "The Lord will remember His covenant forever, the word He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham, His oath to Isaac" [Ps. 104(5): 8-9; compare Ps. 110(1):5]. That is to say His Holy Law, including circumcision, that He gave to Moses, His servant.

##### *Henry's letter [2.24]*

To reply to the calumny, unbelieving Jew, that you just now have vomited forth from your blasphemous mouth against Christ and His saints, would be easy for anyone



### III

instructed in Christian combat, were it not simpler to be able to soften stones than cleave your hearts asunder to receive the truth.

For in spite of the fact that you recognized Him, with cleft hearts, as your creator, when He died [compare Matt. 27:54], you still persist with insensible hearts, although shattered and destroyed, in the obstinacy of your deep-rooted iniquity. Though the mouth of them that speak wicked things has been stopped [Ps. 62(3):12] by God's coeternal wisdom<sup>21</sup> through which the world was miraculously established and even more miraculously transformed, and though your iniquity has lied to itself [Ps. 26:12<sup>22</sup>] and it is manifest through the whole world and through the words of the prophets and examples of the saints how cursed the blind irreverence of your disbelief is and how glorified the weakness of mortality assumed by Christ [compare Phil. 2:5-11],<sup>23</sup> yet you Jews until now do not desist, in the stubborn wickedness of your malice, from your machinations, that is murmuring with infamous arrogance in an attempt to refute the Christian religion and taking issue once again with the erect and flourishing Church, using examples of the Fathers and the words of the prophets, although you are already entirely beaten and wholly overthrown. Therefore we must attack you with the helpgiving Wisdom of God,<sup>24</sup> God's Word, the Son of God, but first we must make our hearts stony [compare Ezek. 11:19] with Him as the stone that the prophet Daniel, whom you regard as your prophet, but who is actually ours, saw rolling down the mountain without human hands and fill the whole earth [compare Dan. 2:34-5].<sup>25</sup> Of whom David also says: "My heart has uttered a good word" [Ps. 44(5):2<sup>26</sup>] and

also: "The Lord has spoken to me: you are my son, today have I begotten you" [Ps. 2:7<sup>27</sup>], and even: "You have made everything in wisdom" [Ps. 103(4):24]. And Solomon: "The Lord has possessed me in the beginning of His ways" [Prov. 8:22<sup>28</sup>].

But since our discourse with the Jew does not concern the birth of Christ in eternity, during which He was always equal to the Father, but His birth into this world, in the course of which He, as David proclaims, "was a little less than the angels" [Ps. 8:6] – let us listen to what he says and reply to his objections one by one.

You say, Jew: "Why do you contradict the truth, fool?" First I should like you to answer the following question: whom do you consider to represent the truth, you or the prophet? If you say the prophet, I agree, for by showing you that I do not contradict him, I shall with justice prove that you have lied. If, however, you say that you represent the truth, while it is established that you have lied previously, then I do not know how you whom the stigma of lying has defiled can prove your uprightness. Nor are you able simultaneously to be the advocate and denouncer of your Law that says: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" [Ex. 20:16(13); Deut. 5:20(17)]. Now, if I, as I have already said, do not contradict the prophet because he himself speaks for me, then I shall inflict upon you mortal wounds with the very weapons you thought to use against me; since contrary to the precept of the Law you have borne false witness against your neighbour, you will be guilty according to the Law. Because of your guilt you will indeed be punished; the punishment in truth will bring you unto death.



But let us turn to the following. Miserable Jew, whom are you calling a fool? Surely not us because we believe in the crucified one, who, for you, however, has become a stone of stumbling and a rock of scandal [Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8; compare Isa. 8:14]? For, in truth, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing and it is wonderful in our eyes [Ps. 117(8):22-3 = Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10-11]. Are we therefore simple and you wise? For by the foolishness of the preaching [1 Cor. 1:21] the arrogance of the world has already been overthrown and upon the foreheads of the kings we see the victory of the cross [compare Rev., for example 7:3<sup>29</sup>]. Because it is the foolish things of the world that God has chosen that He may confound the strong [compare 1 Cor. 1:27]. And that is why we gladly embrace the foolishness of the cross of Christ, for we believe we shall come to the glory of Christ. But why am I telling a story to deaf ears [Terence, *Heautontimoumenos*: 222]? Or lighting a blind man? Or preaching the Gospel to a Jew?

Let us proceed to the following. You say: "Read Habakkuk, the prophet", not in whose book, as you say, but through whom God says: "I am God and do not change" [Mal. 3:6]. I have already told you, Jew, that I shall nowise contradict the testimony of Habakkuk, and not only not that of Habakkuk, but neither that of any of the prophets and I declare that I take my proofs from the Law, for I worship Him who has not come to destroy the Law but to fulfill it [Matt. 5:17]. God has said through Habakkuk: "I am God and do not change" [Mal. 3:6] and to this the Christian religion firmly adheres. But then you go on to say:

"If according to your accursed faith He did change and was produced by mingling of a woman, then the beginning of His words would not be the truth" [compare Ps. 118(9):160]. Is it a wonder if, blind as you are, you do not see the light, that only the clean of heart see [Matt. 5:8], nay, in the way of the mad, you even resist doctors and heap abuse upon those who want to make you well? For the mysteries of the incarnation of Christ are so heavenly and profound, that is, how the Word of God, while ever staying unchanged with God the Father, assumed flesh out of the Virgin and joined our nature to His, that no one takes it in unless he knows it spiritually; no one knows it, unless he receives it through God's grace; and he who as yet does not take it in, believes through the grace of God. "If you do not believe", says the prophet, "you will not understand".<sup>30</sup> That is why the believer deserves merit; he who sees loses his reward, for seeing is not believing [perhaps compare John 20:29].

For as long as we wander in the shadows of this world, the hearts of those who will see God will be cleansed.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, that some of you could be cleansed through this belief, in which the Son of God, nay the Son of Man, is preached, God has long before proclaimed through the prophet Ezekiel, saying: "And it shall come to pass, in the last days, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh [Acts 2:17; compare Joel 2:28 (3:1)], and pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filth and I will cleanse you from all your idols and I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh" [Ezek.



### III

36:25-6], and so forth, through which it is plainly shown that God has taken away the veil from the hearts of some of you, so that the hearts of many would be prepared through the guidance of the Spirit of God, by faith to receive the salutary water, for the purification of all sins [compare 2 Cor. 3:15-6], that some of you, however, would remain blind in the error of disbelief, as is written by another prophet: "I will harden their hearts, lest they see the light" [compare perhaps Isa. 6:10 (= John 12:40)].

How could you Jew, seeing that you grope about blindly in tangible darkness, how could you imagine yourself able to understand how God without any kind of change, not as you, unbeliever, prate was produced by mingling of a woman, but made Himself a body out of the womb of a woman, since the divinity of the Word of God assumed the flesh as one person, so that neither His divinity went over into the transitoriness of the flesh, nor His humanity into His divinity, and so that accordingly the Son of God was at the same time man because of His incarnation, and, as Son of Man, God because of His Godliness. The prophet prophesied it for you, did he not: "if you do not believe, you will not understand"?<sup>32</sup> Believe, and you will understand; and ask God that He take away the veil, that He remove your heart of stone. This is even being asked by us for you, even though you do not want us to.<sup>33</sup>

But since a Jew accepts neither reason nor preaching, unless God takes away the veil – for I know the stiff-neckedness of Jews – let us reply to him with the words of the prophets in order that he either will believe or withdraw confounded.<sup>34</sup>

That Christ would assume the flesh of the

Virgin Isaiah prophesied: "Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son and his name shall be Emmanuel" [Isa. 7:14], "that is: God with us" [Matt. 1:23]. That He would be born out of the tribe of Jesse and full of the spirit of God the selfsame says: "There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse and a flower shall rise up out of his root, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and he shall be filled with the spirit of the Lord" [Isa. 11:1-3].<sup>35</sup> That He must dwell among men Jeremiah proclaimed: "That is our God and no other can compare with Him"; and a bit later: "Afterwards He was seen upon earth and dwelt among men" [Bar. 3:36, 38]. That He must suffer for us, Isaiah likewise said: "He was wounded for our transgressions" [Isa. 53:5]. And many other things have they pronounced about Him, in which one is clearly apprised that the whole stay of the Lord amongst us from the time of His incarnation until that of His ascension is in accordance with their testimonies. What can you say to that, scoundrel? Unless perhaps you reply with the lie that He is of your father the devil, as our same Lord Jesus Christ said: "You are of the father the devil and you do the works of your father" [John 8:44, 41<sup>36</sup>]. Behold how briefly I can answer you by way of reason and examples: God remains unchanged and yet assumed the flesh of the Virgin.

Now, let us move on to the following. God said to Moses: "No man shall see me and be able to live" [Ex. 33:20]. At this point I ask you Jew, because you are always following the killing letter and not the quickening spirit [compare 2 Cor. 3:6], how do you



think a man can see God, or don't you think he can? If so, with his eyes, or with his spirit?

To see God with one's eyes is somewhat absurd; since we are dealing with an unlimited Spirit without volume or area that is timeless and omnipresent. How faulty must human sight then be?

Seeing God with one's spirit is not impossible, at least if that spirit is clean. Were we not promised: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God" [Matt. 5:8]? If it is not possible, how can what David said truthfully then be true: "Seek the Lord and be strengthened, seek His face always" [Ps. 104(5):4]? Doesn't David speak to people whose spirits he is arousing to seek the face of the Lord? Can the truth and the herald of the truth contradict each other in any way? Plainly not for those who understand. Once again I ask you whether a man can see God and live, or not. If he can see Him and live, how can it be true what God has said: "No man shall see me and be able to live" [Ex. 33:20]. If, however, he cannot, in order that this may be true, how can what Jacob said be true: "I have seen God face to face, and my life has been spared" [Gen. 32:30(1)] and Isaiah: "I have seen the Lord Sabaoth with my eyes" [6:5]? How can the truth and the prophets of the truth preach contraries? In fact, since you in your obtuseness follow the oldness of the letter and not the newness of the spirit [compare Rom. 7:6] you run against a stumbling-block as blind men [perhaps compare Levit. 19:14] whence you could have the guidance of light [compare 2 Cor. 3:13-6]. But let us who have embraced the truth of the eternal light tear asunder the error of Jewish blindness by its guidance so that on the one hand the true nature of the problem

posed will become apparent to believing spirits, and on the other hand those that listen will not understand and those that see will become blind [compare Isa. 6:9 (= Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10); compare John 9:39].

That God said unto Moses: "No man shall see me and be able to live" [Ex. 33:20], can be understood as follows: as long as man lives in that corruptible body that is a load upon the soul [Wisd. 9:15], he cannot see God as He is in the nature of His divinity, neither with his eyes, nor even in his spirit, even if it is clean and purified of nearly every blemish of sin. Albeit the spirit were already in a state of divine contemplation, still it would fall short of success since man has incurred a stain through his mortality – therefore man cannot see God and live as long as he lives as a mortal being and not as God and does not die so as to live with God.

But how could someone in the land of death, so to say a mortal being, see or seek God who is the true life, were it not that Life had been mercifully disposed and had descended to the dead? For we were dead since we were all banished from the face of God with Adam on account of that first sin [perhaps compare Rom. 5:14]. Therefore, because the Life had pity on us mortals ensnared by the deceit of the devil, it descended to us, enveloped in flesh, since the weakness of the flesh would not be able to bear the unapproachable light [perhaps compare 1 Tim. 6:16] if the same Life would not envelop itself in flesh, and so by placing before us flesh show us the divine light. Isaiah preached this earlier as if it had already happened: "To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death light is risen" [9:2(1)]. This is thus the



### III

light that both Jacob and Isaiah saw, not with their eyes but in their spirit. And due to this vision one of them burst forth in song rejoicing, saying: "I have seen the Lord face to face, and my life has been spared" [Gen. 32:30(1)]. For he had understood what God had said unto Moses: "No man shall see me and be able to live" [Ex. 33:20]; since Jacob would have had to despair of the sparing of his life if he had not known through the mystery of the prophecy that God, who cannot be seen by man, can be seen incarnate. That is why he sang, because he had seen Him, "I have seen the Lord face to face, and my life has been spared" [Gen. 32:30(1)], and he drew his hope of deliverance from that. In other words, at the sight of assumed mortality, he knew that deliverance, the expectation of the world would come with the proof of His flesh for the world. And this he also expressed in the blessing of his sons proclaiming: "The sceptre shall not be taken from Judah, nor the prince from his loins, before He comes who is to be sent; He shall be the expectation of the nations" [Gen. 49:10]. Of Him Isaiah also says: "Kings shall shut their mouth at him [52:15]; him shall the nations beseech [11:10]. Now what have you to say to that, Jew, why do you call us animals? Behold we are the animals of Him, of whom Habakkuk said: "In the midst of two animals you shall be recognized" [3:2 in Septuagint]. We do not babble, as you upbraid us, but respond as rational beings.

However, to what you go on to say that David's words: "Put not your trust in princes, in children of men in whom there is no salvation" [Ps. 145:2-3 (146:3)] imply, that is that no son of man has been passed over, so as stealthily to wrong Christ through

the testimony of the prophet – but openly you blaspheme His servants, as if an insult to a servant does not reflect contempt for his Lord – to what you say we reply by saying with the prophet: "Let deceitful lips be made dumb that speak iniquity against the just, with pride and abuse" [Ps. 30(1):19]. We too do not place our trust in man but in God and in His Christ, whom we truly believe to be God and man; that He is God and the Son of God we have proven through the testimonies of your prophets. Peter, now, John and Martin are no evil spirits, we acknowledge them, in fact, faithfully as expellers of evil spirits. That this is so we see down to the present day with sure signs; we do not put our trust in them but commend ourselves to God through their intercession.

Your words, however: "In all places it says 'God of Israel' and not 'God of the nations'" God refutes through David, saying to His Son: "Ask of me and I shall give you the nations for your inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for your possession" [Ps. 2:8]; and likewise to Abraham: "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" [Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14]. Now, if the nations are the inheritance of God, I do not know how God cannot be theirs of whom He is the inheritance. For truly, with regard to what you connect to it, under the pretence of inquiring after our explanation, namely "the Lord will remember His covenant, the word that He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant He made with Abraham" [Ps. 104(5):8-9; compare Ps. 110(1):5], our explanation comes much nearer to the truth than yours. How do you interpret here 'to a thousand generations'? If you reply the



generations from the beginning of the world, you will not find a thousand. But since in Holy Scripture the finite is often used for the infinite, 'a thousand generations' must be understood as 'all generations' so that thus in consequence the promise made to Abraham is true: "That in your seed all the nations shall be blessed" [Gen. 22:18; 26:4; 28:14], that is in Christ [perhaps compare Gal. 3:16ff.].

### Notes

\* I should like to thank Drs H. van Rij and Professor Dr C. van de Kieft for their helpful suggestions during my work on this material and Dr D. S. H. Abulafia for reading the typescript of this article.

<sup>1</sup> This article is the by-product of my contribution on Wecelin in the edition and translation into Dutch of *De diversitate temporum* by H. van Rij with myself (1980). The edition was published by Uitgeverij Verloren, whom I thank for allowing me to include some of my material from the book. Readers looking for information on the manuscript tradition of the correspondence are advised to see my comments made in the introduction to this edition: they will not be included here. I thank Hans van Rij for giving me information on Alpert and his work.

<sup>2</sup> Why *De diversitate temporum* is divided into two books is unclear. The framework of Book I is no different to that of Book 2. The only ground for the division one can think of is that Book 1 deals with things that happened during Ansfrid's rule as bishop of Utrecht (995–1010) and Book 2 with occurrences that took place when Adelbold held the bishopric (1010–26). One cannot even be absolutely sure it was Alpert who made the division; the division is given in the only extant MS. of the complete *De diversitate temporum*: Hannover, Niedersächsische Landesbibliothek, MS. Hannoversanus XII<sup>B</sup> 712<sup>a</sup>, compiled towards the end of the eleventh century, probably in Metz.

<sup>3</sup> Perusal of the *Jahrbücher* of Henry II (Hirsch and others 1862–75) and Conrad II (Bresslau 1879–84) yielded no other eligible Conrad.

<sup>4</sup> MGH SS 3:81. The *Annalista Saxo* (MGH SS 6:664) gives the same report but is citing the *Annales Quedlinburgenses* and is therefore not an independent source in this matter.

<sup>5</sup> Blumenkranz would seem to deduce the existence of such a following from the words in the *Quedlinburg annals* following the report of the expulsion of the Jews from Mainz: *sed et quorundam haereticorum refutata est insania* (1960:168). The interpretation of *haeretici* as denoting a group of Wecelin's disciples seems rather rash. Also the use of the words *sed et* to introduce this statement does not seem to warrant the assumption that the insanity of these heretics is connected with the Jews being expelled from the city. The meaning of the phrase still remains unclear.

<sup>6</sup> An example of such a disputation is the one held in Paris in 1240 between an apostate Jew and four members of the Jewish community (Katz 1961: 106ff.; Ben-Sasson 1976:558). The climate started to change in the twelfth century to the detriment of the Jews.

<sup>7</sup> 1966:269. From a passage of Agobard's *Epistola de Iudaicis superstitionibus* we do know that Jews in the ninth century were already attacking the Christian veneration of saints in their own writings: *Denique et Christianos idola asserunt [Iudei] adorare et virtutes quae apud nos sanctorum intercessionibus obtinentur, a diabolo fieri dicere non exhorrescunt* (MGH Epp. 5:190).

<sup>8</sup> The end of Henry's letter is very concise. In my view he is referring to Gal. 3:16ff., where Paul states that the Promise has preference over the Law.

<sup>9</sup> Blumenkranz notes in his *Les auteurs Chrétiens* the possibility that Alpert composed Wecelin's letter on the basis of Henry's reply (1963:248).

<sup>10</sup> Wecelin's letter is not directed against Christians in general, but against one person. From the context of the polemic one must assume this person to be Henry. On the one hand this could mean that this missive of Wecelin is a reaction to an earlier letter of Henry. That would mean that only part of the correspondence has been transmitted. On the other hand Wecelin's letter could have been revised in order to appear to be directed against Henry. This could have been done for compositional reasons; for Henry reacts explicitly to the abuse of his opponent.

<sup>11</sup> At the moment I am preparing work on the reciprocal visualization of Jews and Christians in the



### III

eleventh and twelfth century in which this problem will be studied.

<sup>12</sup> Blumenkranz 1956. It is most interesting that, in contrast to the correspondence between Weccelin and Henry, this disputation is conspicuous for its politeness. How this can be explained in the light of the discussed characteristics of the literary genre remains to be studied. It is possible that the genre took on different forms within the English and Norman milieux of the late eleventh century. I hope to deal with this problem in due course.

