

With these methodological caveats in mind, we shall nevertheless find much in the polemical literature to teach us about the shifts in images and attitudes. Among other matters it will cure us from the naive, enlightened prejudice, that increased knowledge about each other leads to increased tolerance. The history of medieval polemics testifies to the opposite. The more each culture knew of the other, the more intense were both the rejection and the attraction of the other.

Changes in Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Twelfth Century

THE TRADITIONAL MODES OF ALTERCATION

New patterns of Christian anti-Jewish polemics emerged in Western Europe during the twelfth century. Some of them challenged the way in which the Jews, their religion, and their role in the cosmic-historical order were hitherto perceived. The new may not have replaced older patterns altogether, yet they came to dominate the Christian discourse down to the age of Enlightenment. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, religious polemics became ever more acrimonious. It provided rationales for the burning of the Talmud in France and Italy,⁷ hastened missionary activity, and at times orchestrated expulsions or

(chapter 4, n. 88). On the other hand, it is common knowledge that the Kabbalah was accused by its Jewish opponents, from its beginning in the thirteenth century, of Christianizing tendencies, which were later sensed also by Christian kabbalists of the Renaissance. See Gerschom Scholem, *Reshit ha-kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1948), p. 154 (ובסוד דרש 154) (. . . רומם כמו הגמון . . . בכל / בכל; Talya Fishman, "New Light on the Dating and Provenance of *Kol Sachal* and Its Timeless Critique of Rabbinical Culture," *Tarbiz* 59 (1989/90), p. 178, n. 33; I. Liebes in *Tarbiz* 60.1 (1990), pp. 133–35. But the Kabbalah was not the only domain of influence: see chapter 4 on Nachmanides and the discussion of Rashi below.

7. S. Baron, in *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* vol. IX, pp. 62 ff., belittled the material implications of the confiscation and burning of the Talmud. He argued that the number of books actually destroyed was much smaller than the number of books lost as the result of natural catastrophes. Even if we disregard the process of intellectual decline of medieval communities affected by the loss of books—cf. E. E. Urbach, *Ba'ale batossafot, chiburehem veshitatum* (Jerusalem, 1956), pp. 377 ff.—we should not measure the impact of the Talmud trials by their material implications alone. From now onwards, the study of Jewish law was not immune from outside danger in the consciousness of those engaged in it; the knowledge that their own literature became open to systematic Christian scrutiny must in itself have been oppressive to Jews. See D. J. Silver, pp. 11–16. See chapter 5, n. 48.

other oppressive measures. It tended to isolate and alienate the Jews—on all levels and in all of its varieties.⁸

Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Christian polemics falls, I believe, under four categories: (1) The older pattern of altercation, consisting mainly of scriptural proofs for the veracity of Christian doctrines. (2) Rationalistic polemics, the attempt to prove Christian dogmas with the sole aid of reason (*sola ratione*). The twelfth century witnesses even a downright "geometrically demonstrated theology," *theologia more geometrico demonstrata*. The mainstream of scholastic theology abandoned such aspirations later on. They had no room in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, or William of Ockham. Raymundus Lullus remained an exception. (3) Accusations against the Talmud, or, rather, against most of the postbiblical Jewish literature. This polemical strategy resulted in the confiscation or burning of maligned books in almost every century following the first Talmud trial in Paris, held in 1240. (4) Attempts to prove not only from the Old Testament, but from the Jewish postbiblical literature itself, from the legal and homiletic traditions, an implicit recognition of the messianity of Christ and other tenets of Christian faith. Needless to say, these basic types of polemical strategies appeared more often than not mixed and together. In the following I shall try to reconstruct the motives and mental attitudes behind these new polemical modes. I leave for another occasion the detailed discussion of the causes and circumstances of the changes and the Jewish response to them. Anselm of Canterbury, Petrus Alfonsi, Abelard, Petrus Venerabilis, and Alanus ab Insulis will be our main witnesses for the transformation of polemical attitudes. It occurred in the twelfth century, though its full dangers became manifest only subsequently, with the growth of the Church's political power and organization.

Polemical arguments in the early Middle Ages were repetitive and stereotypical; Bernard Blumenkranz described them in detail.⁹ While

8. The theological polemics, we shall see, differs from the more vulgar only in terminology and level when it comes to the demonization and dehumanization of the Jews, traced by J. Trachtenberg in *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jews and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism* (New York, 1961). The synthetic achievement of the book is also its disadvantage: it lacks a differentiation of polemical kinds, of levels of altercation, and it lacks altogether diachronic considerations. Cf. also Baron, *ibid.*, XI pp. 122 ff.

9. Bernard Blumenkranz, *Les auteurs Chrétiens latin du moyen age sur les Juifs et le Judaïsme* (Paris, 1963). The review ends with the eleventh century. Our following study is based mainly on Latin sources. See now also the important study by David Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict* (Jerusalem-Leiden, 1982).

no century passed without bequeathing to posterity several "Tractatus contra Judaeos," "Sermones contra Judaeos," "Dialogi cum Judaeis," until the twelfth century none of them contains a new idea or proof-text. Often enough they just copy arguments from the writings of Tertullian, Cyprianus, and Augustine. They list proof-texts from the Old for the veracity of the New Testament and add to them proofs from history—that is, from the present sorry state of the Jews, their humiliation and dispersion. Hardly any of these writings reflects a real occurrence: Tertullian's dialogue is already a mere literary exercise. The "Dialogue with the Jew Trypho," written in Greek by Justin the Martyr in the mid-second century, may have been for a long time to come the last record of a live altercation.¹⁰ For hand in hand with the shift in the missionary activity of the early Church from the Jews to the "God-fearers" (*θεοσεβεῖς*, *yir'cy shamayim*)¹¹ and again from these to utter pagans—a process that ended approximately at the end of the second century—religious polemics likewise changed its nature and aims. Gradually, polemics with Jews became polemics against them,¹² the

10. On the importance of the question see M. Simon, *Verus Israel. Études sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans L'Empire Romain (135–425)* (Paris, 1964), pp. 166 ff.; M. Avi-Yonah, *Byzantine Roman Judaism* (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 101; J. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London, 1934), pp. 71, 98 ff. The "Dialogue with Trypho" evidently contains fictitious elements, but the occurrence of the altercation and its *dramatis personae* seem to be factual. It is also evident that actual religious altercations occurred later: Cf. Blumenkranz, *ibid.*, pp. 279 ff. (Crispin), but few of them were recorded. The disputation between Herman the Jew (Hermannus quondam Judaeus) and Rupert of Deutz bears the mark of authenticity for precisely the reasons that made A. Soltman doubt it: Herman's Jewish arguments are so different from those we are used to in written compositions.

11. See S. Pines, *Hakinyu ha'irani Lenotsrim veyirey hashem. Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences 2/7* (Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 3–5. On the problems of proselytizing, see B. J. Bamberger, *Proselytization in the Talmud Period* (Cincinnati, 1939). Rokeah, *Conflict*, pp. 40 ff., warns correctly against exaggerating the number of either proselytes or god-fearers.

