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Final Phases of Medieval Hebraism: Jews and Christians between Bible Exegesis, Talmud and Maimonidean Philosophy¹

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Introductory Remarks – The Last Phase of Medieval Jewish Christian Encounter

The relationship between Jews and Christians and between Judaism and Christianity during the 13th and 14th century is a matter of concrete and contingent historical circumstances; and its ideological elements are inherent in pre-modern Catholicism and pre-modern Rabbinical Judaism. Indeed, both St. Paul and the Rabbis are typical revolutionary figures of late antiquity who present themselves as the authentic interpreters of old sacred writings. Throughout the ages, the interpretation of the *Sacra pagina* remained at the very center of Christian and Jewish theology involving hidden or manifest polemics against the rival interpretation.

Still, this fundamental and fixed element did not prevent dramatic changes in the concrete historical manifestations of Judaism and Christianity. Nowhere else, the parallel developments in both religions were as spectacular, often even traumatic, as in Italy, France, Spain, and Germany, where Jewish communities had existed since late antiquity; and where Jews and Christians had developed stable forms of coexistence. These were severely shaken by the dramatic events that marked the ascendancy of European hegemony beginning with the first crusade at the end of the 11th century. The following periods of crises were characterized by series of governmental or spontaneous anti-Jewish acts, popular riots, inquisitorial trials, accusations of ritual murders, and in the late Middle Ages, culminating in the deportations of Jews from Christian kingdoms and cities in England, France, parts of Italy and Germany, and finally in the Iberian peninsula².

¹ This paper was written within the framework of the research project „Latin Philosophy into Hebrew: Intercultural Networks in 13th and 14th Century Europe“ (200403), at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, with the financial support of the European Research Council under the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme. I would like to thank Alexander Fidora for an ongoing and stimulating dialogue in these matters. While presenting this paper at the Kölner Mediaevistentagung, I had the opportunity to enjoy serious discussions with my colleagues. Their remarks and suggestions found their way into the final form of this paper. I would especially like to thank David Wirmer and Görg Hasselhof for their critical and thoughtful remarks.

² It is certainly not easy to suggest any preliminary reading in the vast research literature on these subjects, which reflect intensive research for almost two centuries from general synthetic

As the historian's eye focuses on these centuries of dramatic changes, a complicated methodological problem arises. The stormy events mentioned are not marginal at all, neither for the Jewish communities involved, nor for Christian rulers, intellectuals, and the populace, who were strongly involved in, and directly influenced by, the ongoing social, economical, political, and doctrinal inter-communal dynamics. Nevertheless, the integration of Jewish history into European general history is a task yet to be fulfilled in modern research, and it becomes more acute as Jewish history in Europe grows more substantial and richer. As Jews were integrated into European societies, the European notions and paradigms have become part of the Jewish *habitus*. Yet, it is almost impossible to correlate the two histories except in the marginal areas of documented direct encounters. The lack of documentation is due mostly to the fact that, contrary to the situation in Moslem territories where Jews and other religious minorities fully accepted Arabic as leading cultural language³, in Western Europe the intellectual elites among Jews and Christian were divided by two different written languages – Latin and Hebrew. Therefore, although living in close vicinity, they remained members of two different communities of knowledge and discourse⁴. Consequently, modern scholars, especially those who deal with intellectual history using the available historical and philological methods, are almost completely unable to break through the particular specific communal narrative, when attempting to reconstruct the common environment, namely the reality in which these Jewish and Christian intellectuals were living and working; mainly following the apologetic and polemic realms in which Jews and Christians responded to each other on their own terms, each side within the conventional boundaries of its own community⁵.

Recent works have demonstrated to what extent the two communities were interconnected in their socio-religious expectations and fears already in the 12th and 13th century, and to what degree the inquisition and censorship were not only apparatuses of oppression but also served as major tools of integrating

descriptions to detailed studies of separate territories. In the context of the present topic, I wish to point out especially G. Dahan, *Les intellectuels chrétiens et les juifs au Moyen Âge*, Paris 1990; A. Funkenstein, *Changes in Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Twelfth Century*, in: id., *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley 1993, 172–201; I. J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. B. Harshav, Berkeley 2006.

³ Cf. R. Drori, *Models and Contacts. Arabic Literature and its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture*, Leiden 2000.

⁴ Cf. Y. Schwartz, *Images of Revelation and Spaces of Knowledge, The Jew, the Christian and the Christian-Jew: Jewish Apostates as Cultural Mediators in Medieval Spain*, in: A. Fidora/M. Tischler (eds.), *Christian North – Moslem South*, Münster [forthcoming].

⁵ On the basic unity of Medieval multi-communal existence, as against its absolutely differentiated local narratives, and on the continuation of this basic dichotomy in modern historiography cf. J. Van Engen, *Introduction: Jews and Christians Together in the Twelfth Century*, in: M. A. Signer/J. Van Engen (eds.), *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, Notre Dame 2001, 1–8.

Hebrew texts and Jewish authorities into the dominant Christian environment. Such new studies are vital in order to fully grasp the permanent major paradox of Jewish existence in Europe: Jews were integrated into the new urban European society at a time when this society developed more subtle mechanisms of control. However, the integration into such a „persecuting society“⁶ was not entirely negative. The physical persecution did not necessarily find its exact correlation in the intellectual realm. In fact, one can repeatedly trace the opposite phenomenon, namely intensive intercultural intellectual exchange that took place in an era of political persecution. In the present context, a striking example is the fact that precisely when Christian Europe turned against Jews and other minorities during the 12th and 13th century, a vast amount of Arab and Jewish-Arab scientific and philosophical writings were translated into Latin and gained significant influence among Christian intellectuals. Regrettably, the study of this phenomenon too often stays within the realm of intellectual history, without being truly integrated into the larger historical narrative⁷.

Whatever concluded, concerning the exact cause and dating of the turn against the Jews in Europe, this turn was obviously related to a complete shift in the perception of the Jew that occurred within the European mind and in the interpretation of both, the sacred Jewish and Christian scriptures. Concentrating on the period discussed here, I would like to raise the question: to what extent were there any new developments in this specific context towards the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th century?