<sup>13</sup> These sources were used for a large part of my *doctoraal scriptie* at the University of Amsterdam: *De joodse stellingname ten opzichte van het Christendom. Een studie naar aanleiding van de Hebreeuwse kronieken over de eerste kruistocht* (*The Jewish position in relation to Christianity. A study in the light of the Hebrew chronicles on the First Crusade*).

<sup>14</sup> This is an English translation of the Latin text which appears in the edition by Van Rij with myself of *De diversitate temporum* (1980:16–18, 88–104), replacing the edition by Hulshof (1916). The disputation between Weccelin and Henry has been transmitted to us in the previously mentioned MS. Hannoveranus XII<sup>B</sup> 712<sup>a</sup>, the only MS. to contain the complete *De diversitate temporum*. A fragment of the disputation, however, also exists in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana, MS. Plut. LXXXIX super 15, dating, like the Hannoverian MS., from the eleventh century. Elsewhere I have explored the relationship between these two MSS. (Van Rij with Sapir Abulafia 1980: LI–LII). With regard to different readings in the two MSS., it will suffice to say here that although one can be sure that the correspondence between Weccelin and Henry belongs to Alpert's *De diversitate temporum* and that consequently the scribe of the Florentine MS. directly or indirectly (an intermediary link is possible) extracted his fragment of the exchange of letters from a MS. of Alpert's work, one cannot, in the few cases where problems arise, always determine which of the two MSS. offers the more correct reading. For we have no way of knowing how far the Hannoverian MS. stands from Alpert's autograph; the Florentine fragment could stem from a *De diversitate temporum* that was closer to the original than the MS. Hannoveranus. Therefore, the notes of the appendix will include translations of the disparate readings given by the Florentine version of the disputation.

In the references and notes of the translation I do not indicate when Bible passages are not quoted literally. Such indication would be meaningless: we do not know which versions of the Bible Weccelin and Henry had at their disposal and more often than not they will have cited the Bible from memory anyway. As for the numbering of Bible chapters and verses, I have followed that of the Latin Vulgate. In each case where the Jewish Bible numbers differently, this has been indicated between round brackets. In translating many of the Bible quotations I have used *The Holy Bible*, 1914, which is a direct translation of the Latin Vulgate. The commentaries in *De Heilige Schrift*, 1959, have proved most useful for understanding the way in which various passages must be interpreted.

<sup>15</sup> The Florentine MS. adds here: "and dared to vomit forth a letter against Christ and the firm foundations of His Holy Church".

<sup>16</sup> Here the Florentine MS. has: "now, however, I wish to relate".

<sup>17</sup> For the connotation of the word *perfidus* used in connection with Jews see Blumenkranz 1952.

<sup>18</sup> The Florentine MS. adds here: "this story".

<sup>19</sup> What is meant is that Mary became pregnant by natural means and that Jesus was thus born naturally.

<sup>20</sup> The Florentine MS. reads: "Ezekiel who quotes Jeremiah".

<sup>21</sup> See n. 28.

<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew text (Ps. 27:12) gives a different reading.

<sup>23</sup> Since Christ assumed the human form, that form, that is to say, mortality, has been glorified.

<sup>24</sup> See n. 28.

<sup>25</sup> On the basis of these verses and others in the book of Daniel, prophecies were made about the coming of the messianic era. The Florentine MS. adds here: "for he says: 'I beheld therefore in the vision of the night, and behold one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven. And to him is given a kingdom and glory and all peoples, tribes and tongues shall serve him [Dan. 7:13–4]. What now miserable creature? Behold the Son of Man'."

<sup>26</sup> This psalm is interpreted as the song of love between the King-Messiah and His Chosen People; Jesus and the Church.

<sup>27</sup> In this verse is read the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah as Son of God.



<sup>28</sup> "Me" is wisdom. According to tradition we are dealing here with a personification of wisdom. Wisdom is seen as the first revelation of the Word.

<sup>29</sup> People symbolically receive a sign on their forehead to single them out as the Chosen of God.

<sup>30</sup> Isa. 7:9, not in the Vulgate but according to the old Latin translation.

<sup>31</sup> The Florentine MS. ends here.

<sup>32</sup> See n. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Christians were supposed to pray for the unbelieving Jews once a year (Baron 1957b:351 n. 68).

<sup>34</sup> The loser in a disputation was supposed to accept the thesis of the victor or retreat confounded.

<sup>35</sup> According to tradition, the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit would be first poured out on the Messiah.

<sup>36</sup> The meaning is more or less: if God were your father, you would believe in Me (=Jesus). You (=Jews) do not believe in Me, thus the devil is your father.

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## Session 6

# **Pro evitanda infamia et sedandis scandalis huiusmodi: The New Christians of Apulia obtain a Papal Bull to fend off accusations of Judaizing (2/26/1446)**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Converts and their the descendants: The Cristiani Novelli of peninsular southern Italy in the late Middle ages**

In 1292 many of the Kingdom of Naples' most important Jewish communities under the pressure of inquisitorial persecution more or less collectively converted to Christianity. The number of these converts has been estimated to have been between 6,000 and 8,000.

Starting around 1293/1294, we find the sources beginning to refer to the converts as Neofiti or Christiani Novi. In the mid-fifteenth century, a vernacular version of this term appears in the Apulian sources for the first time: Cristiani Novelli. By that point the meaning of the term “newly planted” or New Christian in Apulia had ceased referring exclusively to Jews who had converted to Christianity, and had begun to be applied to their descendants as well.

The *metropolis* of the New Christians of peninsular southern Italy was the Apulian seaport of Trani. Here the highest number of converts is documented: 310 households. Throughout the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries the New Christians of Trani constituted the backbone of the Southern Italian Neofiti population.

### **The New Christians and the Church**

Like many Jewish communities of southern Italy the community of Trani had been subject to the church, because as early as the eleventh-century century the Norman and later the Swabian rulers began granting the jurisdiction over and the taxes of the realm's most significant Jewish communities to the local episcopal sees (in Trani 1155).

In defiance of royal orders prompted by complaints from the converts, the archbishop of Trani did not renounce to these lucrative rights after the vast majority of the Jews of Trani had converted to Christianity. Through the 1370s he continued to impose taxes and claim jurisdiction not only over the converts but also their descendants. This, however, did have one advantage for the New Christians. The metropolitan church protected them from inquisitorial inquiries since she regarded these as an intrusion into its own jurisdiction over the converts-and their descendants. As early as 1328, the

archiepiscopal see of Trani obtained a grant of immunity from Pope John XXII, thereby effectively shielding the diocese from the Inquisition.

### **The New Christians and the Universitas of Trani**

In 1413, the King of Naples reformed the urban government of Trani. As a consequence, its citizens were allowed to elect a council every four months. This council was to be composed of sixteen men – *pro suis et dicte Civiatis exequendis negotiis* – eight of which were to be recruited *ex nobilibus*, six *ex populares*, and two *ex neophitis*. The reform of urban government established an almost complete balance of power between the noble and the popular orders, whereby the New Christians were counted among the ranks of the latter.

At the beginning of the 15th.-century, the Neofiti had managed to free themselves from the yoke of the archdiocese and had acquired the same legal- and political-status as the rest of Trani's (non-noble) citizens. Yet the label Neofiti continued to articulate an otherness of this group within the *populares*, since this category in Apulia had acquired the meaning of “converted Jew or descendant of converted Jew.

Yet in the course of the fifteenth-century, the position of the New Christians into the municipal body politic and in urban society was put under attack twice: the first time in the middle of the fifteenth century and again in the years immediately after 1495. The second of these crises would mark the end of Neofiti inclusion in Trani's political life and society.

During the 1440s up to the 1460s Trani experienced a period of intense civil unrest. The Cristiani Novelli were involved in these conflicts and as a result of it left Trani, moving mainly to other cities along the Apulian coast and above all to the neighbouring seaport of Barletta. After 1466, when King Ferrante I reformed the city's municipal government once more, they returned to Trani and their position in urban government was re-established and even strengthened.

Yet this was only to last for about thirty years. When King Charles VIII of France invaded the Regno di Napoli in 1495 violence broke out against Jews and Converts. The New Christians of Trani were expelled from the city and once again resettled in the neighbouring towns of Barletta and Molfetta. Here they successfully resisted the efforts of King Ferdinand the Catholic to have all of the Cristiani Novelli expelled from the Kingdom of Naples, first in 1510 and then again in 1514.



### **The Papal Bull of 1446**

Right at the beginning of the period of factional struggle in the 1440s the New Christians of Trani were confronted with inquisitorial persecution for the first time in nearly 120 years.

The Papal Bull the New Christians of Trani managed to obtain by Pope Eugen IV. in 1446 shows them trying to fend off accusations of deviant religious conduct linked to their Jewish ancestry and considered as heretical by a part of Trani's population. It indicates that the question of religious conduct was deeply entangled with the question of the New Christian's position in urban society. Last but not least it is one of the few pieces of evidence that we have that addresses the matter of religious conduct at (some) length. It therefore counts as one of the most important sources for the history of the Cristiani Novelli of peninsular southern Italy in the later Middle Ages.

## TEXT & TRANSLATION

*Rome, 26 February 1446*

*Absolution to neophytes in Trani and its diocese, accused of observing some of their Jewish rites, provided they repent within fifteen days and undertake to live henceforth as devout Christians. They are to be treated well by other Christians. Mandate to Latino Ursini, archbishop of Trani, and his successors to see to the application of these instructions.*

1	Eugenius etc. Ad futuram rei memoriam.	39	Eugene IV etc. For the future memory of this
2	Romanus pontifex, beati Petri regni celestis	40	matter. The Roman Pontiff, successor of blessed
3	clavigeri successor, et vicarius Ihesu Christi,	41	Peter, bearer of the keys of the heavenly kingdom
4	cuncta mundi climata omnesque nationum in	42	and vicar of Jesus Christ, looking with paternal
5	illis degentium qualitates, paterna consideratione	43	interest upon all the regions of the world and the
6	discutiens, ac salutem querens et appetens	44	specific natures of all peoples who dwell in them,
7	singulorum, illa propensa deliberatione	45	seeking and desiring the salvation of every one
8	salubriter ordinat et disponit, que grata divine	46	of them, wholesomely orders and arranges with
9	maiestati fore considerat, et per que oves sibi	47	careful consideration those things which he
10	divinitus creditas ad unicum Dominicum	48	perceives will be pleasing to the divine majesty
11	ovile reducat et acquirat eis felicitatis eterne	49	and by which he may bring the sheep divinely
12	premium ac veniam impetret animabus, que eo	50	committed to him into the one fold of the Lord
13	certius, auctore Domino, provenire credimus,	51	and may acquire for them the reward of eternal
14	cum oberrantes oves non rigoris asperitate, sed	52	happiness, and may obtain pardon for their
15	mansuetudine et sana doctrina ac salutaribus	53	souls, what we believe—with the help of the
16	documentis ad rectam veritatis semitam	54	Lord—to obtain more certain when the
17	perducuntur. Cum itaque, sicut ad nostrum,	55	wandering sheep are being led to the right path
18	non sine displicentia grandi, pervenit auditum,	56	of truth not by harshness of rigidity but by
19	nonnulli Christifideles, neofiti seu Christiani	57	mildness and sane doctrine and wholesome
20	novelli vulgo nominati, in civitate et diocesi	58	documents. So when, as we got to hear not
21	Tranensi moram trahentes, pro eo quod ipsi	59	without great displeasure, some Faithful in
22	eorumque antecessores, licet a quamplurimis	60	Christ, vulgarly called neophytes or new
23	annis iam decursis, divina illustrati gratia, de	61	Christians, residing in the city and diocese of
24	Iudaismo ad Catholicam fidem conversi, ab	62	Trani, for this that they and their ancestors,
25	illorum conversionis huiusmodi temporibus	63	although they—enlightened by divine grace—
26	quosdam mores, ritus, seu vivendi modos	64	converted from Judaism to Catholicism many
27	singulares, plurimumque diversos ab illis	65	years ago, are said to have observed and observe
28	aliorum Christifidelium ipsarum civitatis et	66	certain particular customs, rites or modes of life
29	diocesis observasse et observare dicuntur,	67	differing a lot from those of the the other
30	per dictos alios fideles velut heretici habiti et	68	Faithful in Christ in this city and diocese since
31	reputati, necnon ut tales etiam evitati fuerint,	69	the time of their conversion are held and thought
32	ac contra eos vel ipsorum aliquos tamquam de	70	of as heretics and also shunned as such by the
33	heresi suspectos, etiam auctoritate apostolica,	71	said other Faithful, and that with apostolic
34	processum extiterit, in non parvam ipsorum	72	authority an (inquisitorial) process was initiated
35	infamiam et scandalum plurimorum; ac,	73	against them or some of them as if they were
36	sicut exhibita nobis nuper pro parte ipsorum	74	suspects of heresy, to their great infamy and to the
37	novellorum Christianorum petitio continebat,	75	scandal of many; and, as we were informed
38		76	recently, a petition on the part of these very same
		77	new Christians

78	ipsi novelli Christiani pro evitanda infamia	125	contained that these new Christians for the sake
79	et sedandis scandalis huiusmodi, necnon	126	of avoiding this kind of infamy and calming
80	eorum animarum salute, mores, ritus et modo	127	down this kind of scandal and, moreover, for the
81	singulares et diversos huiusmodi, si quos	128	salvation of their souls wish to totally give up the
82	habent, penitus deserere et aliis Christifidelibus	129	said customs, rites and single modes, given that
83	se in omnibus, presertim fidem Catholicam	130	they have them, and to conform to the other
84	concernentibus, conformare, ac pro faciliiori	131	Faithful in Christ in everything, especially in the
85	conformatione huiusmodi, eis per nos certum	132	things concerning Catholic
86	vivendi modum, seu regulam tradi, ferventius	133	faith, and that for a more easy conformation of
87	concupiscant, nos, qui desideranter in votis	134	this kind they fervently ask us to give them a
88	gerimus, ut non modo mores eorum qui iam	135	certain mode of life or rule, we, wishing to meet
89	ad fidem conversi sunt, sublati quibusvis	136	these desires, so that not only the customs of
90	erroribus, reformatur, verum etiam ultra	137	those who already have converted to the faith may
91	fines solitos fidelium Catholica fides nostris	138	be reformed, after all errors have been removed
92	presertim temporibus augeatur et propagetur,	139	whatsoever, but also faith may be increased and
93	necnon cuncti fideles in pacis dulcedine	140	propagated especially in our times beyond the
94	ac caritatis unione quiescant, eorundem	141	usual borders of the Catholic faith, and all
95	novellorum Christianorum laudabile	142	Faithful may rest in the sweetness of peace and in
96	propositum huiusmodi in Domino plurimum	143	the union of charity, as highest advocates and
97	commendantes, ac cupientes, prout ex debito	144	lovers of those new Christians' laudable
98	pastoralis tenemur officii, super premissis	145	proposition to the Lord, just as we are obliged to
99	quantum possumus salubriter providere,	146	by the duty of pastoral office, provide for the afore
100	universos et singulos Christianos novellos	147	mentioned as good as we can; we appeal to the
101	in prefatis civitate et diocesi commorantes,	148	Lord for each and every one of the new Christians
102	presentes et futuros, obsecramus in Domino et	149	residing in the said city and diocese, present and
103	per aspersionem sanguinis Domini nostri Ihesu	150	future, and encourage them by aspersion with the
104	Christi exhortamur, eisque nichilominus in	151	blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; nevertheless we
105	remissionem suorum peccaminum iniungimus	152	impose on them to cease from their sins, and
106	et sub excommunicationis aliarumque	153	under the sentence of excommunication and
107	censurarum sententiis et penis in hereticos	154	pains of other censures which the law provides
108	a iure promulgatis districtius precipimus et	155	against heretics we more strictly order and
109	mandamus, quatenus infra quindecim dierum	156	mandate that within a period of fifteen days from
110	spatium a die publicationis presentium in dicta	157	the day of the publication of the present
111	civitate facienda computandorum, singulares	158	document, the delivery to the said city included,
112	et diversos ritus, mores ac modos predictos,	159	they may dismiss the above-mentioned particular
113	et presertim in Sabbatorum celebratione et	160	and differing rites, customs and modes, and
114	in libellorum matrimonialis repudii datione,	161	especially regarding the celebration of Sabbath
115	dimittant, necnon ab illis se retrahant et	162	and the grant of divorce papers, and, moreover,
116	abstineant realiter, et omnino illos de cetero	163	that they really may withdraw and abstain from
117	nullatenus observaturi; ceterum, ritus ac vivendi	164	those things and, after all, that they in nowise
118	modos aliorum devotorum Christifidelium	165	may observe them again; furthermore, they may
119	predictorum efficaciter ac diligenter observare,	166	effectively and diligently strive and intend to
120	necnon illis in omnibus se conformare studeant	167	observe the rites and modes of life of the above-
121	pariter et intendant; dies tantum Dominicos	168	mentioned other devoted Faithful in Christ and,
122	et alias festivitates, necnon ieiunia a Sancta	169	moreover, to conform themselves to them in
123	Romana Ecclesia, matre omnium et magistra,	170	everything; they may celebrate and observe the
124		171	days of the Lord and other festivities alike and,
		172	moreover, the Lenten period that is set up and
		173	enacted by the Holy Roman Church, mother and