12. The argumentative strategies of early Christians probably differed only little from those of other apocalyptic sectarians, for example, the Dead Sea Scrolls sect, who likewise defined themselves as a "holy community" (*adat kodesh*) that was given the exclusive "decoding" (*pesher*) of the Scriptures at the end of the old con (see chapter 3, "History as Predestination"). Depending on the concrete polemical situation, Christians since Paul developed two arguments. That they are "Israel in the spirit" to whom the choice of God has been transferred from "Israel in the flesh" they justified with an anachronization of the Old Testament as a *παρθενώγιος εις χριστόν*, a *praeparatio evangelica*. The Old Testament was a historical phase sublated by Christianity. Against Jews and "Judaizing" in its midst, Christian apologists sometimes argued that the law was given to Israel as a burden so as to enhance its sins and punishment (Gal. 3:19–24; 4:1 ff.). Cf. H. D. Wendland, *Geschichtsanschauung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen, 1938), pp. 23 ff., 30 ff. For such reasons Harnack saw in Marcion's dualistic doctrine merely an exaggeration of a Pauline motif. A. von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom Fremden Gott* (Leipzig, 1924; reprint: Berlin, 1960), pp. 30 ff., 106 ff. Cf. M. Werner, *Die Entstehung des christlichen Dogmas* (Bern-Tübingen, 1953), pp. 201 ff., 207. As to the place of polemics in life, Jewish missionary activity must be assumed to have lasted at least to the time of Hadrian: Simon, *Verus Israel*, pp. 315 ff. Note that Tertullian's disputation is directed against a pagan convert to Judaism (*proselito Iudaeo*): "Adversus Iudaeos," I in *Tertullian Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Kroymann, CSEL 70 (1942) p. 251. See also Rokeah (see n. 99).

product of missionary competition that imposed upon Christians the burden of proving to the pagan intellectuals why they hold to the Old Testament without being Jews.¹³ And even while "the empire turned heretical" (*malkhut nebeftkha minut*) down to the early Middle Ages, when the Jews in Western Europe (with the exception of Visigothic Spain) were a small minority among other minorities, the Church retained the fear of Jewish influence over *Judaizantes* in its midst. In Spain and Carolingian France the Church feared the social status of Jews, all the more so in that, until even the tenth century, the Christianization of Western Europe was fairly superficial: pagan customs and beliefs were deeply rooted and could be uprooted only by an intensive internal missionary drive. Mainly, however, religious polemics remained vital for the self-definition of the Church. The very fact that Jews' existence with the realm of influence of the *militans ecclesia* caused astonishment, perhaps even admiration, and called for an explanation.

For all of these reasons—and not only because of its lack of intellectual creativity during the early Middle Ages—polemics against Jews was still necessary even in a stereotypic, internalized form which preserved elements of its former apologetic past. The fixed image of the Jews in this polemical literature has been often described in recent literature,¹⁴ though some of the presuppositions underlying this image have not always been clearly stated. The "blindness" (*obcaecatio*) of the

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13. Even Eusebius still formulates the objections of pagan intellectuals as follows: if indeed Christians hold to the Jewish religion, why did they make it into a new religion? Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, ed. Schwartz, I, 2, 1–4. (His teacher Origenes fought similar objections of Celsus.) In the eyes of a politically minded Roman, Judaism might be a nuisance, but it can be tolerated for the sake of order and, at any rate, it follows a *mos majorum*. A new Jewish religion is an evil without redeeming features. That Christians were persecuted mainly because they were seen as *homines rerum novarum cupidi* has already been Edward Gibbon's opinion: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (New York, n.d.) I, pp. 448 ff. See also Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, pp. 16 ff.

14. E.g., Adolf Leschnitzer, *Die Juden im Weltbild des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1934); Rosenthal, JQR 47, pp. 59 ff.; H. H. Ben Sasson, *Perakim betoldot yisrael biyune habeynayim* (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 29 ff.

Jews expresses itself in the “obnoxious” tenacity with which they hold to the simple, literal sense of the Scriptures, refusing to discern the hints in the Old Testament for the veracity of the new dispensation, refusing to recognize the fulfillment of prophecies and prefigurations in their own history, to recognize that, with the coming of the Messiah, the precepts of the law became obsolete because their aim was achieved by him. Israel “in the flesh” understands its chosenness and its law “literally” rather than in the proper “spiritual” understanding. We mentioned already the Pauline origin of this terminology. Nonetheless, there is a meaning to the continued existence of Israel in dispersion. In this view, which grew out of a variety of discrepant and contradictory voices to become dominant since the fifth century, the dispersion of the Jews among the nations was not only (if at all) a collective punishment for the collective sin of having crucified the Savior: it acquired also a triple teleological, positive meaning. In their dispersion, the Jews fulfill vital functions in the Christian order, in the divine plan of history. To heretics and pagans they serve as a living testimony to the authenticity and antiquity of the scriptures: Augustine inherited this idea from the earlier Greek apologists and transmitted it to the Middle Ages.¹⁵ Furthermore, until the end of days, the Jewish humiliation in dispersion is a living testimony that chosenness by God has been transferred from Israel in the flesh to Israel in the spirit. Their state demonstrates that, when “Shilo” appeared, “the scepter has ceased from Judah” (“The staff shall not depart from Yehuda, nor the sceptre from between his feet, until Shilo come,” Gen. 49: 10). And finally: at the end of days, with the second presence (*παρουσία*) of Christ, the remnant of Israel will convert to Christianity in a dramatic act, thus completing and crowning the universal mission of the Church militant: “Thereafter the carnal Jews having passed, their children at the end of days will, as the prophet testifies, believe in Christ.”¹⁶

Evidently, this doctrine reflects the gradual realization of the Church that it is incapable of converting the Jews, at least for the time being. In it, the Church developed a rationale why Jews still exist, and why they should be tolerated, with their “errors,” at least conditionally. In

15. Augustine, *De civitate Dei* IV, 34; XVIII, 46; B. Blumenkranz, *Die Judenpredigt Augustins* (Basel, 1946); Baron, op. cit. II p. 34 n. 52, pp. 168 ff.

16. “Transeuntibus quidem istis carnalibus Judaeis, postea in novissimis temporibus filii eorum in Christo credituri sunt, propheta testante”: Isidore of Seville, *De fide catholica contra Iudaeos* II, 5, In Migne, PL 83 col. 508 ff. On him see Blumenkranz, *Les auteurs* pp. 80 ff. On the theme of *testamentum aeternum* in Isidore cf. Leschnitzer, op. cit., n. 7.

the terms of canon law, Jews were not heretics as long as they remained Jews; nor were they unbelievers; their status was *sui generis*. Isidore of Seville, for example, opposed the forced conversion of Jews in Visigothic Spain for the reason just quoted, though approving it after the event. But the very same doctrine could likewise provide Christian rulers with reasons for the restriction and oppression of Jews whenever they sought such reasons, that is: whenever they felt that the actual social and political status of the Jews does not match their theoretical “servitude.” It was a doctrine of *conditional* tolerance only.