Robert Chazan's thesis in his ‚Daggers of Faith‘ might form an important tool for this discussion. Chazan claimed that the Barcelona disputation of 1263 and the subsequent immense intellectual effort of Raimundus Martini's ‚Pugio Fidei‘ constituted a turning point, after which the method of arguing against the Jews and attempting to convert them through their own scripture was gradually neglected. The old method seemed to demand too great an effort, was too narrow in its designated audience (Jews only), and its potential achievements were very limited. According to Chazan, it gave way to two different conversion strategies: the „rational-mystical“, proposed by Ramon Llull, and the more ex-

⁶ Cf. R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, Oxford 1987 [second edition 2007]; D. Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages*, Princeton 1996; A. S. Abulafia, *Religious Violence Between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, Palgrave 2002.

⁷ Most of the direct inter-religious polemics have been intellectual efforts of Christian writers dedicated to the delegitimization of Jews and of post-biblical Rabbinical Judaism, which simultaneously referred to the same post-biblical Jewish sources to prove the basic claims of Christianity. Such attitudes are expressed in different literary genres, such as anti-Jewish polemics, interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and of the „Old“ law, and finally, in philosophical and theological writings. Cf. J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca 1982; R. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response*, Berkeley 1989; id., *Barcelona and Beyond. The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath*, Los Angeles – Oxford 1992; A. S. Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth Century Renaissance*, London – New York 1995.

tre measures anti-Jewish such as expulsion and forced conversion⁸. However, and as I shall claim in the following, this argument appears to be true only for the direct inter-religious debate, since at the same time, the Hebraist method of deepening and strengthening Christian self-understanding through the frequent usage of Jewish hermeneutic strategies developed and spread in the following centuries. In this paper I shall claim that the first decade of the 14th century is a crucial turning point between the high scholastics of the 13th century and the Renaissance, between these two major epochs that are usually intensively discussed in modern research on Christian apologetics based on Jewish post biblical literature. Some of the developments I shall describe already began in the last decades of the 13th century and continued in the following decades of the 14th century. Historical processes are not limited to a single year, yet several events that occurred between 1306 and 1310 mark the period surrounding the year 1308 as a significant turning point. I assume that the essence of this new development lies in the creation of the figure of the virtual Jew, the one who is also called the „hermeneutic“ or the „spectral“ Jew in contemporary research⁹. Briefly, it is the discovery that no real Jew is needed in order to maintain a Jewish cultural element and that no real Jew is needed in order to continue the ongoing negotiations between Christianity and Judaism, i. e. that Judaism can become an inner Christian affair.

In support of my argument I shall divide the following part of my paper into two sections. The first will deal with the internal Jewish disputes concerning the studying and preaching of science and philosophy in a Christian environment; the second with the new mechanisms of Christian hermeneutics that were directly inspired by Jewish sources. As we shall see, these two parts are profoundly connected.

I. The End of Maimonidean Controversies

Moses Maimonides was perhaps the most significant single figure to implement the „Pauline“ pneumatic method of the interpretation of the Sacred Scripture in a philosophical way. His purpose was to revolutionize Judaism¹⁰, and his work provoked a variety of opposing reactions, creating waves of controversies throughout the 13th century. The first wave that took place during the last

⁸ Cf. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith* (nt. 7), 161–165.

⁹ Cf. S. F. Kruger, *The Spectral Jew. Conversion and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, Minneapolis 2006.

¹⁰ On Maimonidean Hermeneutics and its effects on Jewish thought cf. A. Ravitzky, *Samuel Ibn Tibbon and the Esoteric Character of the Guide of the Perplexed*, in: id., *History and Faith: Studies in Jewish Philosophy*, Amsterdam 1996, 205–246; id. *The Secrets of Maimonides: Between the Thirteenth and the Twentieth Centuries*, in: op. cit., 246–303; M. Halbertal, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, translated by J. Feldman, Princeton 2007.

decade of Maimonides' life, was limited to the Arabic east¹¹; but the second one, during the 1230's, involved Jewish communities in both, East and West, and was already centered in southern France, the nexus for all later controversies¹². The same geographical distribution occurred in the 1280's, whereas the last great controversy in the first decade of the 14th century was limited, as we shall see, solely to the European area.

The shift into the European intellectual environment and to Hebrew (as opposed to Arabic) as the major written language was followed by the development of completely new literary forms. In northern Spain, southern France, and Italy, these new literary forms were the product of Jewish Philosophy and Jewish Kabbala, two new spiritual streams which, although sometimes opposed to each other, used similar hermeneutic mechanism and strategies: Both introduced contents which were foreign and new and which intended to change the overall structure of Jewish life into the most sacred realms of Judaism. In their efforts to introduce those novelties into the innermost realm of the sacred, both streams implemented similar hermeneutic mechanisms of concealment and revelation, oscillating in their writings and sermons between elitist esotericism and vulgar forms of popularization.

The first European Maimonidean controversy was centered at Montpellier. According to Jewish reports the orthodox opponents of Maimonides appealed to the inquisition against his philosophic writings (the 'Guide of the Perplexed' and the 'Book of Knowledge'), and as a result, those writings were burned by the inquisitors in 1233¹³. If this report is true, Jews were among the first to make use of this new church instrument established in southern France a few years earlier. In that case, the famous apostate Nicholas Donin, who applied to Pope Gregory IX in 1239 against the Talmud, was the second to do so, perhaps as direct reaction against the anti-Maimonideans¹⁴. The north Italian Jewish scholar, Rabbi Hillel of Verona, was the first, during the late 1280's, to suggest

¹¹ Cf. S. Stroumsa, *The Beginnings of the Maimonidean Controversy in the East: Yosef Ibn Shimon's Silencing Epistle Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead*, Jerusalem 1999 (in Hebrew).

¹² The most comprehensive study of the Maimonidean controversies, though in great need of corrections, is J. Sarachek, *Faith and Reason: The Conflict over the Rationalism of Maimonides*, Williamsport 1935.

¹³ The only available description comes from the Maimonideans and seems to be part of the propaganda directed against the anti-Maimonideans. The most reliable description seems to be provided by Abraham, son of Maimonides, sitting in Cairo and relying on the written testimonies that were sent to him, cf. *Rabbenu Abraham ben ha-RaMBaM, Miḥamot ha-Šem*, ed. M. Margalioṭ, Jerusalem 1953, 55 sq.