174	statuta et ordinata ac iuxta consuetudinem	219	mistress of all, and that is usually celebrated and
175	ecclesie Tranensis presentem et futuram	220	observed according to present and future
176	celebrari et observari solita, celebrent et	221	conventions of the church of Trani; their
177	observent; eorum utriusque sexus infantes	222	children of both sexes they may get baptized as
178	quantocius poterunt baptizari ac per loci	223	soon as they can and procure that they get
179	ordinarium confirmari faciant et procurent,	224	confirmed by the Ordinary of the place; they
180	illos quoque orationem Dominicam, symbolum	225	also may educate them in the Lord's Prayer, that
181	fidei, confessionis formam ac alias, quantum	226	is the symbol of faith, and in the form of
182	in eis fuerit, Christianam religionem edoceant	227	confession and in other things of the Christian
183	eorum compadres et commatres fideliter	228	religion as they themselves were; their godfathers
184	venerent; clericalem et monachalem aliosque	229	and godmothers they may faithfully venerate;
185	ecclesiasticos status nullatenus vilipendant,	230	clerics and monastics and those of another
186	sed debitis honore et devotione prosequantur;	231	ecclesiastical status they may despise by no
187	superioribus suis, tam ecclesiasticis quam	232	means, but honor them with reverence and
188	secularibus, devote et fideliter obediant pariter	233	devotion; to their superiors, ecclesiastics and
189	et intendant; illi ex eis, qui ad annos discretionem	234	seculars equally, they may devotionally and
190	pervenerint, singulis Dominicis aliisque festivis	235	faithfully be obedient and applied; those of them
191	diebus, magno cessante impedimento, missam	236	who reached the age of discretion may, as long as
192	integre audiant, et omnia sua peccata saltem	237	they are free from any great impediment, fully
193	semel in anno integre et fideliter confiteantur	238	hear the Mass at every Sunday and at other
194	iuxta canonicas sanctiones, ac iniunctam sibi	239	feasts; and they may fully and faithfully confess
195	penitentiam pro viribus studeant adimplere;	240	all of their sins at least once a year according to
196	suscipiant quoque reverenter, ad minus in	241	canonical sanctions, and they may strive to
197	Pascha, Eucharistie sacramentum, nisi forte de	242	fulfill the penance imposed on them to the best
198	confessoris sui consilio ob aliquam rationabilem	243	of their ability; they also may reverently
199	causam ad tempus ab eius perceptione duxerint	244	receive—at least at Easter—the sacrament of
200	abstinendum; cum infirmitate corporali oppressi	245	Eucharist, unless perhaps at this time they may
201	fuerint, saluberrimum Eucharistie sacramentum	246	be commanded to abstain from its perception by
202	extremamque unctionem ac commendationem	247	counsel of their confessors for any rational
203	anime instantanter postulent devoteque suscipiant	248	reason; when they may be oppressed by corporal
204	necnon ecclesiasticam sepulturam, non	249	infirmity, they may devotionally ask for and
205	omnes, Iudeorum more, sed quilibet in sua	250	receive the most wholesome sacrament of
206	parrochiali, vel aliis ecclesiis, seu ecclesiasticis	251	Eucharist and the Last Rites and the
207	locis eligant; matrimonia quoque inter se et	252	commendation of the soul; furthermore, they
208	cum aliis Christifidelibus iuxta eorum status	253	may choose an ecclesiastical sepulture—not every
209	et conditiones secundum canonicas sanctiones	254	one, as per custom of the Jews, but whichever in
210	contrahant et sic contractis utantur ac in illis	255	their parochial or in other Churches or in
211	permaneant; ab usuris, symonia, turpi questu	256	ecclesiastical places; they may also contract a
212	ac aliis illicitis negotiationibus et contractibus,	257	marriage between them and with other Faithful
213	viciis quoque et presertim capitalibus peccatis	258	in Christ considering their states and conditions
214	abstineant, ac vanitates, impietates et secularia	259	according to canonical sanctions and may enjoy
215	desideria contemnentes, sobrie, iuste, pie et	260	the ones they are related to this way and stay
216	catholice vivant; adventum magni Dei nostri	261	with them; they may abstain from usury, simony,
217	Ihesu Christi fide pura, spe certa et caritate	262	defamation and other illicit business and
218		263	contracts, also from vices and especially from
		264	capital sins, and they may live as contempters of
		265	vanities, impieties and secular desires, soberly,
		266	justly, piously and catholically; they may expect
		267	in pure faith, certain hope and fervid charity the

268	fervida expectantes, si temporalem pariter	316	advent of our great God Jesus Christ, if
269	et eternam ultionem effugere, necnon gratie	317	henceforth they want to escape temporal as well
270	divine premium et misericordiam ac sedis	318	as eternal retribution and to earn the reward of
271	apostolice benivolentiam exinde voluerint	319	divine grace and mercy and the benevolence of
272	promereri Ceterum, ut novelli Christiani	320	the Apostolic See. Furthermore, to ensure that
273	predicti eo ferventius ad nostrorum precepti et	321	the before-mentioned new Christians may be
274	mandati predictorum observantiam incitentur	322	inspired to observe our precept and mandate
275	quo se amplioribus favoribus et gratiis per	323	even more fervently whereby they may notice to
276	nos et sedem ipsam prosequi conspexerint,	324	win themselves ampler favors and graces
277	ex certa scientia et gratia speciali, auctoritate	325	through us and the very See we, by sure
278	apostolica, tenore presentium, omnes et	326	knowledge and special grace, with apostolic
279	singulos novellos Christianos predictos ac	327	authority and the tenor of these presents, from
280	secum coniunctos et participantes, qui ad	328	now on absolve and release each and every one
281	cor reversi de premissis ab intimis dolent, vel	329	of the before-mentioned new Christians and
282	infra dietos quindecim dies doluerint et corde	330	their relatives and participants who suffer deeply
283	penitentes fuerint, ex nunc a cuiusvis heresis	331	because they are taking to the heart the
284	labe, necnon quibuscumque excommunicationis	332	premises, or who will suffer and deeply expiate,
285	suspensionis et interdicti, aliisque sententiis,	333	from any blemish of heresy whatever and,
286	censuris et penis, ecclesiasticis et temporalibus	334	moreover, from whatever excommunications,
287	etiam pecuniariis ac bonorum amissionis,	335	suspensions and interdicts and other sentences,
288	absolvimus et liberamus, necnon absolutos et	336	censures and pains, ecclesiastical and temporal,
289	liberatos fore censemus, omnemque ab eis et	337	also from monetary penalties and deprivation of
290	eorum quolibet inhabilitatis et infamie macula	338	goods; furthermore, we decree that they will be
291	sive notam, per ipsos vel eorum quemlibet,	339	absolved and released, and we abolish every taint
292	premissorum occasione contractam, abolemus	340	or stigma of inability or infamy that was brought
293	decernentes illos ex novellis Christianis	341	upon them by themselves or by any of theirs by
294	predictis, qui mandato et precepto nostris	342	occasion of the premises; we decree that those of
295	huiusmodi infra dietos quindecim dies, realiter	343	the above-mentioned new Christians who may,
296	et cum effectu paruerint, occasione premissae	344	within the said fifteen days, really and effectively
297	vel alterius cuiuscumque heresis per eos	345	obey our mandate and precept may in nowise be
298	hactenus forsitan incurse, nullatenus accusari,	346	accused, inquired, condemned or howsoever
299	inquiri, condemnari, seu alias quomodolibet	347	otherwise brought to court for heresies they
300	in iudicio, vel extra, super personis, vel rebus	348	perhaps incurred thus far by occasion of the said
301	eorum molestari aut perturbari passe, sed per	349	things or by any other circumstances, and
302	quoscumque Christifideles benigne ac cum	350	farther that they cannot be molested or
303	omnibus caritate et benivolentia tractari, et ut	351	perturbed in person or in goods but must be
304	fideles Christianos censi et reputari debere	352	treated benignly and with all charity by all
305	in omnibus et per omnia; necnon quoscumque	353	Faithful in Christ, and counted and thought of
306	processus et sententias contra eos vel ipsorum	354	as faithful Christians in everything and by
307	aliquem, quavis, etiam apostolica auctoritate,	355	everybody; furthermore, we declare entirely
308	quomodolibet habitos et promulgatos, necnon	356	invalid any processes and sentences against them
309	quecumque inde secuta, quarum omnium	357	or any of theirs by whatever authority, even by
310	et singulorum tenores de verbo ad verbum	358	apostolic, howsoever they were held and
311	similiter presentibus haberi volumus pro	359	promulgated, and whatever followed from them;
312	expressis, pro infectis penitus indicamus.	360	this we expressly want to be held in each and
313	Preterea universis Christifidelibus civitatis	361	every tenor and word for word according to the
314	et diocesis ac provincie Tranensis districtus	362	present document. Besides, we inhibit all
315		363	Faithful in Christ in the city and diocese and in
		364	the district of the province of Trani not to



365	inhibemus, ne prefatos novellos Christianos,	413	shun—as aforesaid—the above-mentioned new
366	qui precepto et mandato nostris huiusmodi	414	Christians who may obey our precept and
367	paruerint, ut prefertur, ut hereticos, seu alias	415	mandate like heretics or others that went astray
368	a via veritatis deviantes, evitare, seu per alias	416	from the way of truth, or to make them shunned
369	evitari facere quomodolibet presumant; non	417	by other means howsoever they may presume to;
370	obstantibus constitutionibus et ordinationibus	418	not by opposing constitutions and orders and,
371	necnon privilegiis et litteris apostolicis sub	419	moreover, not by privileges and letters under
372	quibuscumque verbarum formis et clausulis per	420	whatever forms and clauses of words which we
373	nos vel sedem predictam locorum ordinariis	421	or the said See gave to local Ordinaries or
374	vel heretice pravitatis inquisitoribus, aut aliis	422	inquisitors of heretical depravity or any other
375	quibuscumque personis ecclesiasticis,	423	ecclesiastical, secular and regular person, and
376	secularibus et regularibus concessis, ceterisque	424	not by any other contraries. But because we wish
377	contrariis quibuscumque. Cupientes autem, ut	425	that our said precept, mandate, decree and
378	preceptum, mandatum, decretum et inhibiti	426	prohibition and the present letter and everything
379	nostra predicta ipseque presentes littere ac	427	that is contained in it may be given effect as soon
380	omnia alia et singula in illis contenta, debitum	428	as possible we—by apostolic letters—order and
381	quantocius sortiantur effectum, venerabili fratri	429	mandate our venerable brother, the Latin
382	nostro Latino archiepiscopo Tranensi, eiusque	430	archbishop of Trani and his succeeding
383	successoribus archiepiscopis Tranensibus	431	archbishops of Trani (who will be, in respect to
384	qui pro tempore erunt, per apostolica scripta	432	time) that they by themselves or by one or more
385	precipimus et mandamus, quatenus ipsi per se	433	others who may proceed in the full execution of
386	vel alium, seu alias ad plenariam huiusmodi	434	our letter and who may solemnly publish it by
387	nostrarum litterarum executionem procedente	435	apostolic authority where and when, and as often
388	ac illas ubi et quando ac quotiens expedire	436	as it may seem to be useful may take care that
389	viderint, auctoritate apostolica solemniter	437	our precept, mandate, decree and prohibition
390	publicantes, preceptum, mandatum, decretum	438	and each and everything aforesaid contained in
391	et inhibitionem nostram ac omnia et singula in	439	it is observed by the new Christians and the
392	eisdem litteris contenta predicta, per Christianos	440	other above-mentioned Faithful in Christ; and
393	novellos et alias Christifideles prefatos observa	441	by the said apostolic authority they may force
394	faciant, et ad ipsorum observationem eos per	442	and compel them to its observance by
395	censuram ecclesiasticam et alia iuris remedia,	443	ecclesiastical censure and other legal remedies;
396	dicta auctoritate apostolica cogant et compellant	444	furthermore, by the said apostolic authority they
397	necnon contra illos ex novellis Christianis,	445	may proceed against those of the new Christians
398	qui huiusmodi nostris precepto et mandato	446	who may refuse to obey our precept and
399	parere recusaverint, seu ritus, mores et modos	447	mandate, or who may reassume rites, customs
400	per eos dimissos antedictos reassumpserint,	448	and modes that are dismissed by them [the
401	illosque observaverint, aut in eis quomodolibet	449	precept and mandate], and who may observe
402	culpabiles reperti fuerint, dicta auctoritate	450	those, or who may howsoever be found to be
403	apostolica procedant illosque puniant, prout	451	culpably into them; they may punish them
404	de iure fuerit faciendum, facientes, ordinantes	452	according to what, by law, should be done and
405	et exequentes omnia alia et singula que in	453	they may do, order and execute each and
406	premissis et circa ea necessaria fuerint, seu	454	everything else that may be necessary under
407	etiam quomodolibet opportuna; et insuper, hii	455	these premises, or also whatsoever may be
408	per Latinum archiepiscopum et successores	456	opportune; and, in addition, in these matters
409	predictos, per se, vel alium, seu alios habendis,	457	with which the Latin archbishop and the said
410	servatis processibus, eos, quotiens expedierit,	458	successors are concerned by themselves or by
411	aggravare procurent; Contradictores per	459	one or more others they may be careful,
412		460	observing the legal process, as often as it shall be
		461	expedient, to aggravate them [the punishments];



462	censuram ecclesiasticam etc.; invocato ad hoc,	479	objectors by ecclesiastical censure, etc.; without
463	si opus fuerit, auxilio brachii secularis; non	480	appeal and, if necessary, with the help of the
464	Obstantibus felicis recordationis Bonifacii papa	481	secular arm; notwithstanding the decrees of
465	VIII predecessoris nostri ... Nulli ergo etc. ....	482	Pope Boniface VIII., of happy memory, our
466	Si quis etc. Dat. Rome, apud Sanctum Petrum,	483	predecessor ... Nobody therefore, etc. ... If he,
467	anno Incarnationis Dominice millesimo	484	etc. Given in Rome, at Saint Peter, in the year
468	quadringentesimo quadragésimo quinto,	485	1445 of the incarnation of the Lord, on the fourth
469	quarto Kaiendas Martii, anno quinto decimo.	486	Calends of March, in the fifteenth year.
470		487	
471		488	
472		489	
473		490	
474	ex: Shlomo Simsonsohn, ed., <i>The Apostolic</i>	491	
475	<i>See and the Jews</i> , vol. 2, <i>Documents</i>	492	trans. Ch.
476	1394–1464 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute	493	Hoffarth/B. Scheller
477	of Medieval Studies, 1989), pp. 887–91.		
478			



## Conversions in Provence in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

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### INTRODUCTION

I have invested a lot of effort working on the problem of conversions in the late fifteenth century in Provence: studying their typology, going through a rich corpus of documents dating from 1460 to 1530. This corpus is drawn from the ledgers of Christian notaries of the city of Aix, capital of the old Comté de Provence. I have found no less than 300 explicit cases (200 from Aix itself and 100 from Provence) which help establish the converts' identities, both their Jewish past and their new Christian identity.<sup>5</sup> But a description of the actual conversion remains rare. At the invitation of my colleague Ram ben Shalom, whom I would like to thank for this, I am going to submit two cases for the workshop at Beer Sheva:

1. The description of the baptism of Bonet Avigdor d'Arles at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century
2. The baptism of Jean de Marseille who was "a Spanish Jew" at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century

1. Description of the baptism of Bonet Avigdor d'Arles (6 May 1408) written in Provençal  
The scholarly lineage of the Avigdor family of physicians was well known in the ancient Jewish community of Arles, beginning with the father Abraham who together with his young son Salomon translated into Hebrew the medical works of the School of Montpellier (Arnaldo de Villanueva, Gerard de Solo) at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

A Responsum of R. Isaac bar Sheshet mentions the meeting of the judges of the Arles's rabbinical court (=Beit Din?) which took place "at the house of Master Abraham Avigdor, a physician of great renown".

In the past Renan and Neubauer complained about the lack of biographical notes on Salomon, and now the Latin and Provençal reveal that conversion occurred even among members of this distinguished family. Of the four sons of Abraham Avigdor, three very expediently chose the path to Christianity and at a time of relative calm, and one of them even enjoyed royal sponsorship!<sup>6</sup>

Was this caused by personal inspiration? Were they enticed by attempts to attract the Jewish elites? In any case, this was an elite living in proximity of the royal court, as was later the case of Abraham Draguignan and his relatives – another family of learned physicians, rich, wealthy lenders, and providers of large sums of money for the *tallia judeorum*.

Bonet Avigdor, son of Abraham, is described as 20 years old in an act dated 30 March 1408. His conversion, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May of that same year caused a certain commotion because King Louis II, who was at that time in Arles, acted as godfather. The description of the baptism appears in Bertrand Boysset's Chronicle, and here it is in the Provençal:

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<sup>5</sup> *Juifs et néophytes en Provence. L'exemple d'Aix à travers le destin de Régine Abram de Draguignan (1469-1525)*, Préface de Georges Duby, Postface de Gérard Nahon, Paris-Louvain (Peeters), 2001.

<sup>6</sup> D. Iancu-Agou, « Les Juifs d'Arles (1391-1414). Leur aptitude aux sciences (les Avigdor), et à l'accueil de coreligionnaires catalans », paper given in October 2007 at the *III Congrés per a l'estudi dels Jueus en territoris de llengua catalana*, Barcelona-Perpinyà, organised by Tessa Calders i Artis et Esperanza Valls i Pujol. To be published in *Tamid*.



## TEXT 1

*« L'an M.IIIcVIII, lo jorn V de may, se batejet un jusieu, filh que fou de mestre (G)abramet, meje fisician, sa entra, d'Arle, e de Regina, filha que fou de mestre Bendich, jusieu e meje fisician, sa entra, d'Arle, loqual era per son non apelat Bonet.*

*Item, lo Rei Lois lo fes batejar ; vertat es que un quavalier, per son non appellat Monssen ..., lo tenc per lui.*

*Item, l'arsivesqued'Arles, moussen Artau, la mitra tenent sus la testa ; e lo non del filhol fou : Lois Reymon.*

*Item, lo Reis fes far un cadafals ; e sus los cadafals una tina, un luol de font, a aqui fou batejat.*

*Item, batejat que fou, lo meneron a l'autar de San trofeme d'Arles, vest que fou, on ly compliron sis ordes ; compli que fou, fes reverensa al Rey Lois, que era aqui present, e ly remersiat l'armona que facha ly avie ; aprop sy mes dereyre lo Rei ; et ausiron mesa, laquala fou dicha per un monje de san Peyre de Mon majour, que cantet aquel jorn mesa novela ; lo Rei e l'Arsivesque d'Arle e plurons quavaliers et autres gens y foron presens.*

*Item, dicha la mesa, lo filhol si anet dinar a l'ostal del Rei, et dinats que foron, Lois, filhol del Rei sobredig, anet al pardon de San Peyre de Montmajour, an d'autres senhors del Rei ; loqual pardon general era en aquel tems ».*

## TRANSLATION 1

*In the year 1408, the 5th of May a Jew was baptized, who was the son of Master Abramet, a practicing physician, here, from Arles and Regina, daughter of the Jew Master Bendich, a practicing physician here, from Arles, who was nicknamed Bonet.*

*Likewise, King Louis let him get baptized; the truth is that a knight called Monssen... took him under his protection.*

*Likewise, the archbishop of Arles, monsignore Artau, was present with his miter on the head; and the name of the godson was: Louis Raymond.*

*Likewise, King Louis provided a catafalque; and on the catafalque a tent, a baptismal font and there was he baptized..*

*Likewise, as soon as he was baptized, they brought him to the altar of Saint Trophime of Arles, as he was dressed, and there they accomplished six orders; and he was accomplished, he made his reverence to King Louis who was present there and he thanked for the alms he had made on his behalf; and he came closer behind the king; and they heard the mass that was recited by a monk of Saint Peter of Montmajoir who sang on this day a new Mass in the presence of the king, the archbishop of Arles, several knights and other people.*

*Likewise, after the mass was said, went to have dinner in the king's house, and after they had dinner, Louis, the aforementioned kings' godson went to the Pardon (pilgrimage) of Saint Peter of Montmajour with other sirs of the king and that Pardon was general by that time.*

The baptism took place at Saint-Trophime d'Arles where Bonet – whose medical antecedents are well noted (“son of maitre Abramet d'Arles and Regine, she herself being the daughter of Bendich, physician of Arles”) was brought to the baptismal font in the presence of the officiating archbishop of Arles, nobles of the king's entourage, many knights, and various other people. Once the Mass was finished, the king's godson went

to dine at the royal palace. The young convert obtained the pardon of Saint Pierre de Montmajour, as well as that of the other lords of the king's entourage.