The basic assumption underlying this doctrine of conditional tolerance was, then, the certainty that Jews and Judaism never changed, neither ethnically (for they are Israel in the flesh) nor in their religion; that they kept their blind, literal adherence to the Scriptures with its erroneous consequences in Jewish law. *Secundum carnem* the Jews remained the same through the ages—a fossil; Toynbee merely translated into a secular idiom an old theological bias. In the beginning of the thirteenth century, Joachim of Fiore once expressed this assumption in a succinct phrase: “the Jews refused to change with the times” (*noluerunt . . . ipsi Iudaei mutari cum tempore*).¹⁷ The Jews are a historical anachronism. In the more popular imagination Jews did not even change in their outward appearance, in their clothing. And an eleventh century hagiographer tells us in passing (in an altogether nonpolemical context) of a vision that his hero, the missionary and later martyr Anskar, has as a young man. His savior appeared to him “clothed as a Jew”—*more Iudaico vestitus*.¹⁸

The stone of contention between Jews and Christians was not the “fact” of ethnic continuity—both sides did not doubt it—but rather its meaning. The Christian contention that this ethnic continuity became meaningless with the advent of Christ forced some Jewish apologists to stress the value of this continuity far beyond traditional claims. Jehuda

17. Joachim de Fiore, *Super quattuor Evangeliorum*, p. 105, quoted after H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l'écriture* (Lyon-Fournier, 1961), III (II, 1), p. 144, n. 2. It is, of course, a clear literary allusion to Ovid: “tempora mutant et nos in eis.” Later, Josef Albo formulated this principle from the Jewish perspective most succinctly: “ואולם אחר היות כל הדתות מסכימות באחת מהן שהיא אלהית, אלא שהן חולקות עליה: בשיאמרו שהיתה זמנית וכבר עבר זמנה, הנה נאמר שהוא ראוי לכל בעל דת לחקור על עקרי דתו ואמונתו.” Josef Albo, *Sefer ha'iqqarim*, I, 14, ed. J. Husik (Philadelphia, 1946), I, p. 191.

18. Rimbart, *Vita Anskari* 4, ed. G. Waitz, *M. G. in usu Schol.* (Hannover, 1884), p. 24: “cumque ab oratione surrexit, ecce vir per ostium veniebat, statura procerus, Iudaico more vestitus, vultu decorus.” Luther was not the first European to recognize “dass Jesus Christus ein Jud gewesen.”

Halevi elaborated the biological criterion to define Judaism almost *ad absurdum* in his famous doctrine of the adherence of “the divine matter” (*al’amer al’ilahi, ha’inyan ha’elohi*) to Israel. It adheres, he contended, to those of pure ethnic lineage only; even converts to Judaism are exempt from it.¹⁹

THE RATIONALIZATION OF POLEMICS: ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

Christian anti-Jewish polemics changed radically in the twelfth century, reflecting historical events and changes in the methods and contents of theology. I shall not deal with the historical causes for the deterioration of the social, economic, and political status of the Jews since the twelfth century. It was a complex process that defies mono-causal explanations. Among its main driving moments were the demographic explosion, social differentiation, the war of investitures, the various religious popular movements—legitimate and heretical—since the eleventh century, of which the First Crusade was a part. At the time the Christian religious polemics abandoned its introverted nature, became ever more aggressive and began to serve new social and religious functions.

Two formal characteristics became dominant in the history of learned Christian polemics from now onwards: an increasing rationalization, a turn towards rational-philosophical arguments, and—of greater importance—the fact that Jewish postbiblical literature became known to Christian theologians, at first in fragments, systematically later on. Inasmuch as theologians felt an increasing need to rethink theological issues and redefine systematically basic theological terms, they also changed their views about the aims and possibilities of religious polemics. Scholastics sought to ground the dogmas and the elements of canon law *auctoritate et ratione*; in their case against Judaism some of them likewise sought to replace the stereotypic repetition of scriptural reference-lists with rational argument. Polemics became creative again.

Anselm of Canterbury’s “Cur deus homo?” though arguably not written for immediate polemical purposes,²⁰ influenced the polemical literature directly and indirectly. His proofs of the necessity of incarnation for the success of God’s plan for the salvation of humanity were

19. See below, p. 293.

20. See n. 27.

meant to replace older perceptions of humanity as the “captive” of Satan since the original sin, in need of being “ransomed.”²¹ Anselm undertook an *Entzauberung* of theology, its emancipation from redundant myths. His argument presupposes that if God wanted to create the world and the completion of the *civitas dei coelestis*, he was obliged to maintain their implicit order: “it does not behoove God to let into his kingdom anything inordinate.”²² Humanity had to compensate God with a proper compensation (*debitum satisfactionis*) for the original sin wherefore the savior had to be human. But the once impaired human will have lost the capacity to want that which God wants, wherefore the savior had to be divine. He had to be at once man and God. This divine necessity does not amount to absolute determination and does not infringe on God’s omnipotence, such as, for instance, the *’akl* in the doctrine of the *mu’atazila*. It is rather a consequence of the world’s order chosen by God (*ordinatio*). It seems to me that Anselm was the first among medieval thinkers to see clearly the problem known later as the relation between God’s absolute and ordained power (*potentia Dei ordinata et absoluta*), a problem that became central to theological discussion after Thomas. God—such is Anselm’s answer to Petrus Damiani’s contention that the omnipotent God can act *contra naturam*²³—is

21. These, says Anselm, were allegorical readings only (*quasi quaedam pictura*): Anselm of Canterbury, “Cur deus homo?” I, 4, ed. Schmitt, *Anselmi Opera Omnia* (Edinburgh, 1946), pp. 51 ff. On Anselm’s theology at large see E. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* III (Darmstadt, 1959), pp. 218 ff.

22. Anselm, *Cur deus homo?* I, 12: “Deum . . . non decet aliquid inordinatum in suo regno dimittere.”

23. Petrus Damiani, *De divina omnipotentia*, V, XII, ed. P. Brezzi and B. Nardi, *Edizione Nazionale dei Classici del pensiero Italiano* 5 (Firenze, 1943), pp. 70 ff., 118 ff. On his sources see A. Enders, *Petrus Damiani und die Weltliche Wissenschaft, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, ed. C. Baumher VIII, 3 (Munster, 1910), pp. 16 ff., esp. p. 17, n. 1. Anselm joins Augustine, who stated, “Deum, creator et conditor omnium naturarum, nihil contra naturam facit”: *Contra Faustum* XXVI, 3, Migne, PL; 42, col. 480. Most theologians of the twelfth century gave a similar answer to the question whether God can act *contra naturam*: cf. Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science during the First Thirteen Centuries of Our Era* (New York, 1958) I, pp. 58 ff. On the dialectics of *potentia dei absoluta et ordinata* and its importance in the later Middle Ages much has been written since this article first appeared (1969); see my *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, pp. 117–52 (with the recent literature). *Ibid.*, p. 126, I traced the origin of the earlier formula *agere per potentiam—agere per iustitiam*. Cf. Gregory of Rimini, *Lectura super primum et secundum sententiarum*, idem, pp. 42–44 q. 1a. 2, ed. A. D. Frapp and V. Marcolino, 6 vols. (Berlin, New York, 1979–84, III, p. 368), on Origenes (e. g., Migne, PG 13 col. 1716). On Anselm and the *potentia absoluta* see also W. Courtenay, “Necessity and Freedom in Anselm’s Conception of God,” *Analecta Anselmiana* 4.2 (1975), pp. 39–64.