¹⁴ We know that Donin was excommunicated by the Jewish community of Montpellier in 1232, but it is not clear on what grounds. The possibility that it had to do with the controversy between rationalists and Talmudists must be considered seriously. On the inner Jewish controversy and inquisitorial process at Montpellier cf. Cohen, *The Friars* (nt. 7), 52–60; on Donin, his list of charges against the Talmud and his involvement in the Parisian Talmud controversy in 1240 cf. C. Merchavia, *The Church Versus Talmudic and Midrashic Literature (500–1248)*, Jerusalem 1970, 227–290 (in Hebrew).

a direct link between those two events, regarding the trial and burning of the Talmud during the 1240's as divine punishment directed against the orthodox persecutors of Maimonides¹⁵. In any case, whether or not the first event ever took place, here we have evidence to support the fact that from the very beginning of the controversy, Jewish intellectuals were surprisingly open to accept the idea of Christian church authorities being involved in internal Jewish religious debates.

The year 1308 could have been the peak of the last wave of the Jewish internal controversy concerning the writings of Maimonides, and by extension, the study of philosophy, and the relationship between Jewish orthodoxy and the so called „exterior sciences“ or „Greek wisdom“. In 1303 central Rabbinical intellectual figures, such as Rabbi Menaḥem ha-Me'iri, 'Abba' Mari of Lunel, Rabbi Šelomoh ben 'Adret (Rashba) of Barcelona and Yeda'yah ha-Penini Bedersi of Montpellier, became deeply involved in the controversy that began at Montpellier and in the Provence and spread to other Jewish communities: first to Barcelona and subsequently to other Aragonian communities. The correct relationship between the revealed and the concealed levels of Jewish scriptural and oral authority, and the relation of both to larger intellectual frameworks, such as science, philosophy, medicine, and world religions lie at the core of the arguments.

On the surface, the opponents of philosophy no longer challenged the authority or the orthodoxy of Maimonides himself trying to avoid too strong a reaction from the Maimonideans. Instead, they attacked less central contemporary figures, blaming them for teaching complicated and controversial materials to those not mature enough, for preaching them in popular assemblies, for using them brazenly in their allegorical interpretation of Biblical figures, and for letting these philosophical ideas affect their praxis of daily Jewish laws¹⁶.

A closer look at the various parties and participants in the controversy reveals very different attitudes, motivations, and interests. Among the Rabbis of the Provence we can observe an internal controversy within the Maimonidean camp, in which ha-Me'iri, 'Abba' Mari, and the more extreme Maimonidean Averroist philosophers battled about the exact relations between Halacha, traditional Jewish studies, and the study of philosophy and science. The control mechanism, suggested by the defenders of the more traditional attitude, was to limit the study of foreign wisdom to pupils of at least 25 or 30 years of age and to strictly prohibit its popularization through philosophic preaching. None of them doubted the basic Maimonidean claim, that the highest natural sciences – phys-

¹⁵ Hillel of Verona, First Letter on Maestro Gaio (Rabbi Yiṣḥaq ha-Rofeh), in: Z. H. Edelmann (ed.), *Ḥemdah Genuzah* 1, Königsberg 1856, 18 sq.

¹⁶ This is a very short summary of a list that is repeated with small variations in all letters and documents of the 'Abba' Mari – Rashba party. A final summary is found in the last two letters written by the Rashba after the Barcelona ban, and cf. 'Iggeret ha-RaŠBa' 'im 'iggeret ha-Bedersi, Lvov 1809, 1–4.

ics and metaphysics – represent both the highest realms of human natural capabilities and the most sacred realm of divine scriptures¹⁷.

'Abba' Mari decided to try and prevail in the internal Provençal controversy by turning to a higher Rabbinical authority: Rabbi Šelomoh ben 'Adret of Barcelona. This, however, turned out to be a rather problematic decision, bringing into the scene a major Kabbalistic figure, and was perceived by the Provençal intellectuals as a general attack on philosophy, since the Kabbalists and Halachists of Barcelona were known for their basic anti-philosophical attitudes. For the traditionalists, the sacred realm of divine revelation lies between Halacha and Kabbala and to it they apply the same hermeneutic methods of Midrash and Kabbalist allegory. However, unlike the philosophers, the allegorical methods of the Kabbalists never affected their observance of the commandments in their literal meaning and never destroyed their *sensus historicus* of the events described in the Bible. These principles, repeatedly mentioned in the correspondence, are viewed by the Rashba not only in relation to the inner-Jewish perspective, but also in comparison with contemporary Christianity. The traditional Jewish claim that one should learn general sciences in order to be able to confront the heretics (*da' mah še-tašib le-'epikoros*) is no longer valid, since Jewish rationalists are much worse than any Christian intellectual. The rationalists cannot defend divine miracles since they do not accept the possibility of any exception to the natural order. They cannot assert the certainty of the afterlife for the Jews since they do not believe in the existence of the individual soul without the body; they interpret Biblical figures such as Abraham and Sarah or the twelve tribes as allegorical figures for abstract philosophical concepts.

„And what can he [the rationalist] do with the commandments of the Pentateuch, against which the gentiles argue, since it is only understandable, that if the Pentateuch is not understood in its literal sense, then the gentile can interpret it also as he wishes. Isn't it better to accept the Christian allegorical interpretation of some commandments than to accept the interpretation of these people who despise any law? [...] In truth, these people deny all religious laws which are accepted by all the nations, and if this was known to the gentiles, then all their money and gold would not help them escape the punishment for their corruption.“¹⁸

Such a statement that Jewish rationalists are more radical in their interpretation of sacred writings than Christian intellectuals and that therefore they offend not only Jewish law but also the universal religious consensus demonstrates, that even the Kabbalist was not isolated from his intellectual environment and that by evaluating the equation of power within his community he takes into consideration values and norms of his surroundings. This is especially important, once we remember that a Kabbalist such as the Rashba, who himself used an

¹⁷ For 'Abba' Mari's attitude to these questions cf. M. Halbertal, *Between Torah and Wisdom. Rabbi Menachem ha-Meiri and the Maimonidean Halakhists in Provence*, Jerusalem 2001, 152–169.