The 45 minutes left for discussion will allow me to give more details on the conversions of the brothers Bonet (including that of Salomon Avigdor himself), the genealogy and fate of this well-known family, and by extension that of these Jewish elites, learned, scholarly, closely related, forming a kind of medical oligarchy. They are ever present in the archives, their wealthy members making use of Christian notaries, representing their group, mediating conflicts, collecting the *tallia*, interceding with the rulers of the Comté: they are such good mediators that they are sought out or even wooed by the rulers, by the Church, and they often end up denying their past, lured by the temptations of the majority religion. As rationalists, heirs of their glorious forefathers of those times of Languedoc when it was necessary to translate from the Arabic into Hebrew, at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century they are eager to acquire the scientific instruments of the Christian doctors, they learn Latin, they attempt to join the *studium* of the "Ville du Mont", and thanks to their translations from Latin into Hebrew<sup>7</sup>, they render more accessible the works of "the erudite Christians and their scholars of the venerable university which has its seat in the city of Montpellier": this laudatory formula appears in 1379 in Abraham Avigdor's Introduction to the Book of Fevers by Gérard de Solo. This is why they take the path to conversion (according to of Léon Joseph de Carcassonne de Perpignan), often in order to obtain desirable academic titles. In any case, they foreshadow the spreading phenomenon of the slackening of religious commitment that will become more pronounced during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, ever since the relatively benevolent rule of King René.

2. Baptism of Jean de Marseille who was "a Spanish Jew" at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Communal archives of Marseille CC 203, f° 269v°, 16 May 1488 ; published as P.J. n°32 in *Juifs et néophytes ...*, op.cit., p. 531).

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D. Iancu-Agou, « La pratique du latin chez les médecins juifs et néophytes de Provence médiévale (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles) », in *Latin into hebrew : Texts and Studies*, Volume One : Studies, Edited by Resianne Fontaine et Gad Freudenthal, Leiden-Boston (Brill), 2013, p. 85-102.

## TEXT 2

*Baptême de Jean de Marseille qui « était juif espagnol » à la fin du XVe siècle (Archives communales de Marseille, CC 203, f° 269v°, 16 mai 1488 ; donné en P.J. n°32 in Juifs et néophytes ..., op.cit., p. 531).*

*1488 die XVI de may*

*La despenssa facha al fillolayge que feron los consouls per et en nom de la cieutat al baptejar de Johan de Masselha qual era judieu espanhol.*

*Primo per XI pals de drap per la siena rauba, monta, floreni VII*

*Item per 1 par de caussas, floreni II, grossi IIII*

*Item per lo gippon, floreni II*

*Item per la faysson de la rauba et de la jaqueta [f° 270], grossi VI*

*Item per lo drap de la jaqueta, monta grossi X, quaterni II*

*Item per I bonet et I par de sabbates, grossi VI*

*Item per una camisa et I cubrica, grossi IX*

*Item per lo bayssar del drap et agulhetas*

*Item per I toicha*

*Item per lo noyrir de VIII jors et dormir, monta floreni I, grossi III*

*Summa : florini XI, grossi VIII, quaterni II.*

## TRANSLAION 2

*1488, 16th of May*

*The expenditure made in honor of the godsonship (conversion) that the consuls made in the name of the city on the occasion of the baptism of John of Marseilles who was a Spanish Jew.*

*First, sixteen measures of woollen fabric for his cloths for a cost of seven florins.*

*Likewise, for a pair of shoes, two florins and four grossi coins.*

*Likewise, for the gippon cloth, two florins.*

*Likewise, for the fashion of the cloth and of the jacket, six grossi coins.*

*Likewise, for the woollen fabric of the jacket for a cost of ten grossi coins and two quadrans*

*Likewise for a hat and a pair of shoes, six grossi coins.*

*Likewise for a shirt and a coat, nine grossi coins.*

*Likewise for embroidery of the woollen fabric and the ornamental cord*

*Likewise for one toga*

*Likewise for food and accomodation during eight days for a cost of one florin and three grossi coins*

*Total: eleven florins, eight grossi coins, two quarans*

These is a list of expenses incurred for the day of conversion: clothes for the baptized (cloth for the gowns, coat and trimmings, hose, doublet, hat, clogs, shirts, sheet, and “aiguillettes” [metal tipped laces])<sup>8</sup> money for food and lodging for eight days.

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<sup>8</sup> « aiguillettes » : extrémités métalliques ou pointues d'une mince lanière (tresse ou cordon ainsi ferré) pour



The traditional attitude of the church regarding the conversion of the Jews, generally adopted by the Christian lay authorities, favored the giving of gifts and alms to neophytes who converted willingly. The third Lateran Council (1179) clearly decreed that: "converts ought to be in better circumstances than they had been before accepting the Faith".

We cannot fail to mention the observations of Abbé Arnaud d'Agnel on the ambiguity of King René's treatment of his Jewish subjects: he cites many examples where the king has acted as godfather for neophytes and gave them presents to reward them for their conversion: gifts of clothes given to Jews who the "king made to baptize" are listed in the royal accounts of 1472 under "woolen cloths distributed during those four months by the [royal] officials and by others at the king's orders"

Here and there one finds 11 palms (units of measure) of gray cloth made by the tailor Morice for the Jew who King René had baptized in Avignon, or as in our example of a much later date, 1488, a full suit of clothes worth 15 florins which includes: hose, doublet, gown, shirts, hat, shoulder ornaments and a bonnet that the king gave the little Jew who was baptized on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May in Salon in his presence.

These are clothes of good quality, similar to those worn by royal servants, to whom these neophytes wish to resemble by making use of these gifts. In any case, dressing an aspiring convert was an accepted practice (for example in Venice during the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The expression "to clothe a Jew" was metaphorically meant to have him baptised.<sup>9</sup>

The Marseille case of 1488 foreshadows the arrival of Iberian exiles who do not fail to appear there after the fateful year 1492. Marseille is going to be considerably affected by that major uprooting: it is useful here to cite the well-known article of Isidore Loeb, published at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which mentions a group of 118 Aragonese Jews who arrived at the port of Marseille on the 21 of August 1492.<sup>10</sup> I shall allow myself to refer to my work, and an article soon to be published in which I can add 80 more exiles that can be identified by names such as Abudaram, Abensussen, Alphandéry, Abolaffia, Cavalier, Adventurier, etc.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> D. Iancu-Agou, « La pratique du latin chez les médecins juifs et néophytes de Provence médiévale (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles) », in *Latin into hebrew : Texts and Studies*, Volume One : Studies, Edited by Resianne Fontaine et Gad Freudenthal, Leiden-Boston (Brill), 2013, p. 85-102.

<sup>4</sup> « aiguillettes » : extrémités métalliques ou pointues d'une mince lanière (tresse ou cordon ainsi ferré) pour réunir, en les lançant ou en les nouant, les différentes parties du costume (ou pièces d'armures). Ce terme s'applique à tout ou partie de l'objet.

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réunir, en les lançant ou en les nouant, les différentes parties du costume (ou pièces d'armures). Ce terme s'applique à tout ou partie de l'objet. **Trans**: thin metal tipped cords or laces used to gather or tie up various pieces of clothing (or armor). This term is used equally for the entire set or just single pieces of lashing.

<sup>9</sup> Ariel Toaff, *Le marchand de Pérouse...*, p. 209 et 226-227.

<sup>10</sup> I. Loeb, « Un convoi d'exilés d'Espagne à Marseille en 1492 », *REJ*, 1887, p. 66-76.

<sup>11</sup> *Juifs et néophytes...*, 2001, p. 219 ; et « Juifs aragonais et castillans en transit, installés ou convertis à Marseille. Documents inédits (1488-1508) », forthcoming.



## **Session 8**

# **Married, with children: conversion, marriage, and inheritance in medieval England**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Jews of medieval England occupied a precarious position for the majority of their time in the country, but their traditions and laws were protected by royal decree and under English common law. Jewish converts, on the other hand, had no such protections. Their interaction with royal administration and the common law was never consistent. The more cases like this are discussed, the closer we might get to a fuller understanding of a Jewish convert's place in thirteenth century English society—where they were perhaps seen as neither Jew nor Christian.

The above text is a recording of a plea in the 1235 Hertfordshire eyre. It details a plea brought before the assize, asking for a decision to be made as to what, if any, of the land concerned is held by the two daughters of a Jewish convert. Cecilia and Maud were pleading against their brother, Andrew. The case hinged upon the status of another brother, Richard, and whether or not he was legitimate. This text raises several interesting issues. Primarily, what was the status of children begotten after the conversion of their parents to Christianity? Legally they were the same as any other Christians, but in practice this may not have been the case. Conversely, what was the position of children born before the conversion of their parents to Christianity, and how were they treated under the law, especially vis-à-vis their siblings who were born post-conversion? Concerning the converts themselves, what was the legitimacy of a Jewish marriage once the husband and wife converted? The thirteenth century popes had much to say on the topic, but it was not uniform, and the law seems to have been applied differently depending on context. The notion of a changed personality upon conversion is also brought forward by this case—was a Jew always a Jew, despite conversion, or could a Jew truly become a Christian? These questions, and others, will be discussed in the paper, by way of Cecilia and Maud's case, as well as other similar cases involving conversion, marriage, bastardy, and legitimacy.



## TEXT

### 1235 Hertfordshire eyre (JUST 1/80, m.3d)

**Essex.** Assisa venit recognitura si Willelmus le Covers pater Cecilie et Matillidis fuit seisitus etc. de xvj acris terre et j acra prati cum pertinenciis in Lumburne die etc. Et si etc. Quam terram et pratum Andreas le Draper tenet.

Qui venit et dicit quod non debet ad hoc breve respondere quia ipse Cecilia et Matillis habent quendam fratrem Ricardum nomine de eodem patre et eadem matre qui vivit. Et petit iudicium si debeat [eis] respondere.

Et Cecilia et Matillis bene cognoscunt quod predictus Ricardus est frater earum set nichil potest clamare in terra illa quia Willelmus pater earum fuit Judeus et antequam conversus fuit ad fidem et baptisatus generavit ipse predictum Ricardum de matre earum in sunantagio et postea cum conversus fuerat ad fidem desponsavit ipse matrem earum et genuit de ea predictas Ceciliam et Matillidem.

Et Andreas bene cognoscit quod predictus Ricardus fuit natus antequam mater earum fuit desponsata quia cognoscit quod eodem die quo Willelmus fuit baptisatus fuit et idem Ricardus baptisatus et nichil aliud dicit.

Ideo consideratum est quod Cecilia et Matillis recuperent seisinam suam et Andreas in misericordia.

## TRANSLATION

**Essex.** An assize comes to find whether William the Convert, father of Cecilia and Maud, was seized of etc. of sixteen acres of land and one acre of meadow with appurtenances in Lambourne on the day, etc. And if, etc. Which land and meadow Andrew le Draper holds.

Who comes and says that he is not obliged to respond to this writ, because he, Cecilia, and Maud have a brother, Richard by name, who is alive, of the same father and same mother. And he seeks a judgment if he is obliged to answer to them.

Cecilia and Maud readily acknowledge that the said Richard is their brother, however, he is in no way able to claim right in this land because their father William was a Jew and before he was converted to the faith and baptised, he himself fathered the said Richard with their mother in concubinage, and afterwards when he had been converted to the faith he married their mother, and he begot from her the aforementioned Cecilia and Maud.

Andrew readily acknowledges that the said Richard was born before their mother had been married, because he acknowledges that on the same day that William was baptised, so too was Richard; he says nothing else.

So it is adjudged that Cecilia and Maud are to recover their seisin and Andrew is in mercy.



## Session 9

# **The Institutionalization of Conversion in the Iberian Realms**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

By 1479, with civil war finished in Castile, Isabel and Fernando turned their attention to Granada. The launching of a great campaign, in the form of a crusade, gave place to a number of new situations in the kingdom. Mudejars (Muslims living under Christian rule in Castile) could remain in their places, but a new tax was designed for them to pay for the war against Granada, the *castellano de oro*. For organizational purposes, they were finally enclosed in morerías, after several unsuccessful attempts in previous years. The campaign lasted from 1480 to 1492, and finished with the defeat of the Nasrid dynasty in Granada.

Despite repeated laws issued by the Papacy forbidding contacts among Christians and Muslims across common borders, all the sceneries of crusading activity were privileged places for these exchanges. Muslim mediation for captives reached Northern Castile during the War of Granada (1480-1492), Muslim *almotacenes* travelled North and it was difficult to distinguish free Muslims from those in captivity travelling across the country. These contacts seem to have been regular. They defied Christian local authorities –town councils (*concejos*), Military Orders and their tenants- in a direct, straight dialogue with the Crown. Differentiation of all these groups became vital during the war.

Before the massive conversions of Muslims after 1502 in Castile, there were several types of Muslims who sought conversion to Christianity in the kingdom of Castile: few Mudejars who did so from personal conviction, or more importantly, the adventurers, mercenaries, captives and men of fortune who lived on the geographical and political frontier of Granada. In the case of the renegades who were witnesses to how the Castilian frontier was gradually advancing southwards, the desire to avoid the death penalty decreed by the Castilian *Fuero Real* as a punishment for apostasy was undoubtedly a factor of paramount importance. Conversions at the frontier became common during the campaigns that took place in the Granadan border during the whole 15<sup>th</sup> century. Responsibility for catechising and subsequent baptism would have been placed in the hands of the army chaplains in those cases where Muslims passed over to the Castilian army during a campaign against Granada and expressed their desire to change faith at that time, or the priests in the cities and towns where captives were taken as prisoners. Their Muslim names are seldom kept in the records. In some cases the king himself is known to have sponsored the new converts, others were sponsored by leading figures at court, or governors and authorities of frontier castles. Their first names appear in baptism records from 1500– 1502 in various areas of Castile showing a trend to adopt the godfather's given name: Juan, Fernando (more common in 1455–56), Pedro, Alonso and Diego. A placename substituted their surname.

In the case of captives, they were distributed as booty after the campaigns and left the frontier with their owners. Once they were certain they would not recover their freedom, some of them might convert to Christianity, thus looking for a better life, sometimes as freedmen. The need to secure the circulation of free converts without being captured again and re-sold as slaves, explains the appearance of these certificates.

The Archive of Murcia holds one of the best collections of local archives in Castile. Partly published by Prof. Torres Fontes and his disciples after 1980, it still offers new perspectives and details about life in the frontier and beyond.



## TEXT 1

### Certificate of Baptism issued for Juan de Castilla, formerly a Muslim. Toledo, 14 September 1481<sup>1</sup>

Fe de commo es christiano Juan de Castilla.

Manifiesta e conocida cosa sea a todos e a cada vno de los que el thenor de la presente escriptura vieren commo en la muy noble cibdad de Toledo, Juan de Castilla, mostrador de la presente, conosciendo el error de la perfidia mahometana, inspirado por don e gracia del Espíritu Santo que muchas vezes pulso a las rejas de su coraçon e anima, en el qualquier pensamiento asi commo cathecumino contemplo por algunos dias e demandando ser...

(borrado) instruydo en la fe de Jhesuchristo, e por la dicha inspiración del Espíritu Santo vino en conocimiento del error en que fasta alli avia biuido.

E demandando en esta dicha cibdad el bautismo, creyendo firmemente aquella palabra que el Saluador dize en el su Santo Evangelio que ninguno que non fuese bautizado por agua e Espíritu Santo entrara en el regno de los cielos, el qual sacramento es puerta e principio de todos los otros sacramentos de la Yglesia, en virtud de los quales e del thesoro de la sagrada pasyon de Jhesuchristo donde ellos hemanaron, el dicho Juan espero con toda firmeza ser saluo e alcanzar remisión de todos sus pecados, e asy demandando el dicho bautismo en esta dicha cibdad commo dicho es. El qual lo ministro Alfonso López, clérigo, cura de San Gines, desta dicha cibdad, segund que fue presentado por el noble e magnifico sennor Gómez Manrique, Corregidor e Justicia Mayor de la dicha cibdad e del Consejo del rey nuestro sennor, a las puertas de la yglesia parrochal de la Madalena desta dicha cibdad, en el sacrofonte donde el dicho Juan demandando por sy el dicho bautismo e respondió en vno con el dicho sennor Gómez Manrique a todas las preguntas que le fueron fechas por el dicho cura rrequeridas en el dicho sacramento e asy con toda deuocion e catolica fe, segund que de todo yo el dotor Fernando Sánchez Calderón, Arcediano de Mayorga e del Consejo del Rey e de la Reyna nuestros sennores, canónigo e obrero de la santa Yglesia de Toledo e vicario general en lo espiritual e tenporal en todo el arzobispado de Toledo por el muy reuerendo in Christo padre y sennor don Alfonso Carrillo, por la diuina miseración Arcobispo de Toledo, primado en mando de las Espannas, Chanciller Mayor de Castilla e del su Consejo, fuy ynformado por ante el notario e testigos ynfrascriptos; la cual ynformacion por mi asy auida e rrescibida, por el dicho Juan omilmente me fue pedido e rogado que le yo diese e mandase dar mi carta testimonial de commo el era e es chrístiano e fuera bautizado e va libre e forro de toda seruidumbre.

E yo considerando todo lo susodicho auer pasado e ser asy, por la dicha ynformacion por mi auida e rrescibida, mánde de dar e di esta carta testimonial por ante el notario e testigos ynfrascriptos, por la cual yntimo e notifico a todas e qualesquier personas de qualquier estado e preheminencia o condición que sean donde el dicho Juan se acaescire, que es christiano e libre e no es obligado a cualquier seruidumbre e que lo traten por tal e reciban en los oficios diuinos e le administren los sacramentos eclesyasticos, porque en esto el conosca quanto mayor es tratado por auer desamparado el error en que antes biuia e escogido la ley christiana, que es ley verdadera e católica e syn ningund error.