bound at least to the (logical) principle of noncontradiction and to its consequences. Ascribing to God the power to effect two logically contradictory states of affairs weakens God's omnipotence rather than increasing it; without that logical restriction, it would be conceivable that God could annihilate his own existence. Anselm, it seems, wishes to secure God's status as a necessary existent (*ens necessarium*), the ground for Anselm's ontological proof for God's existence.²⁴ Being confined to the principle of noncontradiction also means that God is bound to the world-order that he wanted for as long as he wants it, and consequently to the immanent logic of this order. The object of God's will must remain consistent. Wherefore God became flesh of necessity and yet out of God's unrestricted will and power.

Anselm's emphasis on the necessity of the incarnation may have made him less prone to accuse Jews, collectively or individually, of having killed their savior. At any rate, he explicitly denies the charge of deicide: "no man can knowingly wish to kill God, wherefore those who killed him out of ignorance did not fall into this infinite sin."²⁵ Few medieval authors said so, and fewer so explicitly. It fits the general non-polemical style of Anselm.

In our context it is of little importance whether the dialogue was really written with Jewish arguments in mind, as the result of an actual confrontation or with the intent to induce it.²⁶ The considerable influence of the treatise on later anti-Jewish polemics, in content and form of argumentation, justifies our attention to it here. Yet the internal logic of the treatise makes it difficult to ascribe to it outright polemical purposes. Though he believed in the power of reason to provide a priori proofs for God's existence and even for the truth of the dogma, he was not a rationalist of the kind that believes in the capacity of the unaided, natural reason to perceive these proofs without divine inspiration. Anselm's notion of evidence has sometimes been erroneously compared to

24. D. Henrich, *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis, sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1960), pp. 10 ff., has argued that Anselm's proof, accepted in the Middle Ages by only a few, was grounded on the notion of God as *ens perfectissimum* (*ens quod majus cogitari non potest*), while Descartes revived it with the less ambiguous starting point of the notion of God as *ens necessarium (causa sui)*. N. Malcolm, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *The Philosophical Review* 69 (1960): pp. 41–62, has shown that in fact both forms were anticipated by Anselm. Cf. also my *Theology*, pp. 25–28.

25. *Deum occidere nullus homo umquam scienter saltem velle posset, et ideo qui illum occiderunt ignoranter non in illum infinitum peccatum . . . prouerunt: Cur deus homo* II, 15.

26. *Ibid.* I, 1; II, 22; ed. Schmitt, pp. 133, 147.

Descartes's.²⁷ The "evidence" which Descartes ascribes to "clear and distinct" ideas is largely subjective. Only systematic reasons moved him to ascribe absolute certainty to the transition from the "objective" to the "formal" idea of God, yet to deny such certainty to, say, mathematical propositions.²⁸ The evidence attributed to Anselm to the *rationes necessariae* is, by contrast, an objective evidence. Their certainty reflects and participates in the eternal truth, the eternal light itself, of which every particular truth is a part. Anselm felt, therefore, compelled to try to prove the absolute, a priori validity of God, his goodness, truth—to prove that they are, in the language of Thomas, *nota per se ipsa*. For these reasons, Anselm put forth in the *Proslogion* his ontological proof of God's existence from his very notion—after having developed, in the *Proslogion*, a "physico-theological," a posteriori proof. But these very considerations also moved Anselm, again in contrast to Descartes, to distinguish between objective evidence and subjective certainty (*certitudo*). The latter does not always accompany the truth and may at times be erroneous.²⁹ Every cognition is rooted in illumination: Anselm could not distinguish between the "natural" and "supernatural light" (*lumen supernaturale*) so as to attribute the former with immanent, innate capacities of judgment.

Anselm's epistemology thus makes it clear why only the one who already believes can be convinced; and it may be the reason why Anselm abstained from religious polemics even while possessing good arguments against "the wicked" (*insipiens*) who "said in his heart there is no God." Yet if he abstained from outright anti-Jewish polemics, his disciples and imitators did not, such as Odo of Cambray³⁰ or the anony-

27. E. g., R. Allers, *Anselm von Canterbury: Leben, Lehre, Werke* (Wien, 1936), p. 73. Cf. J. Fischer, *Die Erkenntnislehre Anselms von Canterbury*, BGPhM X, 3 (Münster, 1911), p. 647 (valuable only as a collection of materials). No less mistaken is the comparison of Descartes's notion of evidence to that of Sa'adia Gaon who, in many ways, occupies the same positional value in medieval Christian philosophy as Anselm in the development of Christian philosophy.

28. This was recognized already by Arnauld in his response to Descartes's "Meditations": *Meditationes* q. IV, ed. A. Tannery (Paris, 1904), VII, pp. 199–207. See also A. Funkenstein, "Descartes and the Method of Annihilation," *Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews*, ed. D. Katz and J. Israel (Leiden, 1990), pp. 70–75.

29. Seeberg, *ibid.*, III, p. 165; Fischer, *ibid.*, pp. 50–63. Here, again, Anselm anticipated a major turn in fourteenth-century philosophy. See A. Maier, "Das Problem der Evidenz in der Scholastik des 14ten Jahrhunderts," *Ausgehendes Mittelalter*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1967), pp. 367–418.

30. Odo de Cambray, *Disputatio cum Iudaeo*, Migne, PL 160 col. pp. 1104 ff.; cf. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch* III, p. 237.

mous author of a polemical treatise erroneously ascribed to William of Champeaux. The latter starts his "dialogue" with a declaration that he was unable to convince his Jewish interlocutor with scriptural arguments—that is, with the traditional mode of polemicizing. He was able to do so only with rational arguments.³¹ The arguments themselves are a shallow repetition of Anselm's, certainly without the restrictions that Anselm set on their capacity to convince. Had Anselm's epistemological stunt been really accepted, it might have enhanced true tolerance.

That the increased rationalization of disputation could lead to increased tolerance becomes evident even more when one reads Abelard's *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*³²—a book close in form and content, though not in its intention, to a similar work by Raymundus Lullus in the fourteenth century. Its basic fairness to the Jewish point of view was born out of genuine interest in the Jewish people; it reflects direct contact with, and sympathy for, Jews. Yet the dangers in the invocation of reason were not smaller than its benefit. Peter the Venerable, whose polemics we shall discuss later, set up the following simple syllogism. Man is a rational animal. It is well known that Jews can be convinced neither by scripture nor by reason. They are, therefore, inhuman; their demonic nature drives them to feign lack of understanding.³³ Of the extreme rationalism of the *mu'atazila*, Goldzieher once remarked that "dogmatism, by its very notion, harbors the tendency to intolerance."³⁴ The part played in Europe by rationalists in the history of intolerance is no smaller than their part in the promotion of tolerance. Radical rationalists tend to identify cognitive errors with moral vicissitude. They often tend to identify reason with faith or at least to prove their compatibility. Abelard revived ancient patristic doctrines (going back to Clement of Alexandria) which viewed Greek philosophy as being no less a *praeparatio evangelica* than the Old Testament. Greek thinkers, Abelard assumed, had already accepted many, if

31. [Ps.] William of Champeaux, *Dialogus inter Judaeum et Christianum*, Migne, PL 163, col. 1041.