¹⁸ Cf. 'Abba' Mari ben Mošeh, *Sefer Minḥat Kena'ot*, Pressburg 1838, 51 (translation is mine).

allegoric hermeneutic method similar to the one used by the philosophers, must have had the same difficulty when facing Christian interpretation of Jewish law. Paradoxically, the only way the Rashba can avoid this pitfall is through arguing for universal religious truth, common to the Jew and the Christian and offensive to the philosopher. In this sense, his attitude during the internal Jewish controversy resembled that in his well known discussion against Christian missionary attempts and his refutation of the arguments of Raimundus Martini and probably – as Hames convincingly claims – also of Ramon Llull¹⁹. The Rashba's Spanish Jewish contemporary 'Abner of Burgos – Alfonso de Valladolid after his conversion – consciously locates himself between Rabbinical Judaism, Kabbala and Philosophy, thus creating a genuine space of discourse between Judaism and Christianity. This is clearly manifest in the way 'Abner/Alfonso addresses his Jewish rival Yizḥaq Pollegar, blaming him that while he represents himself as a lawful Jew, he in truth is neither a Jew nor a Christian but simply a philosopher, that is an a-religious rationalist. 'Abner presents his own argument against him as an argument that was directly driven by and remained faithful to the inner-meaning of Biblical, Rabbinical, and Kabbalistic sources²⁰.

Returning to Montpellier on the 9th of 'Ab 1305 the parties banned each other in what seemed to be an unbridgeable conflict. However, the expulsion of the Jews from France by Philip IV on the same day of the following year (1306) put an end to the controversy before a compromise or solution could be found. In 1308 'Abba' Mari found refuge in Arles and then in Perpignan. Subsequently, he published a full account of the correspondence and the controversies in which he was involved under the title 'Minḥat Kena'ot' (An Offering of Zealotry), from which I quoted above. Trying to find a refuge between the territories of the king of Aragon and the king of Majorca, 'Abba' Mari accused his opponents of inciting the authorities against him in order to prevent him from being allowed to stay within their jurisdiction²¹. The Rashba died soon afterwards, and the north Spanish Kabbalistic stream took advantage of the destruction of the Provencal intellectual center and began its victorious march that would last until the 17th and 18th century.

This expulsion did not lead to the end or the total destruction of the Jewish community of France. Jews were allowed to return in 1315 and partially rebuilt their centers that continued to exist until their final expulsion in 1394. The intellectual center in the south produced its greatest representative, Gersonides

¹⁹ Cf. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith* (nt. 7), 139–142; H. J. Hames, *The Art of Conversion: Christianity and Kabbalah in the Thirteenth Century*, Leiden 2000, 246–283.

²⁰ For 'Abner/Alfonso's Hebrew text cf. J. L. Hecht, *The Polemical Exchange between Isaac Pollegar and Abner of Burgos/Alfonso of Valladolid according to Parma MS 2440 Iggeret Teshuvat Apikoros and Teshuvat la-Meharef*, unpublished Diss., New York 1993, 326–462, here 350–352; for the Spanish text cf. C. V. Sainz de la Maza, *Alfonso de Valladolid: Edición y estudio del Manuscrito „Lat. 6423“ de la Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, unpublished Diss., Madrid 1990, 542–730 [Repuestas al blasfemo], here 553–556.

²¹ *Sefer Minḥat Kena'ot* (nt. 18), 100.

(1288–1344), who created an overall synthesis of philosophy, science, and bible exegesis²². However, despite some minor manifestations, it seems that philosophy finally became exactly what its opponents had held it to be, an elitist occupation of single individuals, with very little communal aspirations.

II. New Forms of Christian Hebraism

At the beginning of the fourteenth century we observe not only a turning point within the Jewish world, but also a variety of new hermeneutic strategies developed by Christian intellectuals in their encounter with Jewish sources. In the following I shall briefly discuss four main strategies, adopted by the following four theologians: Bernard Gui, Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Lyra, and Ramon Llull. During 1308, all of them were standing at crucial junctions of their intellectual and political activity. Needless to say, each of them deserves a much more detailed discussion. I would like to examine their thoughts from the very limited perspective of my interest here as representatives of different breakthroughs in the realm of Christian Hebraism. At the outset, it is important to note that none of them shall be regarded as Christian Hebraist in the narrow and almost technical common usage of the term. None of them can be proven to possess a real knowledge of the Hebrew language which would enable either of them to access Hebrew literature freely in its original form. Moreover, it might be argued that neither of them is a real innovator concerning the Jewish sources used; all make use of the rich variety of Latin translations produced during the thirteenth century. And still, I would like to claim that all four, each in their own way, are representatives of different approaches with which the new materials acquired during the 12th and 13th centuries might truly be integrated into new forms of Christian consciousness, without the apologetic or polemical functionality that prevailed in the earlier generation.

Despite the relatively sudden disappearance of Jewish intellectuals from the areas of Paris and southern France, it is surprising to see how leading Christian intellectuals continued to adopt a variety of basic Jewish hermeneutic methods. I strongly believe that the extremely rich, new, and innovative Christian approaches to Jewish sources during that period are not coincidental. In fact, all future strategies developed by Christian Hebraists in early modern Europe are already present at the beginning of the 14th century.

With our first figure, the Dominican friar Bernard Gui (or Bernardus Guidonis, ca. 1261–1331) – the papal inquisitor in Toulouse from 1307 to 1323 –, the inquisitorial study of Judaism, and the threat of „Judaization“ reach its peak. He arrived in Toulouse in January 1307 and began to fulfill his duties as inquisi-

²² On Gersonides Hebrew and Latin works and methods in their Jewish and Christian context see C. Sirat/S. Klein-Braslavy/O. Weijers (eds.), *Les méthodes de travail de Gersonide et le manieement du savoir chez les scolastiques*, Paris 2003.

tor in 1308. Concentrating mostly on the examination of Jewish writings, in January 1310 he burned copies of the Talmud and other books. This was not the first event of burning Jewish books in the years after the expulsion. In December 1309 three wagonloads of Jewish books had been burned in Paris²³. However, it is significant that this specific trial of the Jewish writings in Toulouse was held in the total absence of any Jewish representative. As Yosef Haim Yerushalmi convincingly argued, Bernard Gui's action was aimed mainly against Jewish writings that the Jews had left behind and that were collected from Christian hands²⁴. In this sense, it differs from all previous trials of the Talmud in which leading Jewish intellectuals and Rabbinic authorities were summoned to protect the Talmud against the charges raised by Christians or by Jewish apostates, such as Nicholas Donin and Pablo Christiani.