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<sup>1</sup> Registro de Cartas de los Reyes Católicos (1478-1488), Murcia Municipal Archives, fol. 190. Ed. E. Sáez and J. Torres Fontes, "Dos conversiones interesantes", *Al-Andalus*, IX (1944), pp. 510-512.

E para mayor firmeza de lo que dicho es e seguridad suya, mandele dar e di esta carta sygnada de notario apostólico e infrascripto e firmada de mi nombre e sellada con mi sello, que fue fecha en la muy noble cibdad de Toledo catorze dias del mes de setiembre anno del nascimiento del nuestro Saluador Jhesuchristo de mill e quatrocientos e ochenta e vn annos. Testigos que fueron presentes: Alfonso de Quemada, capellan de la Santa yglesia de Toledo, e

Pedro de Santamarina e Juan de Prado, criados del dicho sennor dotor. — Fernando, doctor. E yo Juan Porcel, escriuano e notario publico dado por las avtoridades apostólicas e rreal e arzobispal de Toledo e publico notario perpetuo, vno de los de numero de la corte e avdiencia metropolitana arçobispal de Toledo, presente fuy a todo lo que dicho es, en vno con los dichos testigos e de rruego e pedimiento del dicho Juan e de mandamiento del dicho sennor dotor e vicario susodicho, esta presente carta de testimonio de mi mano escreui e por ende fiz aqui este mio acostumbrado sygno a tal en testimonio de verdad requerido. — *Juan Porcel*, appostolico notario.

## TRANSLATION 1

Certificate to prove that Juan de Castilla is a Christian

Let it be known by all and each of those who see this scripture, that in the most noble city of Toledo, Juan de Castilla, who shows this statement, knowing about the error of the Muhammadan evilness, inspired by the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit –which often knocked the grill of his heart and soul in any thought-, he contemplated for some days as a catechumen and asked to be instructed in the faith of Jesus Christ, and due to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he came to know the error in which he had been living until then. And asking for baptism in this said city –believing strongly the word that the Saviour says in the Holy Gospel that nobody who had not been baptised with water and the Holy Spirit will enter the Kingdom of Heavens, for this sacrament is the door and principle of all the other sacraments in the Church, for which, and thanks to Jesuschrist's sacred passion where they became brothers-, the said Juan waited with all firmness to be save and reach the atonement of all his sins, and so he asked for the said baptism in this city, as has been said.

It was administered by Alfonso Lopez, clergyman, priest of St. Gines of the said city, where he was introduced by the noble and magnificent lord Gomez Manrique, corregidor and major judge of the city, and member of the King our lord's Council, at the doors of the parrish church of the Magdalene of the said city, in the sacred fountain where the same Juan asked for baptism for himself. And he answered to all the questions required for the sacrament he was asked by the mentioned priest, together with the said lord Gomez Manrique, and so with all devotion and catholic faith, as I –doctor Fernando Sanchez Calderón, archdean of Mayorga, of the Council of the King and Queen our lords, chaplain and worker of the holy Church of Toledo and general vicar (judge) in all the archbishopric of Toledo for the reverend father in Christ lord Alfonso Carrillo, for God's grace Archbishop of Toledo, primate of Spain, Great Chancellor of Castile and [member] of the [royal] Council- was informed before the notary and the witnesses written below. Having received such information, the said Juan humbly asked and begged me to give and order him to be given a witnessing letter about how he was a Christian, and had been baptised, and may go free and enfranchised of all serfdom.

And as I considered that all the aforementioned had indeed happened and was so, due to the information I had received, I ordered him to be given, and I gave him this letter of testimony before the notary and witnesses specified below. By which I tell and notify all the people of any state, preeminence or condition who may be wherever the said Juan happens to be, that he is a free Christian, and he is not obliged to any serfdom, and so he should be treated, and be received in the divine office and administered the Church sacraments, so that he may know how much better he is treated for having abandoned the error in which he used to live, having chosen the Christian law, that is the truthful and catholic and without error.

And for more firmness of what has been said, and for his safety, I ordered this letter to be given to him, signed by the Apostolic notary, and signed by me, and sealed with my seal, written in the very noble city of Toledo, the 14th day of the month of September of the year 1481 of Our Saviour Jesuschrist's birth. Witnesses who were present: Alfonso de Quemada, chaplain of the Holy Church of Toledo, and Pedro de Santamaría and Juan de Prado, servants of the said sir doctor. –Fernando doctor.

And I, Juan Porcel, scribe and notary public given by the apostolic, royal and archiepiscopal authorities of Toledo, and perpetual notary public of the number of the metropolitan archiepiscopal court and tribunal of Toledo, was there in the said business, together with the said witnesses, and begged by the said Juan and ordered by the said sir doctor and vicar, I wrote this letter of testimony with my own hand and placed here my usual sign as the required testimony of the truth. –Juan Porcel, Apostolic notary.

## TEXT 2

### Certificate of Reconciliation issued for Cristóbal de Chillón, who converted twice. Alcalá la Real, 4 October 1483<sup>2</sup>

Testimonio de commo es christiano Christoual de Chillón

En la noble e leal cibdad de Alcalá la Real jueues nueue dias del mes de otubre anno del nascimiento del nuestro Saluador Jhesuchisto de mili e quatrocientos e ochenta e tres annos. Este dia en la yglesia de Santa Maria desta dicha cibdad, dentro en el cuerpo de la dicha yglesia, estando ende en ella mucha gente de ornes e mugeres de los vezinos e moradores desta dicha cibdad e otros, y estando presente Ruy López de Jaén, clérigo preste de misa, capellán de la dicha yglesia, e a presencia de mi Diego Sánchez de Alcalá, escriuano publico desta dicha cibdad e de los testigos yusoescritos, parescio vn ome que se dixo por nombre Christoual de Chillón, mancebo, que segund su aspeto parescia ser de hedad de veynte e dos o veynte e tres annos, poco mas o menos tienpo, e dixo que el seyendo, commo fue, moro de naturaleza e traydo cabtiuuo desde ninno de teta, que se crio catiuo en poder del sennor Martin Ferrandez, Alcayde de los Donceles, sennor de las villas de Chillón e Lucena e Espejo, que Dios aya; e después del fалlescido, en poder del sennor Diego Ferrandez su fyjo, Alcayde de los Donceles, sennor de las dichas villas; e fue tornado christiano e rrescibio agua de bautysmo en la villa de Chillón.

<sup>2</sup> Registro de Cartas de los Reyes Católicos (1478-1488), Murcia Municipal Archives, fol. 190. Ed. E. Sáez and J. Torres Fontes, “Dos conversiones interesantes”, *Al-Andalus*, IX (1944), pp. 510–512.

E que estando asy christiano, que el dicho sennor Diego Ferrandez, Alcayde de los Donceles, lo tenia por su esclauo, e que por cobdicia e deseo de ser libre e horro, al tiempo que el Rey nuestro sennor fue a la vega de Granada este dicho presente anno, el se paso a la dicha cibdad de Granada e se torno moro. E que estando en la dicha cibdad tornado moro, que guardo tienpo e se junto con vn elche que se dezia Bexir e amos a dos de vna concordia e concierto acordaron de se venir a tierra de christianos a se rreconciliar en la nuestra Santa fe católica e tomaron vn ninno fyjo de Rodrigo de Benauides que estaua en la dicha cibdad de Granada por rrehen de ciertos maravedís en poder de los dichos ginoueses e lo troxeron a esta dicha cibdad para lo dar e entregar al dicho Rodrigo de Benauides, su padre.

Por ende dixo al dicho Ruy López clérigo que por que sienpre fue y es su deseo de biuir e morar en la dicha fe de nuestro sennor Jhesuchristo e en ella syenpre permanecer fasta la muerte. Por ende dixo que le pedia e pidió que lo rreconciliara en la santa fe por que el era y es su gusto e voluntad, e luego el dicho Ruy López estando el dicho Christoual desnudo en carnes de la cinta arriba e el dicho Ruy López con un libro en la mano e el dicho Christoual fincado de rrodillas ante el e dándole ciertos acotes el dicho Ruy López le pregunto [las preguntas] que a rreconciliacion se rrequiere, a las quales el dicho Christoual rrespondio e satisfyzo por manera que el dicho Ruy López clérigo dixo que lo auia e touo por rreconciliado al dicho Christoual en la santa fe católica. E desto en commo paso el dicho Christoual dixo que lo pedia e pidió por testimonio para guarda e conseruacion de su derecho e yo dile ende este, segund que ante mi paso; que es fecho en la dicha cibdad de Alcalá la Real el dicho dia e mes e anno susodicho de mill e quatrocientos e ochenta e tres annos.

A lo qual fueron presentes por testigos llamados e rrogados el alcayde Pero Fernandez de Aranda e Pedro de Aranda jurado e Goncalo de Aranda fyjo del dicho alcayde e Goncalo de

Aranda fyjo de Alonso Ferrandez e Ruy Pérez de Harana e Pedro de Rybas e Andrés López de

Pareja vezinos e moradores desta dicha cibdad de Alcalá la Real. Ruy López clérigo. Yo, Diego Sánchez de Avila, escriuano publico de la dicha cibdad de Alcalá la Real fuy presente a lo sobredicho que de mi faze mención a vno con los dichos clérigos e padrinos e testigos e so testigo e fize aquí este mio signo en testimonio.

— Diego Sánchez.

## TRANSLATION 2

Certificate to prove that Christophorus of Chillon is a Christian

En the noble and faithful city of Alcalá la Real, on Thursday, the 9th day of October of the year 1483 of Our Saviour Jesuschrist's birth. This said day, in the church of St. Mary of the said city, in the building of the said church, being there a great number of men and women who are neighbours and inhabitants of the said city and others, and being there Ruy Lopez de Jaen, clergyman and priest, chaplain of the aforementioned church, and in my presence, Diego Sánchez de Alcala, notary public of the said city and the witnesses written below, a man appeared who said he was called Christophorus of Chillon, a youth, who according to his aspect seemed to be around twenty two or twenty three years old, more or less age, and said that being, as he was, a Moor by birth and captured from his tender age, he was brought up as a captive by lord Martin Ferrandez, governor of the fortress (alcayde) of Los Donceles, lord of the towns of Chillon, Lucena and Espejo, may he rest in peace. And after his death, he was under the power of lord Diego Ferrandez, his son, governor of the fortress of Los Donceles, lord of the said towns. He was turned Christian and received the waters of baptism in the town of Chillon, and being a Christian like this, his said master Diego Ferrandez, governor of the fortress of Los Donceles still had him as a slave, so for his greed and desire to be free and enfranchised, when the King our lord went to the meadows of Granada this year, he crossed to the city of Granada and became a Muslim. Being in the said city, once he had become a Muslim, he remained for some time, and then met an elche who was called Bexir. Both in concordance agreed to return to the land of Christians to reconcile with our holy catholic faith, and took a child, son of Rodrigo de Benavides, who was kept in Granada as a hostage for some maravedis, in the hands of the Genoese, and brought him to the said city to give him back to his father Rodrigo de Benavides. Therefore, he [Christophorus] told the said Ruy Lopez, clergyman that because it has always been and still is his will to live and stay in the said faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to remain there forever until his death, therefore he asked him to reconcile him in the holy faith because such was his pleasure and choice. Then the mentioned Ruy Lopez, once the said Christophorus was barechest, and Ruy Lopez holding a book in his hand, and the said Christophorus knelt before him. While beating him, the said Ruy Lopez asked –the questions- required for reconciliation, to which the said Christophorus answered and gave satisfaction, in such a way that the said clergyman Ruy Lopez stated that he had him for reconciled in the holy catholic faith.

And the said Christophorus asked for a testimony of how all this took place, for the safeguard and preservation of his rights. And I gave him this certificate, such as it was that it came before me, made in the city of Alcalá la Real the said day, month and year aforementioned of 1483. Before which were present as required and beseeched witnesses the governor Pero Fernandez de Aranda and the juror Pedro de Aranda and Gonçalo de Aranda, the son of the governor, and Gonçalo de Aranda son of Alonso Ferrandez, and Ruy Perez de Harana and Pedro de Rybas and

Andres Lopez de Pareja, all of them neighbours and inhabitants of the said city of Alcalá la Real. Ruy Lopez, clergyman.

I, Diego Sanchez de Avila, notary public of the said city of Alcalá la Real, was there in the said business, where I am mentioned together with the said clergymen, godfathers, witnesses, and I am myself a witness, and place here my sign as a testimony. –Diego Sánchez.





## **Maimonides' Response to Obadiah the Convert<sup>12</sup>**

Alan Verskin  
University of Rhode Island

### **INTRODUCTION**

Muslim converts to Judaism are few in number. Because Islamic law prohibited nonMuslims from proselytizing and mandated the death penalty for Muslims who apostatized, conversion posed a danger not just to converts but also to the Jewish communities which accepted them. To mitigate these dangers, converts often emigrated in order to escape notice.<sup>1314</sup> Translated here is Maimonides' responsum to "Obadiah the righteous convert" who was very likely a former Muslim. Very little is known about Obadiah. No writings by him survive. We hear his voice only through Maimonides' paraphrase of the questions that he wrote to him. Some manuscripts identify Obadiah as a Muslim convert who fled his home for Palestine.<sup>3</sup> That he was once a Muslim is plausible given that, although Maimonides does not identify his former religion, part of the responsum is devoted to an analysis of Islam.

Maimonides's responsum to Obadiah covers four main areas: (1) liturgical matters, (2) free will versus determinism, (3) the monotheistic nature of Islam, and (4) the status of converts in Judaism. He first addresses the question of whether converts are required to change the words of their prayers to acknowledge that their ancestors were not part of the Jewish people. For example, Obadiah asks whether he is permitted to say such liturgical phrases as, "God of our fathers," given that his ancestors were not Israelites. Maimonides responds that the community of Abraham the Patriarch is not solely comprised of his biological descendants but also of those who, like Abraham himself, came to understand monotheistic truths. Thus, when the liturgy references connections to Abraham, he argues that they apply with equal force to converts. Maimonides does add, however, that it is permissible, but not mandated, for Obadiah to alter liturgical passages which reference the participation of "our" ancestors in the exodus from Egypt.

It should be noted that Maimonides' attitude to converts seems to have undergone development. In the first version of his *Commentary on the Mishnah*, he indicated that there were certain circumstances in which a convert was obliged to pray differently from a Jew-from-birth. Later,

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<sup>12</sup> Joshua Blau, *Teshuvot Ha-Rambam* (Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1960), 2: no. 293, pp. 2: 548-50, no. 436, pp.

<sup>13</sup> : 714-16, and no. 448, pp. 2: 725-28.

<sup>14</sup> Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 2: 304. <sup>3</sup> 2: 548, n.

however, he altered his commentary to erase these differences. Reflecting this view, he writes in the *Mishneh Torah*:<sup>15</sup> “The righteous convert is like the Israelite in every respect.”<sup>16</sup>

Maimonides deals with a conflict between Obadiah and his Rabbi over whether or not Muslims, whom he calls Ishmaelites, are idolaters. Obadiah argues that Muslims are monotheists, but his rabbi considers them idolaters on the grounds of his understanding of their rituals of worship in Mecca. Maimonides sides with Obadiah arguing that Islam is a monotheistic religion. Because Obadiah’s rabbi shamed and belittled him in the course of this disagreement, Maimonides introduces a discussion on the status and treatment of converts in Judaism. The Torah, he says, seldom prescribes a duty of love. Parents are to be feared and honored, prophets are to be heeded, but only converts and God Himself must be loved. This, he says, is an indication of the importance which the Torah attaches to the good treatment of converts. Maimonides is deeply impressed with Obadiah whom he praises for his wisdom. From another responsum, we know that he believed that a convert’s intellectual leap from Islam to Judaism was even more difficult than from Christianity to Judaism. In his view, this was because of the lack of a shared scripture between Islam and Judaism and because of Islamic beliefs that the biblical text was corrupt.<sup>17</sup> Maimonides indicates that only a truly gifted individual would be able to reason his way out of Islam and join the Jewish community at risk to his life and livelihood.

In another section of the responsum, Maimonides supports Obadiah’s objections to his rabbi’s belief in predestination and the limitations which it places on human free will. It is not clear what, if any, bearing this disagreement has on Obadiah’s conversion. It is noteworthy, however, that Obadiah endorses the free will doctrine dominant among Jews, whereas his rabbi endorses the doctrine dominant among Muslims.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Obadiah was attracted to Judaism because it theorized a greater sphere for human action. If this is the case, it is possible that he clashed with his rabbi when the latter advocated a view in harmony with the dominant Islamic doctrine of predestination.

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<sup>15</sup> Maimonides, *Mishnah ‘im perush Rabenu Moshe ben Maimon*, ed. Yosef Kafah (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1963-68), Bikkurim 1: 4 and Moshe Halbertal, *Maimonides: Life and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 95.

<sup>16</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, ed. Yohai Makbili (Neveh Sha’anani: Mif’al Mishneh Torah, 2007), *Hilkhot Shabbat* 20: 14, p. 200.

<sup>17</sup> Blau, *Teshuvot Ha-Rambam*, no. 149, 1: 284-85.

<sup>18</sup> Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 94 ff.

## Notes on the Translation

The surviving versions of Maimonides' responsum to Obadiah are written in Hebrew. It is possible that Maimonides wrote in Hebrew in order to conceal this sensitive subject from a Muslim audience. It is also possible, however, that this text is a translation of a Judeo-Arabic original. Joshua Blau presents Maimonides' letter to Obadiah as three separate responsa. Yitzhak Shailat, however, has suggested that it is likely that they originally formed a single text and I have followed this suggestion in my translation.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Maimonides, like other rabbinic writers, uses the Hebrew word *ger* to signify "convert." He thus interprets biblical passages which reference the *ger* as dealing with converts. In biblical Hebrew, however, *ger* does not mean a convert in this sense. To indicate this difference in meaning, I have translated *ger* in biblical passages as "stranger," but have translated it as "convert" when Maimonides uses the term.

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<sup>19</sup> Yitzhak Shailat, *Igrot ha-Rambam* (Jerusalem: Ma'aliyot, 1987), 1: 233.