32. Petrus Abaelard, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Judaeum et Christianum*, Migne, PL 178, 1609 ff. About the general tone and character of the book see H. Liebeschütz, "Die Stellung des Judentums im Dialog des Peter Abälard," *MGWJ* 83 (47) (1939): pp. 390 ff.

33. Petrus Venerabilis, *Tractatus adversus Judaeorum inveteratam duritiam* V, Migne, PL 189, col. 602.

34. "Dem Dogmatismus wohnt vermöge seines Begriffes die Tendenz zur Intoleranz inne": I. Goldzieher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Heidelberg, 1910), p. 117.

not all, tenets of the Christian faith, which forms at its core a rational system; only the fear of ignorant masses made them veil their knowledge in hints.³⁵ Similar views in Arab and Jewish philosophy are better known. Sa'adia Gaon, in the beginning of the medieval Jewish philosophical tradition, likewise saw in revelation and prophecy a historical-social necessity rather than a matter of principle. The labor of reason is discursive, slow, and prone to be impeded by mistakes and dead-end trials. Therefore the *tora* was given, and so also miracles and prophecy, "because [God] knew in his wisdom that the proposition sought by the work of reason cannot be completed except in time, and if he deprives our knowledge of them in the *tora* we shall remain a long time without it until the labor is completed." Especially the masses are cause for concern: "and perhaps many of us will never complete the work because of the internal defects or lack of talent to deal with it . . . or because of overbearing doubts. . . . And God saved us from all these troubles quickly and sent us his messengers."³⁶

REASON AND CONVERSION: PETRUS ALFUNSI

The Christian reaction to these exaggerated hopes of reason came after Thomas, particularly during the fourteenth century. The Jewish reaction grew out of an awareness of the dangers implicit in the emergence of intellectuals to whom differences of faith are but differences of intellectual levels.³⁷ In Jehuda Halevi's "Kuzzari," the positions of the Muslim and Christian participants in the fictitious dialogue are set in close proximity to that of the "philosopher." This is not a mere theoretical or rhetorical construct. Close to Jehuda Halevi's time and place, Petrus Alfonsi converted to Christianity. In his polemical treatise

35. Abaelard, *Dialogus*, Migne, PL 178 col. 1614 ff. Cf. H. Reuter, *Geschichte der Aufklärung im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1875; reprint: Aalen, 1963), I, pp. 215, 323, n. 1. Reuter's anachronistic hunt for "enlighteners" stretches to John the Scott (Eriugena). The book was written from a Catholic, apologetic point of view at the end of the last century to document the Church's openness to science.

36. Sa'adia, *Sefer ha'emunot vedot* (Ibn Tibbon's trans.), introduction (New York, 1956), p. 16: "מפני שידע בחכמתו כי המבוקשים המוצאים במלאכת העיון לא ישלמו כי אם במדה . . . מהזמן כי אם ימחה אותנו בידיעת תורתנו עליה נעמוד ומן רב בלא תורה עד שתשלם המלאכה . . . או שמא רבים ממנו לא תשלם בו המלאכה בעבור חסרון שיש בו או שלא ישלם לו להתעסק בה . . . מפני שהספקות שולטים עליו . . . ושמרנו הבורא מכל אלו הטרחים במהרה ושלח לנו שלוחיו."

37. J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 178.

tise—one of the most notorious and influential throughout the Middle Ages—Alfunsi focused on the rational motives leading to his conversion. Only Christianity is the suitable faith for a philosopher. We shall see later how he transformed arguments of Sa'adia Gaon: his acquaintance with Jewish philosophy seems more profound than his knowledge of Christian theology.

Petrus Alfonsi was an early prototype of those Spanish-Jewish upper-class intellectuals who led to the "Taufweller" of the fourteenth century. Their motives were many—economic, social, and religious. As was the case among German Jews in the nineteenth century, many of them may have embarked from the false perception that the measure of tolerance in the Christian society at large resembled the measure of understanding for other religions in the small enlightened circles to which they belonged. Some of them, such as Abner (Paulus) of Burgos later and Petrus Alfonsi, may have felt a genuine attraction to Christianity as a religion of reason that fits the dominant elements of their education better than Judaism. At any rate, Alfonsi was a victim of a more popularized philosophy, of half-digested ideas. I do not see in his polemical treatise an intent to vilify Judaism at all costs, but rather a fairly sincere account of the motives of his conversion.³⁸ Having converted, the new name he chose was Petrus, to honor the king who was present at his baptism: the conversion of a Jew in the early days of the *reconquista* was still a rare event because the economic situation of a convert was often enough worse than it was as a Jew; he could be dispossessed. In short, I have no reason to doubt Alfonsi's protestations that he was not led by material considerations. He certainly was not led by them.

His treatise is written as a dialogue between himself and his friend Moses. Moses was Alfonsi's name prior to his conversion: the dialogue seems to be an internal dialogue between his new and old self. The explicit intent of the book was the immanent refutation of Judaism with its own weapons, *secundum Hebraicam veritatem*.³⁹ To that aim, Alfonsi employs extensively the talmudic aggadic materials. He wishes to show that Judaism is confined to primitive, anthropomorphic perceptions of

38. For a different assessment see A. Ashtor, *The History of the Jews in Moslem Spain* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 172–73, 382 nn. 261–67; I. F. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 35.

39. Petrus Alfonsi ex Judaeo Christians, *Dialogi* etc. I, Migne, PL 157 col. 536ff. Quotation: col. 339C. Against the view that the *Sefer michamot hashem* of Jacob ben Reuben was written to refute Alfonsi, see J. Rosenthal in the introduction to his edition of *Milchamot hashem* (Jerusalem, 1963), pp. xvii–viii.

God, and that it is necessarily confined to those because it is limited to the literal understanding of its scriptures and its traditions. "You contend that God has a head, arms and a form; if this is so, then, of necessity, you confess that God has the dimensions of altitude and longitude."⁴⁰ A. L. Williams and S. Lieberman have traced many of Alfonsi's sources. Like Agobard of Lyons almost two hundred years earlier, he uses heavily the anonymous and esoteric *Sefer shi'ur koma*. Alfonsi himself names the treatise *Berachot* of the (Babylonian) Talmud as his main source: "in the first part of your doctrine, whose name is Benedictions (*benedictiones*)."⁴¹ In the course of his dialogue he develops eclectic theological and cosmological theories that purport to be free of anthropomorphizations. He goes on to refute the Jewish reasons for being scattered in the *Galut* and adds, at the end of the first part, some further examples of the absurdities in the aggadic imagination.