As in England after the expulsion of 1290, and especially in the Iberian Peninsula after the expulsion of 1492, we discover that the Jew remained unexpectedly present despite his bodily absence. In Bernard Gui's systematic work, *Practica officii inquisitionis heretice pravitatis*, this Jewish presence is manifest mainly through the censorship of Jewish books charged with containing anti-Christian blasphemies, and the constant struggle against the threat of Judaization that was directed primarily against „new Christians“.²⁵

Once again, just like in the Parisian trial of the 1240's, we find a close geographical and temporal relation between the inner-Jewish controversy of 1303–1306 and the inquisitorial process against Jewish writings that took place just a few years later. With Gui, the inquisitorial involvement in Jewish intellectual and religious affairs – a development that began mostly during the 1230's – reached a new peak: the actual Jewish participation, not even that of Jewish apostates as accusers, was no longer needed. For the charges raised by Gui against Jewish written authorities, they hardly contain contents not already known from previous anti-Rabbinical acts.

However, there is one point that does deserve some attention. Bernard follows Giles' of Rome *De errores philosophorum*, written in the 1280's (perhaps in Spain)²⁶, in his constant references to certain Jewish medieval authorities as

²³ Cf. Y. H. Yerushalmi, *The Inquisition and the Jews of France in the Time of Bernard Gui*, in: *Harvard Theological Review* 63 (1970), 317–376, here 323.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, The fact that Jews had to leave their written documents behind can be proven and explained from a letter written by Moshe ben Shmuel to the Rashba during the expulsion, in which he raised the issue of the legal situation of married couples who were left without their matrimonial documents of marriage (*Ketubah*). I can only assume that this happened because Jews were forced to leave all their written documents behind and that the motivation of the king, in enforcing that order, had to do with his interest in the financial documents held by the Jews, cf. *Minḥat Kena'ot* (nt. 18), 179.

²⁵ Cf. Bernard Gui, *Manuel de l'Inquisiteur*, ed. G. Mollat, Paris 1964, vol. 2, 6–19.

²⁶ Giles of Rome, *Errores philosophorum*, ed. J. Koch, Milwaukee 1944. On the authenticity of the work see Koch's introduction in *op. cit.*, xxxiv–xxxvi; Görg Hasselhoff recently raised severe doubts on Joseph Koch's attribution of authorship of this work to Giles and suggested a Spanish author from the close circle of Raimundus Martini, cf. G. K. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses. Studien zum Bild von Moses Maimonides im lateinischen Westen vom 13. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg 2004, 189–191. The two last chapters of the *Errores* (12–13) are

commentators of the law, i.e. the Torah: In the ‚Practica‘, Rashi’s work is described as „*quodam libro cuius actor vocatur Salomon, qui intitulatur apud eos Glosa super textum Legis*“, and Maimonides’ work is referred to as „*quodam libro quem Judei vocant Glosas Moyse de Egipto et actor illius libri intitulavit Declarationem et reformationem legis*“²⁷. I suggest, that this systematical reference to different Jewish literary genres under the common denomination of scriptural exegesis is another element shared by all four Christian intellectuals discussed here. While the Dominican inquisitor continues to reflect the figure of the „exegetical Jew“, the following three Christian intellectuals seem to absorb this figure into an independent and autonomous Christian figure through which the Jewish protagonist surfaces in a less sharp form, yet, at the same time, richer than ever before.

Unlike Rashi, Moses Maimonides did not actually write a Bible commentary, but he did provide his disciples and readers with very detailed instructions of correct reading and interpretation of Scriptures, as well as with some examples for their implementation. Many Jewish Maimonideans turned to such a systematic interpretation of biblical works. As we have seen above, the insistence of the Maimonideans not to limit themselves to scientific speculation, but to adopt systematic (allegorical) interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, was taken as a major threat by their conservative opponents.

The Dominican Meister Eckhart is the second figure to be discussed in the present context. Shortly after 1308, most probably during his second Parisian teaching period in 1311, he adopted the Maimonidean hermeneutic rules as the basis of his great plan of the ‚Opus tripartitum‘ in its later and final form. I shall not go into detail on this matter, but focus on one important difference between the hermeneutic method of Maimonides himself and the way it was implemented by Eckhart²⁸. According to the hermeneutics of Maimonides, the esoteric (i.e. inner and hidden) layer of Scripture can be connected to diverse philosophical contents. Sometimes it directs the reader to metaphysics; on other occasions to physics and moral claims. However, it never refers to different philosophical realms simultaneously. His famous parable of „golden apples overlaid with silver net-work“ does not represent two inner layers of the esoteric, but diverse relations between philosophy and law, that is, between the most abstract and universal layer of pure scientific and philosophical knowledge and the political level of accommodation into the daily language of a concrete human community²⁹. Against the background of such hermeneutical and epistemologi-

dedicated to the errors to be found in Maimonides’ ‚Guide‘, to which the author systematically refers under the title ‚De expositione legis‘.

²⁷ Cf. Bernard Gui, Manuel (nt. 25), 18.

²⁸ For a more detailed analysis of Eckhart’s reception of Maimonidean hermeneutic principles cf. Y. Schwartz, Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung als maimonidisches Projekt, in: G. K. Hasselhoff/O. Fraisse (eds.), Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) – His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts (Ex Oriente Lux: Rezeptionen und Exegesen als Traditionskritik 4), Würzburg 2004, 173–208.

²⁹ On the principle of accommodation cf. A. Funkenstein, Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century, Princeton 1986, 213–271.

cal monism, we can, in the writings of his successors – philosophers as well as Kabbalists – find an alternative understanding of the linkage principle, which creates an inner hierarchy within the esoteric layer of revelation referring in its turn to an inner hierarchy within reason itself³⁰. Raimundus Martini, apparently a participant in the Barcelona disputation of 1263 and the celebrated author of the *„Pugio Fidei“*, is the first among Christian authors who used this simile of Maimonides in his inter-religious polemics³¹. Arnald de Villanova adapted Martini's specific anti-Jewish polemic into broader Christian metaphysics in his treatise *„Allocutio super significatione nominis Thetragrammaton“*³². Meister Eckhart translated the dichotomy gold – silver into a series of double notions: outer – inner, Physics – Metaphysics, Old Testament – New Testament³³.