R. MOSES b. MAIMON  
RESPONSA

QUAE EXSTANT AB IPSO ARABICE SCRIPTA EX SCHEDIS CAIRENSIBUS  
ET LIBRIS TAM MANU SCRIPTIS QUAM IMPRESSIS  
NUNC PRIMUM COLLEGIT EMENDAVIT VERSIONE  
HEBRAICA ET NOTIS INSTRUXIT

JEHOSHUA BLAU

In adiutorium laborum usus copiis a B. C. Halper atque  
I. N. Simchoni collectis et editione textus Hebraici ab  
A. H. Freiman parata

VOLUMEN SECUNDUM

SUMPTIBUS SOCIETATIS MEKIZE NIRDAMIM  
HIEROSOLYMIS MCMLX

מימון זצ"ל.

משה

**רצג = פין מ"ב.**שאלות ששאל<sup>1</sup> ר' עובדיה גר צדק מרבינו משה זצ"ל ותשובותיו.

אמר משה ב"ר מימון מבני גלות ירושלם אשר בספרד זצ"ל. הגיע אלינו שאלות מרנא

רצא. כ"י סי' רכ"א = סימונסן בס' היובל לכבוד גוטמן 211. כ"ב [דף י' עמ' א'; דף ל'

עמ' א'; סי' ז'.

1. ברכה : ברכות (כ"ב). 2. תשובה : עי' ת' רכ"א. ומש"כ סימונסן שם עמ' 212.

3. אפשר שיש מהם : שיו"ד מהם (כ"ב). 4. ויענו אמן : ה' תפלה פ"ח ה"ט.

רצב. כ"ס סי' קמ"א. כ"נ דף 107א. [בכ"ס כתוב בשוליים : יגב אן תחרר הדה אל תשו

לאנהא מגלוטה = צריך לתקן תשובה זו, לפי שיש בה שגיאות].

1. אין הקורא : סוטה ל"ט ב'. 2. להם : לנו (כ"נ). 3. אין המקרא : וכן הוא לפני' בה' תפלה

(נשיאת כפים) פי"ד ה"ה. 4. תקרא : המקרא (כ"נ) [וכך נראה].

5. כדתנן : ברכות פ"ה מ"ד (ל"ד א'). ה' תפלה שם.

רצג. כ"א דף ר"ו א'. ת סי' ט' = ק סי' קנ"ח. כ"נ דף 110א. [כ"ב דף ל"ב עמ' א'. כ"ב"א

דף רכ"א ב']. נדפסה בקצרה בשו"ת הרשב"א ד' רומא קודם ר"מ = ח"ו סי' ק'.

1. שאלות ששאל וכו' : תשובת שאלה מארץ ישראל מן גר צדק שהשיב הגאון רבינו משה ז"ל (ת).

[וכן כיב"א].

ורבנא עובדיה המשכיל המבין גר הצדק ישלם יי פעלו ותהי משכרתו שלימה מעם יי אלהי ישראל אשר בא<sup>2</sup> לחסות תחת כנפיו. שאלת על עסקי הברכות והתפלות בינך לבין עצמך או אם תתפלל בצבור היש לך לומר אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו ואשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו ואשר הבדילנו ואשר בחר בנו ושהנחלת את אבותינו ושהוצאתנו מארץ מצרים ושעשה נסים לאבותינו וכל כיוצא באלה הענינים. יש לך לומר הכל כתקנם ואל תשנה דבר אלא כמו שיתפלל ויברך כל אזרח מישראל כך ראוי לך לברך ולהתפלל בין שהתפללת יחידי בין שהיית שליח צבור<sup>3</sup>. ועיקר הדבר שאברהם אבינו הוא שלמד כל העם והשכילים והודיעם דת האמת וייחודו של הקב"ה ובעט בע"ז והפר עבודתה והכניס<sup>4</sup> רבים תחת כנפי השכינה ולמדם והורם וצוה בניו ובני ביתו אחריו לשמור דרך יי כמו שכתוב בתורה כי ידעתיו<sup>5</sup> למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחריו ושמרו דרך יי וגו'. לפיכך כל מי שיתגייר עד סוף כל הדורות וכל המיוחד שמו של הקב"ה כמו שהוא כתוב בתורה תלמידו של אברהם אבינו ע"ה ובני ביתו הם כולם והוא החזיר אותם למוטב כשם שהחזיר את אנשי דורו בפיו<sup>6</sup> ובלמודו כך החזיר כל העתידים להתגייר בצואתו שצוה את בניו ואת בני ביתו אחריו. נמצא אברהם אבינו ע"ה הוא אב לזרעו הכשרים ההולכים בדרכיו ואב לתלמידיו וכל גר שיתגייר. לפיכך יש לך לאמר אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שאברהם ע"ה הוא אביך ויש לך לומר שהנחלת את אבותינו שלאברהם נתנה הארץ שנ' קום התהלך בארץ לארכה ולרחבה כי לך אתננה. אבל שהוצאתנו ממצרים או שעשית נסים לאבותינו אם רצית לשנות ולומר שהוצאת את ישראל ממצרים ושעשית נסים עם ישראל אמור. ואם לא שנית אין בכך הפסד כלום מאחר שנכנסת תחת כנפי השכינה ונלוית אליו אין כאן הפרש בינינו ובינך. וכל הנסים שנעשו כאלו לנו ולך נעשו. הרי הוא אומר בישעיה ואל יאמר בן הנכר<sup>7</sup> הנלוה אל יי לאמר הבדל הבדילני יי מעל עמו וגו'. אין שום הפרש כלל בינינו ובינך לכל דבר. ודאי יש לך לברך אשר בחר בנו ואשר נתן לנו ואשר הנחילנו ואשר הבדילנו. שכבר בחר בך הבורא יתעלה והבדילך מן האומות ונתן לך התורה שהתורה לנו ולגרים שנ' הקהל חוקה אחת לכם<sup>8</sup> ולגר הגר חוקת עולם לדורותיכם ככם כגר יהיה לפני יי. תורה אחת ומשפט אחד יהיה לכם ולגר הגר אתכם. ודע כי אבותינו שיצאו ממצרים רובם עובדי ע"ז היו במצרים נתערבו בגוים ולמדו מעשיהם עד ששלח הקב"ה משה רבינו ע"ה רבן של כל הנביאים והבדילנו מן העמים והכניסנו תחת כנפי השכינה לנו ולכל הגרים ושם לכולנו חוקה אחת. ואל יהא יחוסך קל בעיניך אם אנו מתיחסים לאברהם יצחק ויעקב אתה מתיחס למי שאמר והיה העולם. וכך מפורש בישעיה זה יאמר לי יי<sup>9</sup> אני וזה יקרא בשם יעקב וגו'. וכל מה שאמרנו לך בענין הברכות שלא

2. [בא : באת (כיב"א)].

3. בין שהתפללת... בין שהיית ש"ץ (ת). [ ... בין עם הצבור (כיב"א)].

4. והכניס : בנים רבים (ת [כיב"א]). 5. כי ידעתיו : בראשית י"ח י"ט.

6. [בפיו : בפיו ובלשונו (כיב"א)]. 7. ואל יאמר בן הנכר : ישע' נ"ו ג'.

8. חקה אחת לכם : במד' ט"ו ט"ו. 9. זה יאמר לי יי : ישע' מ"ד ה'.

תשנה כבר ראייה לזה ממסכת בכורים<sup>10</sup>. תמן תנינן הגר מביא ואינו קורא שאינו יכול לומר אשר נשבע י"י לאבותינו לתת לנו<sup>11</sup>. וכשהוא מתפלל בינו לבין עצמו אומר אלהינו ואלהי אבות ישראל. וכשהוא מתפלל בבית הכנסת אומר אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו<sup>12</sup>. זהו סתם משנה. והיא לר' מאיר ואינה הלכה<sup>13</sup>. אלא כמו שנתפרש בירושלמי<sup>14</sup>. תמן אמרינן תני בשם ר' יהודה גר עצמו מביא וקורא מאי טעמיה כי אב המון גוים נתתיך לשעבר היית אב<sup>15</sup>. לאברהם מיכאן ואילך אב לכל הבריות. ר' יהושע בן לוי אמר הלכה כר' יהודה. אתא עובדא קמיה דר' אבהו והורי כר' יהודה. הנה נתברר לך שיש לך לומר אשר נשבע י"י לאבותינו לתת לנו. ושאברהם אב לך ולנו ולכל הצדיקים<sup>16</sup>. ללכת בדרכיו והוא הדין לשאר הברכות והתפלות שלא תשנה כלום. וכתב משה ב"ר מימון זצ"ל<sup>17</sup>.

10. ממסכת בכורים: פ"א מ"ד. עיי"ש בפ' המשניות: ומפני זה יכול גר לומר וכו' לפי שאברהם היה אב לכל העולם לפי שהוא למדם אמונה.
  11. לאבותינו לתת לנו: וכשהוא מתפלל בבית הכנסת אומר אלהי אבותיכם. ואם היתה אמו מישראל אומר אלהי אבותינו. וכשהוא מתפלל בינו לבין עצמו (ת). [וכשהוא מתפלל בב"ה אומר אלהי אבותינו וכשהוא מתפלל לעצמו אומר אלהי ואלהי אבות ישראל. זהו סתם משנה. (כיב"א)].
  12. או"א: אלהי אבותיכם (כי"ג).
  13. ואינה הלכה: ה' בכורים פ"ד ה"ג הגר מביא וקורא שנא' לאברהם אב המון גוים נתתיך הרי הוא אב כל העולם כולו שנכנסין תחת כנפי שכינה ולאברהם היתה השבועה תחלה שירשו בניו את הארץ.
  14. בירושלמי: ביכורים שם הובא ברדב"ז לה' בכורים ובכ"מ שם. ועי' ספר המצות מ"ע סי' ר"ז.
  15. היית אב: היה אב לאדם מכאן ואילך. ת [כיב"א]. 16. ולכל הצדיקים: שהורנו ללכת (ק).
  17. ע"ד התשובה עי' ווערטהיימר גנזי ירושלים ח"ב עמ' ז'. עפנשטיין ע' 44.
- רצ"ד. כי"א ד רי"ב ב'. כי"ס דף 213 בב [בכתב אחר]. כי"ש סי' מ"ב. [כי"ב דף י"ג עמ' ב'. כי"א"ו ל"א. כיב"א עמ' רט"ו, ב]. ת סי' ד'. פ סי' ט' (ד' ע"ג) = ק סי' ט"ו. כי"ג 107. שו"ת המיוחסות להרמב"ן סי' רל"ט. ארחות חיים ה' קה"ת סי' ה' = כל בו ה' קה"ת סי' ק' (דף י"ג ב'). אבודרהם סדר שחרית של חול (ד"פ דף מ' א'). [חלק של התשובה כישב"י עמ' 41א]. — הובא בשו"ת הרשב"א ח"א סי' תפ"ז ותת"ה. שו"ת מהרי"ק שורש ס"ט. שו"ת רשב"ש סי' י"א. כ"מ ה' ס"ת פ"י ה"א. ב"י או"ח סי' קמ"ג. [שו"ת תומת ישרים סי' ל"ב. אגרת הסופר לר' אברהם חסן 'הסגולה' חוב' ג"ג עמ' א'—ב'. שו"ת בית יהודה לר"י עייאש ח"ב סי' א' (ס' בני יהודה ד' ס"ט א') 'תשו' הרמב"ם ותשו' חכמי נברונא'. הוספת פ—ג]. ועי' כי"ב סי' ט'.



תלו = פֶּן שמ"ה (לר' עובדיה גר צדק).

שאלה<sup>1</sup>

וובה [ועי' ש"ך חו"מ סי' ש"ו סק"ט בשם ת"ת, הרמב"ם] ועי' אוצר

חייב ש"ך, עמ' 48. א"ך.]

תל. כי"א דף ר"ז א'. [כי"ב דף ל"ג עמ' א'.] כ"י ואתיקאן 171 דף 79a—78b (=כי"ו א').  
כ"י ואתיקאן 320 דף 589a (=כי"ו ב'). ת"ס י" = ק סי' קנ"ט. [כי"ב א דף רכ"ג א'.] ה"ת נמצאת  
גם בספרו של Buxtorf הזקן Institutio epistolaris hebr. בסליאה 1629 עמ' 455. הובאה בשו"ת  
תשב"ץ דוראן ח"ב סי' א'.

1. שאלה: ששאל עובדיה הגר להרמב"ם ז"ל (כ"י"ו). עוד שאלה מן גר צדק לגאון (ת). [עוד שאלה  
מן גר צדק למורנו הרמב"ם ז"ל (כי"ב א).]
2. על הכל: מה הוא זה שארז"ל (כי"ו ב').
3. הכל בידי שמים: ברכות ל"ג ב' ושי"ג.

תשובה<sup>4</sup>

על מה שאמרת אתה כי כל מעשה <בני> האדם<sup>5</sup> אינם בגזירה מלפני הבורא יתעלה הוא האמת שאין בו דופי ולפיכך נותנים לו שכר אם הלך בדרך טובה<sup>6</sup> ונפרעין ממנו<sup>7</sup> אם הלך בדרך רעה וכל מעשה בני האדם בכלל יראת שמים<sup>8</sup> הם וסוף כל דבר ודבר ממעשה בני האדם בא לידי מצוה<sup>9</sup> או עבירה וזה שאמרו רז"ל הכל בידי שמים<sup>10</sup> במנהגו של עולם ותולדותיו וטבעו כגון מיני אילנות וחיות ונפשות<sup>11</sup> ומדעות<sup>12</sup> וגלגלים ומלאכים הכל בידי שמים, וכבר הרחבנו<sup>13</sup> בפ' מסכת אבות<sup>14</sup> ענין זה והבאנו ראיות<sup>15</sup>. וכן בתחלת החבור הגדול<sup>16</sup> אשר חברנו בכל המצות. וכל המניח דברים שביארנו שהם בנויים על יסודי עולם והולך ומחפש בהגדה<sup>17</sup> מן ההגדות או במדרש מן המדרשים או מדברי<sup>18</sup> אחד הגאונים ז"ל עד שימצא מלה אחת<sup>19</sup> ישיב בה על דברינו שהם דברי דעת ותבונה אינו אלא מאבד עצמו לדעת ודי לו מה שעשה<sup>20</sup> בנפשו. וזה שאמ' לך רבך בת פלוני<sup>21</sup> לפלוני<sup>22</sup> וממון של פלוני לפלוני אם גזרה השוה בכל היא<sup>23</sup> זאת והדברים כפשוטן<sup>24</sup>. למה נאמ' בתורה פן ימות<sup>25</sup> במלחמה ואיש אחר יקחנה ואיש אחר יחללנו. וכי יש בעולם בעל דעה יסתפק לו דבר זה אחר מה שכתוב בתורה. אלא כך ראוי למי שהוא מבין ולבו נכון<sup>26</sup> לטול<sup>27</sup> דרך האמת שישים ענין זה המפורש בתורה עיקר ויסוד שלא יהרוס בנין<sup>28</sup> ויתד התקועה אשר לא תמוט<sup>29</sup> וכשימצא<sup>30</sup> פסוק<sup>31</sup> מדברי הנביאים או דבר מדברי רז"ל חולק על עיקר זה וסותר ענין<sup>32</sup> זה ידרוש ויבקש בעין

4. תשובה: כל מה שאמרת (כ"ו א'). על כל מה שאמרת (כ"ו ב').

5. <בני> האדם: כ"ה בכ"ו ובת' [ובכ"ב א.]. 6. בדרך טובה: הטובה (ת [כ"ב א.]).

7. ונפרעין ממנו: ועונש (כ"ו ב'). 8. יראת שמים: יראת י' י (כ"ו ב').

9. בא לידי מצוה: יבא לידי מצוה (כ"ו א'). מביא [כ"ב א.]: בא לידי מצוה או לידי עבירה (ת).

10. הכל בידי שמים: חוץ מיראת שמים כמנהגו ותולדותיו וטבעו (כ"ו א'). חוץ ממנהגו של עולם

(כ"ו ב' והוא ט"ס). כמנהגו של עולם וטבעו (ת [כ"ב א.]). 11. ונפשות: חסר בכ"ו ב'.

12. ומדעות: ומזלות (ת). 13. וכבר הרחבנו: בענין זה בפירוש אבות (כ"ו ב').

14. בפ' מסכת אבות: סוף פ"ד משנה כ"ב. 15. ראיות: ראיה (כ"ו ב').

16. החבור הגדול: חיבור הגדול לכל המצות (שם). — מוסב על ס' משנה תורה ריש ה' דעות ולא על

ס' המצות. ע"י רמ"ש רשימת בודלינה עמ' 1902.

17. בהגדה: באגדה או במדרש או בדבר אחר מן הגאונים (כ"ו ב').

18. [מדברי: בדברי (כ"ב א.]. 19. מלה אחת: על פשוטה (כ"ו ב').

20. מה שעשה: במה שיעשה בנפשו (כ"ו ב'). מה שעשה לנפשו (ת [כ"ב א.]).

21. בת פלוני: בתו של פלוני (כ"ו ו' ות' [וכ"ב א.]). 22. בת פלוני לפלוני: סוטה ב' א'. מ"ק י"ח ב'.

23. בכל היא: בכלל היא (כ"ו ב'). 24. [והדברים כפשוטן: בכ"ב א' ליתא].

25. פן ימות: דברים כ' ה' ואילך. 26. ולבו נכון: נכון (ת [כ"ב א.]).

27. לטול: כ"ה בכ"ו ובת' [ובכ"ב א.] למול והוא ט"ס. בק להבין דרך האמת.

28. בנין: חסר בכ"ו ב'. 29. תמוט: תמוש (שם).

30. [וכשימצא: וכימצא (כ"ב א.].

31. פסוק: מדברי תורה או מדברי נביא או מדברי החכמים (כ"ו ב'). 32. [ענין: בנין (כ"ב א.].

לבו עד שיביין דברי הנביא או החכם אם יצאו דבריהם מכוונים בענין המפורש בתורה הרי מוטב <sup>33</sup> ואם לאו יאמר דברי הנביא הזה או דברי חכם זה איני יודע <sup>34</sup> אותם. ודברים שֶׁבִּגְוָה הם ואינם על פשוטיהם. וזה שאמ' <sup>35</sup> החכם בתו של פלוני לפלוני דרך שכר או דרך פורענות הוא זה. שאם זה האיש או זאת האשה עשו מצוה שראוי ליתן שכרה בהם זיווג יפה ומשובח הקב"ה מזווגן זה לזה. וכן אם ראוי <sup>36</sup> ליפרע מהם בזיווג שיהיה בו קטטה ומלחמה תמיד מזוגן \*<sup>36</sup>. וזה כענין שאמרו רז"ל <sup>37</sup> אפילו ממזר אחד בסוף העולם וממזרת אחת בסוף העולם הקב"ה מביאן ומזווגן זה לזה <sup>38</sup> ואין דבר זה <sup>38</sup> השוה לכל אלא לאלו שנתחייבו או שזכו <sup>39</sup> כמו שישר בעיני אלהים יתעלה. וכל אלו הדברים הם בנויים על מה שפירשנו בפירוש משנת <sup>40</sup> אבות <sup>41</sup> כמו שהבנת. וחכם גדול <sup>42</sup> אתה ולב מבין יש לך שהבנת <sup>43</sup> הדברים וידעת דרך הישרה. וכתב משה ב"ר מימון זצ"ל <sup>44</sup>.