All of this is not to say that Alfonsi objects in principle to concrete illustrations of abstract ideas, to parables and metaphors. In his *disciplina clericalis* he demonstrated the practical-pedagogical value of "philosophical" stories: it was one of the most popular books of anecdotes in the Middle Ages. He opposed the *aggada* because he saw in it not merely odd and infantile elements even where it does not relate miracles, but rather an insult to common sense. Since Jews are incapable of allegorical interpretations—the *sensus spiritualis*—of necessity they read such materials literally. The *aggada* proves that Judaism must essentially stay outside the garden of true philosophy. You may argue: surely he must have known that Jews do practice allegorical and symbolical reading (*derash*). But then again, many Jewish intellectuals of his time were profoundly embarrassed by some of the *midrashim*.⁴² His stand differs from theirs only in its radical consequences. The medieval Jewish enlightenment of the Middle Ages also aimed at the sublimation of vulgar anthropomorphism (*hagsama*).

A. L. Williams still thought that one could omit a discussion of Al-

40. Alfonsi, *Dialogi* I, Migne, PL 157 col. B–C: "Vos Deum caput, brachia et totam corporis formam habere contenditio. Quod si hoc est, igitur Deum longitudinis et altitudinis dimensionibus constare necesse est fateamini." This is a clear allusion to the *shi'ur koma*, as if to say: rabbinical legends lead of necessity to the bizarre speculations about the dimensions of God such as in the *shi'ur koma*.

41. *Ibid.*, Migne, PL 157, col. 541–42.

42. Cf. Ramban, *Perush hatvora*, ed. Schawel (Jerusalem, 1962), I p. 11 (after enumerating divine and seemingly conflicting midrashic traditions, and harmonizing them kabbalistically): "אבל הזכרתי זה לבלום פי קטני אמונה מעושי חכמה, המלעיגים על דברי 'אבל הזכרתי זה לבלום פי קטני אמונה מעושי חכמה, המלעיגים על דברי' רבותיני" Maimonides was so incensed about the *Shi'ur koma* that he suggested it be better incinerated.

funsi's philosophical theories.⁴³ Aside from the belittling of medieval philosophy as such, which sounds today much more obsolete than its object, in our case the separation of the religious from the philosophical argument is particularly impractical. One of the main marks of Alfinsi's polemics is the way in which he employed Jewish philosophy—a dominant ingredient in his education. It seems clear to me that he borrowed his proofs for God's existence and attributes—together with its epistemological presuppositions—directly or indirectly—from Sa'adia's "Book of Beliefs and Opinions." Sa'adia distinguished three sources of cognition, "the underlying grounds (*meshachey*) for truth and evidence"; "the first: cognition of the apparent, the second: knowledge of reason, the third: knowledge of that which is necessitated."⁴⁴ He means sensual perception, direct intellectual evidence (axioms), and deductive inferences. So also Alfinsi:

To know has three meanings. One, when something is perceived by the bodily senses. Another, when something is known by necessary reason only. Yet another, what is known by analogy to other things.

And he continues and borrows some of Sa'adia's examples for the latter verbatim: that we infer from smoke the presence of fire, and from a human voice the presence of a person.⁴⁵ But Sa'adia also admitted a fourth source of knowledge that Alfinsi omits, a source confined to "the community of true monotheists" (*kehal hameyachadim*), namely "trustworthy hearsay" or tradition. Upon it Sa'adia grounds the validity of the "commandments of obedience" in the third part of his book. Alfinsi may have omitted this mode of knowledge because he had no

43. With a curious argument, at least in its conclusion: "These essays must have been intended for the perusal of the upper classes of all educated men of the period. Naturally they are out of date now, and it is not worth the trouble to any but a very few readers to try to understand the philosophy and the science of the period": A. L. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos. A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 233 ff.

44. Sa'adia, *ibid.* *Meshech* in the sense of underlying matter: cf. D. Kaufmann, *Geschichte der Attributenlehre in der Jüdischen religiösen Philosophie des Mittelalters von Saadya bis Maimuni 4* (Gotha, 1877), p. 1, n. 1.

45. Alfinsi, *Dialogi* I, Migne, PL 157 col. 555C; Sa'adia, *Sefer ha'emunot vede'ot*, intro.:

Illud autem quod per similitudinem percipitur, tale est ut sicuti vocem audieris, ibi aliquot vocale esse intelligis, quamvis minime videas, vel cum ubilibet fumum conspexerit, ille ignem etsi non videas esse cognoscis" etc.

והאחד מהם כי כשאנחנו רואים עשן שנאמין במציאות האש במציאות העשן כי לא יתום זה כי אם בזה. וכן כאשר נשמע בקול אדם מאחורי הפרגוד או מאחרי הכותל אנחנו חייבים שנאמין במציאותו מפי שלא יהיה קול אדם בלתי אם מאדם נמצא וגר

need for it—if indeed he saw the merits of Christianity over Judaism in that it has no room for blind obedience. It is a religion of reason.

Be that as it may, Alfinsi undoubtedly knew either Sa'adia's book or parts of it, or perhaps only a paraphrase, in Hebrew or Arabic. His proof for the existence and unity of God are likewise Sa'adia's, and so is his elaboration of the divine attributes. The latter forms the basis for his proof of the Trinity—rather than, as one might guess from other theological writings of his time, the somewhat similar ideas of Augustine.⁴⁶ In the short time that he acquired his far from elegant Latin he may not have read Augustine, who was one of the most quoted but less often read of the Church Fathers in the early Middle Ages. Alfinsi's theological education was rather narrow.

In the course of his defense of Christianity, Alfinsi employed another family of ideas that again became popular at the time about the place of various religions in the cultural progress of the world. The idea that Christianity appeared only when the cultural, social, and political development of humanity reached a proper level to perceive and spread it over the whole inhabited world is not the same as the Pauline conception of the sublation of the commandments of the Old Testament and the distinction of periods "before the law, under the law, under grace" (*ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia*). Eusebius combined both lines of thought into one argument so as to defend Christianity as the only religion really befitting the Roman Empire.⁴⁷ Others repeated similar arguments in various contexts down to the liberal theology of the nineteenth century. Alfinsi employs them in his classification of Judaism and Islam. The more traditional use of the idea of divine accommodation is his explanation for the now obsolete commandments of the Old Testament:

In the beginning of the world, humans were still bestial and more or less wild, and could not be immediately guided towards obedience to God's precepts. Knowing this, the divine wisdom, unwilling to give them all precepts, gave slowly [*paulatim*] one to Adam . . . another to Noah. . . . When indeed Moses

46. Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 41 ff., read Augustine's comparison of the three faculties of the soul to the trinity as a mere illustration or allegory; in fact it is more, namely the latter a prototype of the former, and humans a true *imago* of God. Cf. Uberweg-Geyer, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Basel-Stuttgart, 1960), vol. 3, p. 108.