The best articulated expression of this principle of the plurality of layers within the esoteric meaning of revelation is formulated in the first part of Eckhart's commentary on John. Here, Eckhart compares the diverse forms of revealed truth as formulated in the writings of the philosophers, in the Old and finally in the New Testament, or, according to his own formulation, in the writings of Aristotle, Moses and Christ. He argues that, while the core contents of these diverse revelations are one and the same, they differ from each other in their epistemic methods, as well as in their different degrees of certitude: *„Idem ergo est quod docet Moyses, Christus et Philosophus, solum quantum ad modum differens, scilicet ut credibile, probabile sive verisimile et veritas.“*³⁴

In the eyes of Eckhart, Moses Maimonides incorporates this principle by showing the similitude between his faith as a Jew and his rationalistic method as a philosopher. He represents the Old Testament both as the Law of Moses and as the physics of Aristotle. Eckhart, as Maimonides' commentator, adds to it the teaching of Christ and the „true“ metaphysics of Aristotle. Indeed, Maimonides' parable of the golden apples becomes the focal point in Eckhart's prologue to the *„Liber parabolarum Genesis“*, his most elaborate hermeneutic programme.

³⁰ Cf. Y. Schwartz, *The Esoteric and Inter-Religious Aspects of the Relation between Philosophy/Kabbalah in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, in: *Studia Judaica* 16 (2008), 126–143.

³¹ Cf. Ramundi Martini ordinis praedicatorum *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos, cum observationibus Josephi de Voisin et introductione Jo. Benedicti Carpzovi*, Lipsiae 1687, 427 sq.: „R. Moses filius Maimon in libro qui a Iudaeis *Moreh Nebbuochim*, a Latinis vero dicitur *directio neutrorum* [...] תפודי וזב במשכיות כסף“.

³² Cf. J. C. Artau, La „Allocutio super tetragrammaton“ de Arnaldo de Vilanova, in: *Sefarad* 9 (1949), 75–105; Arnaldi de Villanova, *Allocutio super significatione nominis Tetragrammaton*, ed. J. Perarnau (Arnaldi de Villanova opera theologica omnia 3), Barcelona 2004, 139–204. In one place Arnald's text seems to be a direct source for Eckhart, who, through him, accepts the Kabbalistic theory of letters, cf. *Allocutio*, ed. Perarnau, 141, 57–60; Meister Eckhart, *Expositio libri Exodi*, n. 151–154, LW II, 134, 16–138, 4.

³³ It is in this sense that Eckhart expounds the first verse of John – *in principio erat verbum* – as the metaphysical inner layer, facing its physical outer counterpart in the first verse of Genesis – *in principio creavit deus*; cf. Y. Schwartz, *Meister Eckharts Schriftauslegung* (nt. 28), 204–208.

³⁴ Cf. Meister Eckhart, *Expositio Sancti evangelii secundum Iohannem* 185, LW III, 155, 5–7.

Eckhart's main encounter with Maimonidean hermeneutics probably took place during his second Parisian magistrate from 1311 onwards. Similar to the Maimonideans of southern France, he combined radical philosophical allegory, which he in Maimonidean terminology defined as parabolical, with popular preaching. In a way, the different attitude of the two Dominicans – Gui and Eckhart – might be seen as a repetition of the equivocal attitude of the Dominicans of Paris during the 1240's. Then, Albertus Magnus was the first to truly and fully integrate Maimonidean philosophy into his thought, while at the same time being one of the signatories to the condemnation of the Talmud³⁵. More important in my present discussion is the basic tendency to translate the Jewish hermeneutic-metaphysical principles into a new conceptualization of the traditional relationship between Jewish and Christian revelations³⁶.

This brings me to the third figure of my present paper: In 1308–1309 Nicholas of Lyra becomes *Magister actu regens* of theology in Paris and begins composing the ‚Postilla super totam Bibliam‘, his great exegetical work, that will systematically transmit the works of the greatest Jewish interpreter of the literal meaning of Scripture – Rabbi Šelomoh ben Yizḥaq (Rashi) – to Christian literature³⁷. In his literal commentaries, Nicholas is faithful to the basic attitude of the Jewish traditional scholarship in Paris and the Loire valley with their literalist methodology. Nicholas goes beyond the well known apologetic or polemical approach to Jewish authority in order to prove the truth of Christianity. He

³⁵ Cf. C. Rigo, Zur Rezeption des Moses Maimonides im Werk des Albertus Magnus, in: W. Senner (ed.), Albertus Magnus. Zum Gedanken nach 800 Jahren: Neue Zugänge, Aspekte und Perspektiven, Berlin 2001, 29–66; Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses* (nt. 26), 129–136.

³⁶ Eckhart's intensive and explicit usage of Maimonides' name is much more in line with scholastic writers of the third quarter of the 13th century than with Eckhart's own time. In 2006, Gilbert Dahan published his research on ms. Latin 16096 of the Bibliothèque nationale de France which he dates to the last decades of the 13th century, cf. G. Dahan, Un florilege Latin de Maïmonide au XIII^e siècle: les *Extractiones de Raby Moysse*, in: J. Hamesse/O. Weijers (eds.), *Écriture et réécriture des textes philosophiques médiévaux*, Turnhout 2006, 23–44. This ms., which was in the possession of Geoffroy de Fontaines, contains a florilegium of all the works of Maimonides accompanied by very detailed and interesting marginal notes Dahan traces back to Geoffroy himself. Dahan concludes: This implies, that at the turn of the century a leading Parisian theologian was engaged in a careful and detailed study of Maimonides great work. It is significant, however, that Maimonides' name does not occur even in one of Geoffroy's own works. Dahan is right when he demands to try and locate the non-explicit points of reference in Geoffroy's oeuvre, and in his more general claim that „la présence de Maïmonide dans la pensée chrétienne de la fin du XIII^e siècle et du début du XIV^e siècle est plus importante que ne le laissent supposer les citations explicites“ (34), but this is of course no reason to neglect the importance of the „politics of quotation“, i. e. the intended establishment of a philosophical or theological *auctoritas*, as practiced by Eckhart.