ישראל. ור' זירא נ"י דלשתכח מן טעמיה דבבלאי <sup>7</sup> משום דהוה נהירן <sup>8</sup> ליה בתר

33. הרי מוטב : הרי מה טוב (ת [כיב"א]).
34. איני יודע וכו' : אין מבין דברים שבתוכן ואינן על פשוטן (כ"ו ב').
35. וזה שאמ' : וזהו שארז"ל (כ"י"ו).
36. וכן אם ראוי... ומזווגן זה לזה : חסר בכ"י"ו.
- 36\* [מזוגן : צ"ל מזווגן].
37. כעניין שאמרו רז"ל : ירושלמי קדושין פ"ג ה"ב. בראשית רבה פ' ס"ה אות ב'.
38. ואין דבר זה : בכל אלו (כ"ו א'). בכלל אלו אלא שנתחייבו בו או שזכו (כ"ו ב').
39. [או שזכו : ושזכו (כיב"א)].
40. משנת : מסכת (שם).
41. בפירוש משנת אבות : שם, ועי' שמנה פרקים פ"ח.
42. וחכם גדול : וחכם גרים אתה (כ"ו ב').
43. שהבנת : שהכרת (כ"י"ו).
44. בשו"ת תשב"ץ שציינתי כתב : והרמב"ם תקן בזה בתשובה ואמר כי בת פלוני לפלוני נאמר דרך שכר ודרך פורענות מזווג לו זוג כעור והביא סעד לזה מ"ש בב"ר בפסוק ויהי עשו בן מ' שנה וכו'. ועי' מש"כ ראזין, Die Ethik des Maimonides, ברעסלא 1876, עמ' 68 ה' 3 ושם עמ' 69 על ת' זו.

תל"ז. חידושי הריטב"א ליומא דף נ"ו ע"א. הובא בהכותב בעין יעקב חגיגה סוף פרק ראשון, ושם הובאה התשובה על שם הרמב"ן וז"ל "ומאמר זה פירשו הרמב"ן ז"ל בתשובת שאלה דר' ירמיה לטעמיה" וכו'. [הת' אינה לא לרמב"ם ולא לרמב"ן אלא לר' מימון אבי הרמב"ם והדפיסה פריימן ז"ל בתרביץ ש"ו ספר ג' עמ' 170/1, ועיי"ש עמ' 166. א"ך.]

1. משום דדיירי וכו' : יומא נ"ו א'.
2. במחשכים הושיבני : איכה ג' ו'.
3. זה תלמוד בבלי : סנהדרין כ"ד א'.
4. וטעמא : וטעמו.
5. נהירי להון : נהירא לחו.
6. ור' זירא גמי בעי וכו' : בבא מציעא פ"ה א'.
7. טעמיה דבבלאי : טעמי דבבלאי.
8. נהירן : נהירין.

מצוות <sup>7</sup> כמו שמניתי לחם וקלי וכרמל <sup>8</sup> בשלש מצוות אע"פ שהן בלאו אחד <sup>9</sup> דהא נתפרש שהן לחלק ואם אכל לחם וקלי וכרמל מן החדש לוקה שלש לפיכך מניתי אלו בשלש. וזה שאמרת ידידי שדברים הרבה יש שם במנין המצוות שנסתפקו לך ודאי כך הוא

כתב משד.

תמח = פ-ן שס"ט (לר' עובדיה הגר) <sup>1</sup>.

ש א ל ה <sup>2</sup>

על אלו הישמעאלים <sup>3</sup> שאמרת <sup>4</sup> שאינם עובדי ע"ז ואמ' לך רבך שהם עובדי ע"ז והאבנים

7. בחמש מצוות : במנין המצוות שם ר"ב עד ר"ו.  
8. לחם וקלי וכרמל : שם סי' קפ"ט עד קצ"א.

9. אע"פ שהן בלאו אחד: נ"ב בכ"י: ובמעשר דגן תירוש ויצהר בשלש מצות א'פ'ע'פ' שהן בלאו אחד דהא.

10. הגיעו ממנו עד בבל: עי' ת' ש"י וזה החבור גם כן מצוי אצלם בבבל.

11. וניחמתי הרבה וכו': ע"י באכר במאסף המדעי על הרמב"ם ח"ב 281 ועפנשטיין ע' 69.

12. ק'ל'ד'... ק'מ'א': וכן המנין לפנינו במנין המצות שם מ"ע.

[13. בכ"י נוסף בתחתית הגליון "צחחת מן כט ידה אלכרימה = תיקנתי לפי כתב ידו האצילה.]

תמח. כ"א דף ר"ז ב'. כ"ג דף 110a—108a. ת סי' י"א. ק סי' ק"ס. [כ"ג דף 108a ; כ"ב

דף נ"ח עמ' ב' (קטע). Buxtorf הזקן, *Institutio epistolaris hebr.*, בסליאה 1629 עמ' 460. [כיב"א

דף רכ"ד א'. כ"י מונטיפיורי 103 דף 287a (להלן כ"מ; הכותרת שם "מכלל השאלות שנשאל

הרמב"ם ז"ל, ואחריה באה ת' רס"ט.) [נזכרה בשו"ת רדב"ז ח"ד סי' צ"ב. [ובהשמטות בסוף חלק

ו', דפ' ורשה דף 93. תוס' פ"ג.]

1. (לר' עובדיה הגר): תשובה שעשה הרב לישמעאל אחר שנתגייר. הגיעו אלינו שאלות מרנא ורבנא

עובדיה המשכיל המבין גר צדק ישלם יי' פעלו ותהי משכורתו שלמה מעם יי' אלהי ישראל אשר בא לחסות תחת כנפיו שהיה ישמעאל ונתגייר (כ"ב).

2. שאלה: עוד שאלה לו מן הגאון זצ"ל (ת). [עוד שאלו למורנו הרמב"ם זצ"ל (כ"ב"א)].

3. אלו הישמעאלים וכו': ה' מאכלות אסורות פי"א ה"ז כן כל גוי שאינו עובר ע"ז כגון אלו



שמשליכין בתרפותן<sup>5</sup> הן למרקוליס והשיב לך<sup>6</sup> שלא כהוגן עד שנתעצבת אל לבך ונכלמת וקרא עליך ענה כסיל כאולתו<sup>6\*</sup>.

#### תשובה<sup>7</sup>

אלו הישמעאלים אינם עובדי ע"ז כלל, וכבר נכרתה מפיהם ומלבם והם מיחדים לאל יתע' יחוד כראוי<sup>8</sup> יחוד שאין בו דופי ולא מפני שהם משקרים עלינו<sup>9</sup> ומכזבים ואומ' שאנו אומרים<sup>10</sup> שיש לאל יתעלה בן נכזב כך<sup>11</sup> אנחנו עליהם ונאמר שהם עובדי ע"ז. התורה<sup>12</sup> העידה עליהם אשר פיהם<sup>13</sup> דבר שוא וימינם ימין שקר. והיא העידה עלינו שארית ישראל<sup>14</sup> לא יעשו עולה ולא ידברו כזב ולא ימצא בפיהם לשון תרמית. ואם יאמר אדם שהבית שהם מקלסין אותו בית ע"ז הוא וע"ז צפונה בתוכו שהיו עובדין אותה<sup>15</sup> אבותיהם<sup>16</sup> מה בכך. אלו המשתחווים כנגדו היום אין לבם אלא<sup>17</sup> לשמים. וכבר פירשו רז"ל בסנהדרין<sup>18</sup> שאם השתחוה אדם לבית ע"ז <ו> הוא סבור<sup>19</sup> שהוא בית הכנסת הרי לבו מסור לשמים. וכן אלו הישמעאלים היום<sup>20</sup> כולם טף ונשים נכרתה ע"ז מפיהם וטעותם<sup>21</sup> וטפשותם בדברים אחרים היא שאי אפשר לאומרו<sup>22</sup>. בכתב מפני פושעי<sup>23</sup> ורשעי ישראל<sup>21</sup>, אבל ביחוד<sup>24</sup> השם יתעלה אין להם טעות כלל ובאמת שהיה לישמעאלים מקודם<sup>25</sup> באותם המקומות שלשה מיני ע"ז פעור ומרקוליס וכמוש, והם עצמם מודים בדברים אלו היום וקוראין להם שמות בלשון ערבי. פעור עבודתו<sup>26</sup> שיפעור<sup>27</sup> עצמו לפניו או שיניח ראשו ויגביה ערותו למולו כמו שאלו הישמעאלים משתחווים היום<sup>28</sup>

הישמעאלים יינם אסור בשתייה ומותר בהנייה וכן הורו כל הגאונים. עי' ת' רס"ט. שווארץ במאסף המדעי על הרמב"ם ח"א עמ' 362. תה"ג אסף I סי' נ' וס"א ותה"ג אסף II סי' רס"ו והמקורות שציין שם. ועי' עפנשטיין עמ' 87.

4. שאמרת: אתה (כי"נ). [אתה אינם (כי"מ)]. שאמר שאינם עובדים (כיב"א).
5. בתרפותן: בתרופתן (כי"נ). בתרופן (ת [כיב"א]). [לתרפותן (כי"מ)].
6. לך: אותך (כי"מ). 6\*. ענה כסיל כאולתו: משלי כ"ו ה'.
7. תשובה: על אלו (כיב"א).
8. יחוד כראוי: חסר בכי"נ.
9. עלינו: חסר בת'.
10. אומרים: נאמר (כי"נ [כי"מ]).
11. כך: גם אנחנו (ת [כיב"א]).
12. התורה: שהתורה (ת [כיב"א]).
13. [אשר פיהם וכו': תה' קמ"ד ח' וי"א].
14. שארית ישראל וכו': צפנ' ג' י"ג.
15. אותה: בכי"מ ליתא.
16. אבותיהם: באותו הבית (כי"נ [כי"מ]).
17. אין לבם אלא: אם לבם לשמים (ת [כיב"א]).
18. בסנהדרין: דף ס"א ב'.
19. והוא סבור: וכסבור (כי"נ). [והוא סובר (כי"מ)].
20. היום: ליתא בכי"נ.
21. וטעותם... ישראל: חסר בק' [ובכיב"א].
22. לאמרו: לאמרן (כי"נ [כי"מ]).
23. [פושעי: בכי"מ ליתא].
24. אבל ביחוד: וביחוד (כיב"א).
25. מקודם: בכי"מ ליתא.
26. פעור עבודתו וכו': עי' ה' עבודה זרה פ"ג ה"ה.
27. שיפעור: שיפעור אדם (כי"נ).
28. היום: ליתא בכי"נ [ובכיב"א].

בתפלתם ומרקוליס עבודתו ברגימת האבנים וכמוש עבודתו בפריעת הראש ושלא ילבש בגד תפור ודברים אלו כולם מפורשים וידועים אצלנו<sup>29</sup> מקודם שתעמד דת הישמעאלים<sup>30</sup>, אבל הישמעאלים היום אומרים זה שנפרע ראשנו ושלא נלבש בגד<sup>31</sup> תפור בתפירות<sup>32</sup> הוא כדי להכנע<sup>33</sup> לפני האל יתעלה ולזכור היאך יעמוד האדם<sup>34</sup> מקברו וזה שנשליך האבנים בפני השטן אנו משליכים אותם כדי<sup>35</sup> לערבבו. ואחרים מפקחיהם<sup>36</sup> נותנים טעם ואומרים<sup>37</sup> צלמים היו שם ואנו רוגמים במקום הצלמים כלומ' שאין אנו מאמינים בצלמים שהיו שם ודרך בזיון להם אנו רוגמין אותן<sup>37</sup> ואחרים אומרים מנהג הוא כללו של דבר אע"פ שעיקר הדברים יסודם<sup>38</sup> לע"ז אין אדם בעולם משליך<sup>39</sup> אותם האבנים<sup>40</sup> ולא<sup>39</sup> משתחוה לאותו המקום ולא עושה דבר מכל הדברים לשם ע"ז לא בפיו ולא בלבו אלא לבם מסור לשמים.

ואשר השיבך רבך<sup>41</sup> שלא כהוגן והעציבך והכלימך<sup>42</sup> וקראך<sup>43</sup> כסיל עבירה גדולה בידו וחטא גדול חטא וקרוב בעיני ששוגג הוא וראוי לו לבקש ממך מחילה, אע"פ שאתה תלמידו ואחר כך יצום ויזעק ויתפלל ויכנע אולי יתכפר<sup>44</sup> לו וימחול<sup>45</sup> לו האל יתעלה, וכי שכור היה זה <ולא ידע><sup>46</sup> שבשלשים וששה מקומות<sup>47</sup> הזהירה תורה על הגר ואיה דבר וגר לא תונה<sup>48</sup> והיא אונאת דברים. אילו אמר הוא האמת והיית אתה התועה<sup>49</sup> היה לו להסביר לך פנים ולדבר לך<sup>50</sup> רכות כל שכן<sup>51</sup> שאמרת האמת והוא

29. וידועים אצלנו [כיב"א : אצלם !] : עי' גמ' ע"ז ס"ד א'.

30. דת הישמעאלים : דת ישמעאל (כי"נ). 31. בגד : חסר בכי"נ.

32. בתפירות : כ"ה בכי"נ. בכי"א : בתפירות [וכן בכי"מ]. בת' [ובכיב"א] : בתרופות. בק' : בתפירות.

33. להכנע : שנכנע (ת [כיב"א]).

34. [האדם : אדם (כי"מ)]. 35. כדי : בכי"מ ליתא.

36. מפקחיהם : אומרים ונותנין טעם (ת [כיב"א]).

37. ואומרים... רוגמין אותן : חסר בק' [ובדומה בכיב"א].

38. יסודם : ויסודם (ת). [וסודם (כיב"א). וסידן (כי"מ)].

39. משליך... ולא : חסר בק' [ובדומה בכיב"א].

40. האבנים : אבנים (כי"מ).

41. ואשר השיבך רבך וכו' : עי' מש"כ ראזין Ethik des Maimonides עמ' 148.

42. והכלימך : והכעיסך (ת [כיב"א]). [בכי"מ ליתא].

43. וקראך : וקרא עליך ענה כסיל וקרא אותך (כי"מ, ונראה הנוסח המקורי, שקוצר בכי"י האחרים ע"י הומויוטיליוטון). 44. אולי יתכפר : אולי יכפר לו האל וכי... (כי"מ).

45. וימחול : ומכפר (כי"נ). 46. ולא ידע : כ"ה בכי"נ ובת' [ובכיב"א. כי"מ : לא ידע].

47. שבשלשים וששה [כי"מ : שבששה ושלושים] מקומות : ב"מ נ"ט ב'. ועי' בהקדמת ס' המצות שורש ט'.

48. [דבר וגר לא תונה : דבר השם וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו (כי"מ). — שמות כ"ב כ']. עי' ה' סנהדרין פ"כ הי"ב וה' מכירה פי"ד ה"טו. 49. [התועה : טועה (כי"מ)].

50. לך : אליך (כי"מ).

51. כל שכן : ועוד שאתה אמרת (כי"נ [כי"מ]). [כל שכן שאמרת אתה (כיב"א)].



התועה<sup>52</sup>. ועוד שזה<sup>53</sup> דורש אחר הישמעאלים אם הם עובדי ע"ז אם לאו היה לו לחוש לעצמו על הכעס שכעס עד שהכלים גר צדק שלא כדין<sup>54</sup> וכבר אמרו רז"ל כל הכועס<sup>55</sup> יהיה בעיניך כעובד ע"ז. דע שחובה<sup>56</sup> שחייבתנו התורה על הגרים גדולה היא<sup>57</sup>. על האב ועל האם נצטוינו<sup>58</sup> בכבוד ומורא ועל הנביאים לשמוע להם ואפשר שיכבד אדם ויירא וישמע<sup>59</sup> ממי שאינו אוהבו, ועל הגרים צונו<sup>60</sup> באהבה<sup>61</sup> רבה המסורה ללב ואהבתם את הגר וגו' כמו שצונו לאהוב את שמו ואהבת את י"י אלהיך. והקב"ה בכבודו אוהב גר, שנ' ואוהב גר לתת לו לחם ושמלה<sup>62</sup>. וזה שקרא לך כסיל תמה גדול הוא, אדם שהניח אביו<sup>63</sup> ומולדתו ומלכות עמו וידם הנטויה והבין בעין לבו ובא<sup>64</sup> ונדבק באומה זו שהיא היום למתעב<sup>65</sup> גוי עבד מושלים<sup>66</sup> והכיר<sup>67</sup> וידע שדתם דת אמת וצדק והבין דרכי ישראל וידע שכל<sup>68</sup> הדתות גנובות<sup>69</sup> מדתם זה מוסיף וזה גורע זה משנה וזה מכזב ומחפה על י"י דברים אשר לא כן זה הורס יסודות<sup>70</sup> וזה מדבר תהפוכות<sup>68</sup> והכיר הכל ורדף אחר י"י ועבר בדרך הקדש ונכנס תחת כנפי השכינה ונתאבק בעפר רגלי משה רבינו רבן של כל הנביאים ע"ה וחפץ במצותיו ונשאו לבו לקרבה<sup>71</sup> לאור באור החיים ולהעלות<sup>72</sup> במעלת המלאכים ולשמוח ולהתענג בשמחת הצדיקים והשליך העולם הזה מלבו ולא פנה אל רהבים ושטי כזב, מי שזו מעלתו כסיל יקרא. חלילה לך לא כסיל קרא י"י שמך אלא משכיל ומבין ופקח והולך נכוחות<sup>73</sup> תלמידו של אברהם אבינו שהניח אבותיו ומולדתו ונטה אחרי י"י. ומי שברך את אברהם רבד<sup>74</sup> ונתן לו שכרו בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא<sup>75</sup> הוא יברך אותך ויתן לך שכרך כראוי בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא ויארץ ימיך עד שתורה במשפטי י"י לכל<sup>76</sup> עדתו ויזכה<sup>77</sup> אותך לראות בכל הנחמות העתידות לישראל<sup>77</sup> והיה הטוב ההוא<sup>78</sup> אשר ייטיב י"י עמנו<sup>79</sup> והטבנו לך כי י"י דבר טוב על ישראל. משה ב"ר מימון זצ"ל.