47. E. Peterson, "Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum," *Theologische Traktate* (München, 1951), pp. 86 ff. On the theme of accommodation in classical and medieval literature see Funkenstein, *Heilsplan*, pp. 31–34; *idem*, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination*, pp. 256–58; S. D. Benin, "Thou Shalt Have No God Before Me: Sacrifice in Jewish and Christian Thought" (Ph.D. diss., UC Berkeley, 1980).

came, and God wished the children of Israel to join him and be distinguished from other nations, he gave them all his precepts.⁴⁸

Alfonsi could have drawn from the long and rich history of this figure of thought in Christian theology from Irenaeus of Lyons through Augustine to his own times.⁴⁹ But he could have also relied on traces of it in the Jewish tradition again down to his time—they are present in Jehuda Halevi's *Kuzari*.⁵⁰ Maimonides was later to work them out into a detailed theory about the origins of some commandment as a partial concession to polytheistic practices so as to invert them. We shall deal with it later.

While discussing the abolition of the pristine law given to Israel, Alfonsi lets his interlocutor, Moses, ask: if indeed he, Alfonsi, wanted the most progressive religion, why did he not turn to the youngest one among the monotheistic creeds? Alfonsi answers by describing the primitive character and origins of Islam:

People in Mohammed's time were lawless, without letters, ignorant of any values except warfare and plowing, seeking luxury, given to gluttony. . . . Had he preached to them in any other way, he would not have moved them towards his law.⁵¹

In other words, Islam is even further from reason than Judaism. It is worth noting that he assumes the influence of Samaritans and Nestorians on nascent Islam. He also repeats the story of Mohammed's Jewish helpers.

I argued that Alfonsi did not intend a crude defamation of Jews and Judaism. Nowhere did he accuse the postbiblical Jewish literature of blasphemous misrepresentations of Christianity—as other Christian theologians who came to be acquainted with the *aggada* and *halakha*

48. Alfonsi, *Dialogi* V, Migne, PL 157, col. 667 ff., esp. 667B: "Quoniam in mundi exordio quasi silvestres erant adhuc homines et bestiales, nullatenus tam cito possent admoneri ad oboedientiam praeceptis Dei. Quod Dei comperiens sapientia, nequaquam simul omnia eis voluit dare praecepta, imo patulatim unum dedit Adae . . . aliud vero Noe . . . cum vero Moyses venit, et Deus filios Israel secum adjungere et ab aliis gentibus, discernere voluit, praecepta eis sua praecepit." Cf. Sa'adia (above n. 44); Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 2, 19, ed. Schwartz, 5th ed. (Berlin, 1952), p. 8.

49. Cf. above, pp. 141–145.

50. Jehuda Halevi, *Kuzari* IV, 3

51. Alfonsi, *Dialogi* V, Migne, PL 157, col. 605B (Cf. 603A): "Homines autem temporis Mohameti, sine lege, sine scriptura, totius boni inscii praeter militiam et aratrum, appetentes luxuriam, deditique gulae, facile secundum voluntatem eorumdam praedicari poterant. Si enim aliter faceret, non ad legem suam eos impelleret."

did. On the other hand, his materials could be used for baser purposes, and indeed were so used.

THE POLEMICS AGAINST THE TALMUD

From the twelfth century onwards, attacks against the Talmud became a dominant theme in the Christian polemical literature. The term was used to refer to almost the entire postbiblical Jewish literature, of which the legal and homiletic parts—*halakha* and *aggada*—were found to be equally offensive. Accusing Judaism with blasphemy against Christianity was, as I said before, only part of a much broader, much more pernicious accusation of heresy, of deviating from the original and proper form of Judaism. That Jews and Judaism did not change was, as we saw, the assumption underlying the doctrine of conditional tolerance towards Judaism prevalent in antiquity and in the early Middle Ages. That Jews and Judaism did change was the implicit and explicit ground for the trial and burning of the Talmud in 1240 and several times since.⁵² Should I be able to show, as I intend to do, that already Petrus Venerabilis of Cluny raised similar accusations about a hundred years earlier than the speculations about the role of the convert Dunin in the Talmud-trial or about the damaging effects of the controversy over Maimonides's philosophical writings may seem much less relevant. Christian theologians were, then, ready and prepared for such allegations long before 1240.

Peter the Venerable was the first to express such views in the twelfth century. Though I doubt whether he was acquainted even with one fully translated talmudic tractate (he claimed to have initiated the translation of the whole Talmud), his source-material was richer than that of any of his predecessors. The change was not merely quantitative: he views the Talmud as a genuine heresy, containing human traditions which are not intended to interpret the Bible but to compete with it. He begins the fifth chapter of his *Tractatus adversus Judaeorum inveteratam duritiam* with solemnity and sarcasm:

I will, in public, show you, O Jew, you beast, your book, I say this book of yours, this Talmud of yours, that venerable doctrine of yours which you prefer to the prophetic books and to all authentic sentences.⁵³

52. See n. 72.

53. Petrus Venerabilis, *Adversus Judaeorum inveteratam duritiam*, V, Migne, PL 189, col. 602C–D: "Profero tibi coram universis, O Judae, bestia, librum tuum, illum, inquam, librum tuum, illum Talmuth tuum, illam egregiam doctrinam tuam, prophetis libris et cunctis sententiis authenticis praeferebam."

Some of the words are not new. They echo, in part, a famous judgment of Jerome. In an often quoted letter, Jerome—who, like Origenes, was well acquainted with Jewish traditions—complained that there are “so many Pharisaic traditions now called ‘deuteroiseis’, like old women’s tales.”⁵⁴ He continues with the argument that, given the fact that the biblical precepts cannot be fulfilled literally, the only proper way to understand them is spiritually; yet the Jews prefer to force the Scriptures to yield their oral laws, such as the laws concerning the walking-limits on the Sabbath, “preferring the doctrines of men to God’s doctrine” (“doctrinas hominum praeferentes doctrinae Dei”).⁵⁵ Yet Jerome never questioned the subjective dependence of the *halakha* on the scriptures. He does not doubt the sincerity of the sages who believed that the oral law represented an interpretation and adaptation of the written law. A similar attitude is reflected in the widely read remarks of Epiphanius a hundred years earlier on the scribes who hold customs and beliefs that cannot be found in the *Tōra* (*νόμος*). But he knows that the scribes and Pharisees regard their laws as a fence around the written law (*συναγ λatorα*). Indeed, his use of the word “heresy” is value-free: he distinguishes four hermeneutical “schools” of those who add to the law (*Δευτερωται*). Similar remarks can be found throughout the Patristic literature in the East and West.⁵⁶ Only the Emperor Justinian I drew radical conclusions when he forced on the Jewish community the liturgical use of translations and forbade, in his notorious novella, the use of traditions (*δευτερωσεῖς*).⁵⁷

We find Jerome’s remarks quoted also by Agobard of Lyons in the ninth century. But even while attacking the crude, blasphemous anthropomorphisms of the *Sefer shi’ur koma* or other Jewish *errores et superstitiones*,⁵⁸ Agobard, too, does not challenge their subjective dependence

54. Hieronymus, *Epistulae* 121 q. 10, ed. I. Heiberg, CSEL 61, 3 (1918): pp. 48–49: “Quanta traditiones phariseorum sint, quas hodie *δευτερωσεῖς* vocant, et quam aniles fabulae, revolvere nequeo.”