³⁷ For Lyra's exegetical methods in general and his use of Jewish Rabbinical sources cf. W. Bunte, *Rabbinische Traditionen bei Nikolaus von Lyra: Ein Beitrag zur Schriftauslegung des Spätmittelalters*, Frankfurt a. M. 1994; P. Krey/L. Smith (eds.), *Nicholas of Lyra: The Senses of Scripture* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought 90), Leiden 2000; G. K. Hasselhoff, *Raschi und die christliche Bibelauslegung dargestellt an den Kommentaren zum neuen Testament von Nikolaus von Lyra*, in: *Judaica* 62 (2006), 193–215.

adopts Jewish sources and integrates them in a new systematic Christian writing. To a large degree Eckhart chose to formulate his theological and philosophical views in the form of Bible commentaries, mentioning his main Jewish source, Maimonides, almost solely in his commentaries on the Old Testament. Similarly, Nicholas used Rashi primarily in his literal ‚Postilla‘, yet contrasts this literal sense with the moral sense that remained exclusively Christian. He quotes both Ezekiel 2:9 („*liber [...] erat scriptus intus et foris*“) and Revelation 5:1 („*et vidi [...] librum scriptum intus et foris*“) in order to establish this principle of the two layers of Scripture³⁸. But Nicholas is less philosophically oriented than Eckhart and thus cannot understand this principle like Eckhart does, as a differentiation between physics and metaphysics, and therefore mostly neglects the philosophical hermeneutics of the Jewish tradition. Moreover, in his work, he redefines the old boundaries between Jewish and Christian thought in its most extreme Pauline dichotomic formulation. According to Nicholas, Jewish exegesis may well serve as a key to the understanding of the literal meaning of Scripture, and this literal meaning may well gain a new and fresh authoritative status; but there seems to be no possibility for the erudite Jewish reader whatsoever to move on from this literal place to another level of understanding. Thus he rebuilds the traditional role of the exegetic Jew while ignoring the existence of any possible alternative Jewish persona³⁹.

It is no coincidence that another Jewish apostate, the bishop Pablo de Santa Maria, raised exactly this criticism in his notes to Nicholas' ‚Postilla‘, composed in 1429⁴⁰. The Dominican Thomist Pablo points out Nicholas' failure to use more sophisticated Jewish authorities, such as Ibn 'Ezra', Maimonides, and Nachmanides, and his excessive emphasis on the literal interpretation of Scripture⁴¹. On this issue Pablo is much closer to Meister Eckhart than to Nicholas of Lyra.

³⁸ Cf. Prologus primus Nicolai de Lyra, in: *Biblia sacra cum glossis interlineari et ordinaria*, Nicolai Lyrani Postilla, ac Moralitatibus, Burgensis Additionibus, et Thoringi Replicis, vol. 1, Venetiis 1588, 3.

³⁹ The difference on that point between Nicholas and other commentators quoted above (Martini, Arnald de Villanova, Eckhart) is seen most clearly in the way he quotes Maimonides' simile of the golden apples (cf. nt. 31–32 above), which is introduced not as a representation of the two layers of scriptural exegesis but simply as a literal explanation for Proverbs 25:11, while ignoring, of course, most parts of the original Maimonidean text, cf. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses* (nt. 26), 250.

⁴⁰ Pablo de Sancta Maria, *Additiones ad Postillam Magistri Nicolai de Lyra*, in: *Biblia sacra cum glossis* (nt. 38), 4–7.

⁴¹ Op. cit., 6. On Pablo's criticism and on his own usage of Maimonides cf. Hasselhoff, *Dicit Rabbi Moyses* (nt.26), 265–277. As Hasselhoff points out (ibid., 273 sq.), Pablo precisely takes the opening prophecy of Ezekiel in order to refer to Maimonides' philosophic esotericism. However, Hasselhoff fails to identify both sources to which Pablo refers in this passage, i.e. Mishna and Babylonian Talmud, Tract Hagigah, as the most classic locus in medieval Jewish literature in order to discuss the politics of esotericism and the exact place in Maimonides' ‚Guide‘ to which it refers here, that is Guide III, 1–7.

Our fourth and last figure is Ramon Llull. In 1308, Llull returned from his third North African mission and began to compose the works that represented the last and most mature phase of his „Art“. He also continued in his efforts to establish oriental studies⁴², preparing the decision taken at the council of Vienne in 1312 to call for the establishment of chairs for oriental languages in Paris, Oxford, Bologna, and Salamanca, as well as in the papal curia⁴³. Llull's system makes it difficult to propose any research hypotheses about its origins, sources, and influences. Each of the system's elements is not necessarily original. Rather, originality and authenticity are immanent in Llull's thought and self image. „Thus, an important characteristic of Llull's writings is that they never bear explicit reference to their source; on the contrary, these are jealously concealed.“⁴⁴ When reconstructing the sources of Llull's speculations, one almost naturally tends to look for exterior sources of specific contents and their elements, while assuming that the form, i. e. the unique structure of Llull's work, reflects the inventive powers of the author. This is true to a certain degree, since Llull identifies mostly with the general structures of the „Art“, but this does not mean that there are no external sources of influences to be found precisely in those structures. On the one hand, many scholastic ideas penetrated Llull's system when he was in Montpellier and Paris, allowing him to enter into close dialogue with the Masters of arts, medicine, jurisprudence, and theology. On the other hand, it is not surprising at all to find Muslim and Jewish structures being absorbed into the scheme of his teaching in order to be used in the inter-religious dialogue he creates. This is certainly the case with the Muslim tradition of divine names, and most probably also with the Koranic tradition of the sacred ultimate „Book“ revealed on the mountain, „como imitador de Mahoma“⁴⁵. Furthermore, Llull's system bears remarkable similarities to major Kabbalistic topoi of the late 13th century⁴⁶.

Several studies have been dedicated to the reconstruction of Llull's possible Kabbalistic sources⁴⁷. Such a reconstruction is rather difficult since Llull himself does not provide us with any such references. I perceive this difficulty as a significant fact in itself. First because it indicates that we are dealing here not

⁴² On this late phase in Llull's life see F. Domínguez/J. Gaya, Life, in: A. Fidora/J. E. Rubio (eds.), *Raimundus Lullus. An Introduction to his Life, Works and Thought* (*Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina; Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis* 214), Turnhout 2008, 97–105.

⁴³ *Concilium Viennense, Decretum „Inter sollicitudines“*, in: J. Alberigo [e. a.] (eds.), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, Freiburg i. B. 1962, 355.