52. התועה : טעה ועד שזה (כי"מ). 53. ועוד שזה : ועוד כשהיה (כי"נ).

54. [צדק שלא כדין : הצדק שלא כדין כו' (עד כאן כי"מ)].

55. כל הכועס : שבת ק"ה ב'. ועי' נדרים כ"ב ב'. 56. שחובה : שהחובה (כי"נ).

57. גדולה היא : מאד (שם). 58. [נצטוינו : חייבתנו (כיב"א)]. 59. וישמע : בכי"נ ליתא.

60. ועל הגרים צונו : עי' ס' המצות מ"ע סי' ר"ז וה' דעות פ"ו ה"ד.

61. באהבה : דבר המסור ללב (כי"נ).

62. ושמלה : כמו שצוה באהבת שמו כך צוה באהבת הגר (כי"נ).

63. שהניח אביו : ואמו ומקום מולדתו (ת). 64. ובא : בכי"א ובו.

65. למתעב : מתעב (כי"נ). 66. מושלים : בו (ת [כיב"א]).

67. והכיר : דרכי ישראל וידע (כי"נ). 68. וידע שכל... תהפוכות : חסר בק' [ובכיב"א].

69. גנובות : גזירות (כי"נ). 70. יסודות : סודות (כי"א).

71. לקרבה : אל י"י (כי"נ). 72. ולהעלות : ולעלות (כי"נ ות'). [ולעלות למעלת המלכים (! כיב"א)].

73. נכוחות : נכוחו ותלמידו (כי"נ). 74. [רבך : רבן (כיב"א)].

75. ולעולם הבא : ובע"ה (שם ; וכן בהמשך). 76. לכל : אמת לכל (שם).

77. ויזכה... לישראל : בכיב"א ליתא. 78. ההוא : בכיב"א ליתא. 79. עמנו : לנו (כי"נ).

## TRANSLATION OF MAIMONIDES' RESPONSE TO OBADIAH THE CONVERT

BLAU # 293

We have received questions from our master and teacher Obadiah, the wise, knowledgeable and righteous convert. May the Lord reward his deeds, may he have a full recompense from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings he has sought refuge.<sup>20</sup> You asked concerning the blessings and prayers you offer in private and in public. Are you permitted to say “our God and God of our fathers,” “who sanctified and charged us with his commandments,” “who separated us,” “who chose us,” “who bestowed upon our ancestors...”, “who brought us out from the land of Egypt,” “who performed miracles for our fathers,” and other such statements?

You are to say everything in its standard form and are not to alter a word. It is proper for you to pray and bless in the same way as a Jew-from-birth (*ezra mi-yisra'el*), regardless of whether you are praying privately or whether you are the prayer leader. The underlying reason for this is that it was Abraham our father who taught and enlightened the whole nation, teaching them the true religion, and the unity of the Holy One, blessed be He. He despised idolatry and halted its practice and brought many under the wings of the Shekhinah. He taught and instructed them and commanded his sons and household to keep the way of the Lord. As it is written in the Torah: “For I have singled him out that he may instruct his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord [by doing what is just and right in order that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what He had promised him].”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, until the end of all generations, anyone who converts and anyone who proclaims the unity of the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written in the Torah, is a disciple of Abraham our father, peace be upon him, and is one of his household. Abraham has restored him to righteousness just as he restored the people of his generation through his teaching and instruction. Consequently, as a result of Abraham’s command to his sons and his household after them, future generations will convert. Abraham our father, of blessed memory, is thus [both] the father of his worthy descendants who follow his ways and the father of his disciples and each convert. Therefore, you must say, “Our God and God of our fathers” – because Abraham, of blessed memory, was your father. And you must say, “Who bestowed an inheritance upon our fathers” – because the land was given to Abraham, as it is said: “Arise, walk about the land, through its length and its breadth, for I give it to you.”<sup>22</sup> But as for [such verses as], “Who brought us forth from Egypt,” or “Who performed miracles for our fathers,” if you want to change them, you may say, “He brought forth Israel from Egypt” and “Who performed miracles for Israel.” But nothing whatsoever is lost if you do not make these changes. Because you have come under the wings of the Shekhinah and are accompanied by it, there is no difference between you and us. It is as if all of the miracles were performed for both you and for us. Behold, he says in Isaiah: “Let not the stranger who has joined himself to the Lord say, ‘The Lord has separated me from His people.’”<sup>12</sup> There is no difference between you and us in any matter. You are clearly obligated to say the blessings, “who chose us,” “who gave us,” “who bestowed an inheritance upon us,” and “who separated us.” The Creator, may He be exalted, chose you and separated you from the nations and gave you the Torah, a Torah which is both for us and for converts, as it is written, “There shall be one law for you and for the stranger; it shall be a law for all time throughout the ages. You and the stranger

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<sup>20</sup> Ruth 2: 12 (slightly altered). Biblical quotations are taken, sometimes with slight modification, from *JPS HebrewEnglish Tanakh*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Genesis 18: 19.

<sup>22</sup> Genesis 13: 17 <sup>12</sup> Isaiah 56: 3.



shall be alike before the Lord. The same law and the same regulation shall apply to you and to the stranger who resides among you.”<sup>23</sup>

Know that our fathers who left Egypt were mostly idolaters. In Egypt, they had mingled with the nations and learned their ways<sup>24</sup> until the Holy One, blessed be He, sent Moses our master, the master of all the prophets, peace be upon him. He separated us from the nations, brought us under the wings of the Shekhinah – us and all the converts – instituting a single statute for us all. Do not consider your lineage to be paltry. If we are connected to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you are connected to the One who spoke and the world came into being. This is explicitly indicated in Isaiah: “One shall say, ‘I am the Lord’s,’ another shall use the name of Jacob,”<sup>25</sup> etc.

[Maimonides answers an argument which could be raised against his position on converts]. *Tractate Bikkurim* contains proof of what we said to you about not altering the blessings.<sup>26</sup> There they taught:

A convert brings [the offering of the first fruits] but does not recite [the required declaration] because he is not able to say, “[I have come into the land] which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.”<sup>27</sup> When the convert prays in private, he says “God of the fathers of Israel.” When he prays in the synagogue, he says “God of their fathers.”<sup>28</sup>

The rule is that an anonymously cited Mishnaic teaching [such as this one] is attributed to R. Meir (*setam mishnah*). But the opinion here of R. Me’ir is not the law. Rather, the law is in accordance with what is explained in the *Jerusalem Talmud*:

It was taught in the name of R. Judah: “A convert himself both brings [first fruits] and recites [the required declaration].” What is the scriptural basis for this view?: “...for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.”<sup>19</sup> In the past you were a father to Aram, but henceforth you are the father of all nations. R. Joshua b. Levi said, “The law accords with the view of R. Judah.” A case came before R. Abbahu and he decided it in accordance with the view of R. Judah.<sup>29</sup>

It is therefore clear that:

(1) You must say, “Which the Lord swore to our fathers to give to us.”

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<sup>23</sup> Numbers 15: 15-16

<sup>24</sup> Psalms 106: 35 (slight rephrase).

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 44: 5.

<sup>26</sup> Mishnah, Tractate Bikkurim, 1: 4.

<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy 26: 3.

<sup>28</sup> The quotation from the Mishnah is corrupt. My translation is of the standard Mishnaic text. Cf. Blau, *Teshuvot haRambam*, 2: 550, n. 11 <sup>19</sup> Genesis 17: 15.

<sup>29</sup> P.T. *Tractate Bikkurim*, 1: 4 and Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: Orlah and Bikkurim* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 139-40.

(2) Abraham is both your father and ours and the father of all the righteous who follow his ways.

(3) It is the law that the rest of the blessings and prayers not be at all altered.

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BLAU # 436

## CONCERNING, “EVERYTHING IS IN THE HAND OF HEAVEN EXCEPT THE FEAR OF HEAVEN.”<sup>30</sup>

What you have said – that no human act is decreed by the Creator, may He be exalted – is incontrovertibly true. It is for this reason that [a person] is rewarded if he follows the good path and is punished if he follows the path of evil. These [acts], including the fear of heaven, are all human acts which lead either to the fulfillment of a commandment or to the commission of a sin. Our rabbis, of blessed memory, said, “Everything is in the hands of heaven” with regard to the natural course of the world, its generations and nature. For example, species of trees, animals, living creatures, constellations,<sup>31</sup> spheres, and angels – all [of these] are in the hands of heaven.

We have already elaborated on this matter and have brought proofs concerning it in our commentary to *Tractate of the Fathers* and also at the beginning of our great composition on the commandments.<sup>32</sup> Anyone who disregards what we have explained (which is based upon the very foundations of the world) and goes searching for a lone homily, midrash or pronouncement of one of the Geonim, of blessed memory, until he finds one word with which he can contradict our words (which are words of knowledge and wisdom), is intentionally committing suicide.

Woe<sup>33</sup> to him for what he has done.

As for what your rabbi said to you, [quoting *Tractate Sotah*, “Forty days before the creation of a child, a heavenly voice goes out saying:] ‘the daughter of so-and-so will marry so-and-so’”<sup>34</sup> and “the money of so-and-so will go to so-and-so.” If this was to apply generally, and these words were to be taken literally, why is it said in the Torah?: “[Is there anyone who has paid the bride-price for a wife, but who has not yet married her? Let him go back to his home,] lest he die in battle and another marry her”<sup>35</sup> and “[Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard but has never harvested it? Let him go back to his home,] lest he die in battle and another harvest it.”<sup>36</sup> Could any intelligent person be satisfied with this [Talmudic] passage after seeing what is written in the Torah? Rather, this should be the true path

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<sup>30</sup> B.T. Berakhot 33b.

<sup>31</sup> Reading *mazalot* for *mada'ot*, see Blau, *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, 715 n. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Avot, 4: 22. His work on the commandments refers to *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 5: 1 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Reading *vay* for *ve-day*.

<sup>34</sup> B.T. Sotah, 2a.

<sup>35</sup> Deuteronomy 20: 7.

<sup>36</sup> Deuteronomy 20: 6.

for a knowledgeable person with a discerning<sup>37</sup> mind: Make this notion [of human action], which is explicitly conveyed in the

Torah, a principle and root which cannot be destroyed, an embedded tent peg that will not budge.

When one finds a verse of the Prophets or a word of the sages which differs from this principle and contradicts this notion, one must rationally investigate the matter until one understands the words of the prophet or sage. If their words agree with the notion explicitly conveyed in the Torah, then all is well; but if not, one should say: "I do not understand the words of this prophet or that sage. The words are not to be understood literally, this is [merely] their external meaning." The words of the sage, "the daughter of so-and-so will marry so-and-so," [should be interpreted as referring to] the ways of reward and punishment. If this man or that woman fulfilled a commandment, it is proper that they be rewarded by way of a good marriage and so the Holy One, blessed be He, marries them off. Similarly, if they need to be punished by way of marriage, there will be constant strife and struggle between them. This is similar to what our rabbis of blessed memory said: "Even if there is a *mamzer* at one end of the world, and a *mamzer* girl at the other end of the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, brings them together and pairs them."<sup>38</sup> This does not universally apply to all, but only to those who are found guilty or deserving in accordance with what is just in the eyes of God, may He be exalted. All of these things are built upon what we explained in the *Commentary on the Mishnah of the Fathers*, as you understand. You are a great sage with a perceptive mind. You have understood matters and know the way of righteousness.

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BLAU #448

Concerning your claim that these Ishmaelites are not idolaters, and your rabbi's objection that they are idolaters and that the stones they cast are in worship of Marqulis.<sup>39</sup> He wrongfully rebuked you so that you were shamed and distressed, saying, "Answer a fool in accord with his folly, [else he will think himself wise]."<sup>40</sup>

These Ishmaelites are not idolaters in any way. They have struck idolatry from their mouths and hearts, and they profess the unity of God, may He be exalted, [and their understanding of] that unity is irreproachable. Although they slander us by claiming that we believe that God, may He be exalted, has a son;<sup>41</sup> we should not slander them by calling them idolaters. The Torah testifies about them: "Whose mouths speak lies and whose oaths are false."<sup>42</sup> It testifies about us: "The remnant of Israel shall do no wrong and speak no falsehood; a deceitful tongue shall not be in their mouths."<sup>43</sup> If someone were to say that the sanctuary which they praise is a sanctuary of idolatry, and that the idolatry which their ancestors practiced is concealed within it, what of it? The hearts of those who prostrate themselves towards it today are only oriented towards heaven. Our rabbis, of blessed memory, already explained in *Tractate Sanhedrin* that if a person prostrates himself towards a sanctuary of idolatry thinking that it was a synagogue, his heart is [still considered to be] dedicated to heaven.<sup>44</sup> The same is true with the Ishmaelites today. All of them – women and children included – have struck idolatry from their mouths. On account of the presence of apostates and evil-doers among the Jews, it is not possible to

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<sup>37</sup> Reading *navon* for *nakhon*, see Blau, *Teshuvot ha-Rambam*, 715 n. 26.

<sup>38</sup> P.T. Kiddushin, 3: 12 and Jacob Neusner, *Qiddushin: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 204.

<sup>39</sup> Refers to the Roman god, Mercurius. See, for example, B.T. *ullin* 133a.

<sup>40</sup> Proverbs 26: 5.

<sup>41</sup> Perhaps a reference to Qur' n 9: 30 where a claim is made that Jews believe that 'Uzayr is the son of God.

<sup>42</sup> Psalms 144: 8 and 11.

<sup>43</sup> Zephaniah 3: 13.

<sup>44</sup> B.T. *Sanhedrin*, 61b.

convey in writing their error and folly in other matters, but concerning the unity of God, may He be exalted, they are not at all in error.

The truth is that the ancient Ishmaelites in these areas had three kinds of idolatry: Pe'or, Marqulis, and Kemosh. They themselves acknowledge these things today and have names for them in Arabic. The worship of Pe'or involved defecating before him or lowering the head and raising the behind,<sup>45</sup> just as these Ishmaelites prostrate themselves in prayer today. The worship of Marqulis involved the pelting of stones, and the worship of Kemosh involved letting one's hair grow in neglect and not wearing sewn garments. These things were all known and manifest to us prior to the advent of the Ishmaelite religion, but the Ishmaelites today say this: "When we grow our hair and do not wear stitched garments, it is in order to humble ourselves before God, may He be exalted, and to remind us how a person will arise from his grave. As for pelting stones at Satan, we cast them in order to confuse him." Some of their shrewd ones give this explanation, "Idols were there and so we throw stones where they stood so as to say: 'We do not believe in the idols that were there and we throw stones at where they stood to indicate our contempt for them.'" Others say, "It is a custom." In the end, even though these things have their basis in idolatry, there is no one in the world who casts stones at them, prostrates himself in the direction of that place, or does any other such thing in the name of idolatry – not with his mouth nor in his heart. Their hearts are dedicated to heaven.

As for your rabbi who responded wrongfully to you, grieving and shaming you and calling you a fool, he has committed a grave transgression and a great sin. In my opinion he did so unintentionally and it is appropriate for him to ask forgiveness from you, even though you are his student. After this he should fast, lament, pray and be humbled, and perhaps God, may He be exalted, will pardon and forgive him. Was he so drunk that he did not know that the Torah warns about the [treatment of] converts in thirty-six places. What about "Do not mistreat the stranger,"<sup>46</sup> for that is [in the legal category of] wronging with words (*ona'at devarim*). Even if he was correct and you were wrong, it would have been obligatory for him to treat you graciously and to speak to you gently – how much more so given that you are correct and he is wrong. Furthermore, before investigating whether or not the Ishmaelites are idolaters, he should have taken note of his own anger, an anger which led him to unlawfully shame a righteous convert. Our rabbis, of blessed memory, said, "Anyone who becomes angry should be considered as an idolater."<sup>47</sup> Know that the obligation which the Torah imposes on us concerning converts is a weighty one. We have been commanded to honor and fear mothers and fathers, and to heed the prophets, but it is possible to honor, fear and heed someone whom one does not love. However, we have been commanded to love converts, a matter which is entrusted to the heart<sup>48</sup>: "You shall love the stranger,"<sup>49</sup> etc., just as He commanded us to love His name: "You shall love the Lord your God."<sup>41</sup> The Holy One, blessed be He, himself loves the convert, as it is said: "He loves the stranger, providing him with food and clothing."<sup>50</sup> It is astounding that he called you a fool. You are a person who has left his father, homeland, his nation's kingdom, and their outstretched hand. You have achieved understanding through your own reason and have joined yourself to a nation which today is "the abhorred nation, the slave of rulers."<sup>43</sup> You recognized that their religion is a religion of truth and righteousness and have understood Israel's ways. You came to know that all religions are stolen from their religion – this one adding, that one subtracting, this one changing, that one falsifying, this one fabricating matters about the Lord which are not true, that one destroying

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<sup>45</sup> Literally: "nakedness."

<sup>46</sup> Exodus 22: 20.

<sup>47</sup> This phrase does not appear in Talmudic literature but close parallels do exist, see B.T. Shabbat 105b and B.T. Nedarim 22a.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhhot De'ot*, 6: 4.

<sup>49</sup> Deuteronomy 10: 19. <sup>41</sup>

Deuteronomy 6: 5.

<sup>50</sup> Deuteronomy 10: 18. <sup>43</sup> Isaiah 49:



foundations [of the faith] and another speaking perversities. But you recognized all of this, pursued the Lord, took the holy path, and entered under the wings of the Shekhinah. You sat amidst the dust of the feet of Moses our master, the master of all the prophets, peace be upon him, desiring his commandments. Your heart bore you close to God, illumined by the light of life, to rise to the level of angels and to rejoice and exult in the happiness of the righteous. You hurled this world from your heart, “turning not to the arrogant or to the followers of falsehood.”<sup>51</sup> Can someone like this be called a fool? Heaven forbid! The Lord calls you wise, understanding, intelligent, a righteous person – not a fool. You are a student of Abraham our father who left his ancestors and his homeland and turned to God. He who blessed Abraham your master gave him reward in this world and in the next. He will bless you and give you the reward you deserve in this world and the next, and lengthen your days until you teach the laws of God to all of his congregation. He will make you worthy to see all the future consolations for Israel. And “we will extend to you the same bounty that the Lord grants us”<sup>52</sup> “for the Lord has promised to be generous to Israel.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Psalms 40: 5.

<sup>52</sup> Numbers 10: 32.

<sup>53</sup> Numbers 10: 29.