⁴⁴ J. E. Rubio, Thought: The Art, in: Fidora/Rubio, *Raimundus Lullus* (nt. 42), 244.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Pardo Pastor, „Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis“ (Is. 7, 9) en la interpretación de Ramón Llull, in: *Patristica et mediaevalia* 25 (2004), 77–88, here 77.

⁴⁶ Among those topoi is that of the Rashba himself, who, as Hames claims, also directly responded to Llull's Kabbalistic speculation, cf. Hames, *The Art of Conversion* (nt. 20), 246–279.

⁴⁷ Cf. J. M. Millás Vallicrosa, Algunas relaciones entre la doctrina luliana y la Cábala, in: *Sefarad* 15 (1958), 241–253; M. Idel, Ramon Lull and Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Preliminary Observation, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), 170–175; Hames, *The Art of Conversion* (nt. 20), 118–189, 246–283.

with the polemical adaptation of the adversary's arguments, but with a meaningful and essential incorporation of ideas. Here one can see the great difference between Llull and his Dominican Catalan contemporary Raimundus Martini. Both were deeply influenced by the Barcelona disputation and both dedicated their lives to converting the infidels, emphasizing the urgent need for a thorough knowledge of oriental languages. However, while Martini turns to Jewish exegetical sources, Llull is looking for a much wider exegetical scheme that should not only comprise every written book but also include all other realms of human experience⁴⁸. Llull's conviction that he can achieve the wished concord between the religions is based on his belief to have found the elements which directly support his „Art“ in the most sacred Jewish and Muslim teachings. Thus, Hames can claim that Llull „should be seen, at least on one level, as the start of Christian appropriation of the Kabbalah“⁴⁹.

One can certainly point out one major similarity between Lull and several of his contemporary Jewish Kabbalists on a meta-hermeneutical level. Overall, in Jewish Kabbalistic systems Scripture hermeneutics is applied not only to the Holy Scripture, but also to the ‚Book of Nature‘ and to the divine realm itself. In doing so, such systems eliminate the borders between logic and ontology, between philosophy, theology, science, and magic. This idiosyncratic and free usage of all sorts of traditional materials, while creating a new and unique sacral language, is of course one of the most typical features of the Lullian „Art“⁵⁰.

The very basic idea of ‚the book‘ already implies the built-in problem of the rejection of authorities. In that sense Lullian literature may be compared to the Zoharic literature of the time. Both transform all kinds of traditional sources into a completely new format that does not enable real sourcework because it declares its canonical value as a new type of primary *textus*⁵¹. Both strive to bridge the tension between logic, science, and theology, between the ‚Book of Revelation‘ and the ‚Book of Nature‘, between the transcendence of God and the divine presence in the universe, within an old Neoplatonic scheme dressed in a new revelation language. Interestingly, in both cases scholars have tended to point out the teachings of John Scotus Eriugena as a possible source⁵², though such a theory has never been established satisfactory.

⁴⁸ On Llull's method as a form of exegesis see H. Santiago-Otero/K. Reinhardt, *La Biblia en la península ibérica durante la edad media (siglos XII–XV): el texto y su interpretación*, Coimbra 2001, 87–95.

⁴⁹ Hames, *The Art of Conversion* (nt. 20), 288.

⁵⁰ M. D. Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Llull*, Oxford 1987; A. Bonner, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull. A User's Guide*, Leiden–Boston 2007.

⁵¹ L. Kuchenbuch/U. Kleine, *Textus im Mittelalter – Erträge, Nachträge, Hypothesen*, in: iid. (eds.), *Textus im Mittelalter. Komponenten und Situationen des Wortgebrauchs im schriftseman-tischen Feld*, Göttingen 2006, 417–453, especially 419 sq.

⁵² Cf. for instance F. A. Yates, *Ramon Lull and John Scotus Eriugena*, in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960), 1–44; for the connection between the teaching of Eriugena and early Kabbalist theosophy cf. G. Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. Z. Werblowsky, trans. A. Arkush, Princeton 1990, 318, 344, 423.

With his system, Llull attacked the Averroists of Paris and criticized the theologians in a manner that is strongly reminiscent of the basic attitude of Jewish Spanish Kabbalists a few years earlier. Also, his effort runs parallel to that of Eckhart in striving to reconstruct the profound rationality of Christian belief. In Eckhart's case, it was applied in a Maimonidean fashion to the deeper level of written revelation, and in a 'Kabbalistic' way to the deeper level of cosmic intellectual powers in the case of Llull.

III. Conclusion

The common denominator of the Christian intellectuals discussed in this paper, Eckhart, Bernard Gui, Nicholas of Lyra, and Llull, is that as theologians they strongly rejected the common literary forms typical for 13th century scholastics. I believe that their ability to provide new alternative genres of systematic theological writing is closely related to their newly developed forms of Hebraism. The two major fields in which the main theologians of the 13th century encountered Jewish (as well as Muslim) writings were on the one hand their scientific endeavors, and their general speculative theology on the other. From William's of Auvergne 'De legibus', 'De anima', and 'De universo' until Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas this has always been the case. Usually they dealt with Jewish texts as sources for general scientific knowledge, either by accepting such knowledge or arguing against it. Eckhart, Nicholas, and Llull on the other hand strove to develop a unified and comprehensive hermeneutic system in which they adopted the full range of Jewish exegetical strategies that were developed in northern Spain, Provence, and southern France throughout the 13th century. Each of them formulated his new exegetical methodology as a framework for new Christian thought, able to absorb Jewish contents without being assimilated by them.

In summary, the Jewish-Christian relationship in the early Middle Ages was marked by mutual interests and agreements. In the Late Medieval and Early Modern eras Christian Europe developed its image of the Jew as an integral part of Christian identity. The fading perception of the factual Jew paved the way for the recognition of the existence of the post-biblical Jew in European culture.

The 13th and 14th century were the first time since late antiquity that Jewish elements penetrated Christian thought in such a variety and to such an extent. The process was not necessarily mediated by living Jews or apostates, nor motivated purely by polemical anti-Jewish reasoning. What can be observed is a significant stage in the shaping of European mentality. Following the last phase of the internal Jewish Maimonidean controversy we can already see how Jewish consciousness was increasingly influenced by its Christian environment. Later on, these developments would bear even greater significance for the further evolution of Jewish thought, as Jewish intellectuals began incorporating some of these images into their own mechanisms of self-understanding. But that is another story, one that shall lead us directly to the modern age.