55. Ibid.: “Solent respondere et dicere: Barkhibas et Symeon et Helles [Akiba, Hillel, Shamai], magistri nostri, tradiderunt nobis . . . doctrinas hominum praeferentes doctrinae dei.” At issue are the הלכות תחום שבת.

56. Epiphanius, *πανάρτιος* I, 1, 15, Migne, PG 41, col. 242 ff.; cf. id., *Ἀνακῆφαλον*, Migne, PG 42, col. 846. As to the term “heresy” in the sense of “school” or “sect,” cf. *παν.* I, 5, about the lack of differences of beliefs and opinions in the beginning of the world. For others, cf., for example, Augustine, *Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum* II, 1, 1, Migne, PL 42, col. 637.

57. A. Linder (ed.), *Roman Legal Legislation on the Jews* (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 295–302.

58. Agobard, *Epistola . . . de Judaicis superstitionibus* X, Migne, PL 104, col. 88B–C; on his sources: Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, pp. 348 ff.; Blumenkranz, *Les Anterus*, pp. 152–67, 195 ff. On Agobard and the *sefer tole’dot Jeshu* see S. Kraus, *Das Leben Jesu*, pp. 5 ff.

on the Bible, and never denies that all the Jews believe they are doing is interpreting the scriptures.⁵⁹ The same passage from Jerome’s letter was quoted again by Agobard’s disciple Amulo of Lyons and others after him.⁶⁰ Little, then, seems new in Peter the Venerable’s opening remarks: the Jews “prefer” their doctrines to God. But he took it literally to mean that the Jews but pretend to still hold to the Old Testament. He continues:

You wonder, since I am not a Jew, who put into my hand the Jewish *secrets*? Who uncovered your most occult and intimate [matters]? . . . These are your mysteries, O Jews, these your hidden sacraments, your wisdom, which you prefer to all the divine wisdom.

The Talmud is the secret of the Jews revealed by the Savior. It contains their *hidden* doctrines.

It has been shown by Lieberman (against Williams) that most of Peter’s materials are drawn from Petrus Alfonsi’s dialogue.⁶¹ Yet he changed their context and intent. Like Alfonsi, he is certain that the legends of the Jews are to be taken literally, for Jews are incapable of any but a literal understanding of their texts. But unlike Alfonsi, he wanted much more than to demonstrate the absurdity and backwardness of such legends. To the contrary: so much absurdity points not at error, but deceit. Wherefore Peter focused his attention not so much as Alfonsi or Agobard before him on anthropomorphic Jewish traditions as such, but rather on those anthropomorphic traditions that want, as he thinks, to prove that God himself recognized the superiority of the man-made Talmud. To prove his point, Peter mixes and distorts his sources deliberately. Out of the talmudic anecdote about the controversy over the snakelike oven (*Baba metsi’a* 59b) and another talmudic anecdote about a controversy concerning skin-spots (*ibid* 86a) he weaves one story which aims to prove that, whenever God disputes a matter of law with the earthly courts, the latter prevail. Where the

59. Agobard, *ibid.*, col. 87B. See also G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1946), p. 63, n. 82; Scholem also showed that already Origenes knew some early forms of speculative *midrashim* of the kind known to Agobard; and that he distinguished (unlike Agobard) between them and the *δευτερωσεῖς*: Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), p. 38; Origenes, *Prologus in Canticum*, Migne, PG 13, col. 63.

60. Amulo of Lyon, *Liber contra Judaeos*, Migne, PL 116, col. 145; cf. below n. 75. The same passage can also be found in the anonymous treatise ap. Martene Durand, *Thesaurus Anecdota* III, 1507 ff., mentioned in Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, p. 396. Similar formulations can be found in Petrus Alfonsi and others.

61. S. Lieberman, *Sheki’in*, pp. 27 ff., esp. p. 33 against Williams, *ibid.*, pp. 384 ff.

death-angel is said to have been “unable to approach Rabba bar Nahmani, because his mouth did not cease learning” (*lo hava matsi lemikrav ley midelo hava ka psik pumey niginsa*), Peter adds, “reading the scriptures of the Talmud mentioned above, which the Jews say to be so sacred, that no one can die while reading it.”⁶² Where God “smiled and said: my sons won a victory over me” (*chivekh ve’amar nitsachuni banay*) Peter brings the following translation: “Then God, blushing somewhat, and not daring to contradict the testimony of such men, said smilingly NAZA HUMI BANAI, that is my sons won a victory over me.”⁶³ Of course, he omits the voice from heaven (*bat kol*) and the hermeneutical principle “it [the law] is not in heaven” (*lo bashamayyim hi*)—the *Torah* was given to humans so that they be responsible for interpreting and applying it. His aim is to construct a conflict between the talmudic sages and the divine law, a conflict of which they were clearly conscious. Since the cessation of prophecy, Jews are engaged in the production of new canonical writings utterly alien to the Old Testament. These writings are kept secret so that their satanic nature remains likewise hidden, but they are meant to compete with the Scriptures and to suppress them: “You have fought for so long a time against the divine books with diabolical books.”⁶⁴ These were new accusations, never before raised by Jerome, Augustine, or even Agobard, and certainly not by Alfonsi. The Talmud is the satanic secret of the Jews: Peter the Venerable took present Judaism out of the framework of the Church doctrine of conditional tolerance because, as he thought, Jews did change and hold today to the Old Testament only outwardly. Their purpose is throughout destructive.

In this context one ought to place two other elements of his polemics. He was, of course, also interested in instances of Jewish defamation of Christianity, but he ties them again to the Talmud. Lieberman, has shown that Peter appropriated his story of the ascendance to heaven of Rabbi Jehoshua bar Levi from the book known as *Alphabeta deban Sira*. Again, Peter’s alterations reveal his purpose. The hero asks his accompanying angel upon his way to visit Hell:

62. Petrus Venerabilis, *Adversus Judeos*, Migne, PL 189, col. 607 ff.: Legentem Talmuth supradictam scilicet scripturam, quam Judaei adeo sanctam dicunt ut nemo, dum eam legerit, mori possit.

63. Ibid.: Tunc deus aliquantulum erubescens et contra testimonium tanti viri nihil dicere audens sic Judaeis secum disputantibus allucendo respondit: NAZA HUMI BANAI, id est vincerunt me filii mei. That he left the Hebrew words show how important they were to him.

64. Ibid., col. 648 ff.: Pugnasti tanto tempore contra divinos libros diabolicis libris.

Why are the Christians damned? Said he: Don’t you know? He answered: I do, but I would to hear it from you. Said he: because they believe in the son of Maria, and do not observe the law of Moses, and chiefly because they do not believe in the Talmud.⁶⁵

There is a certain symmetry between this alleged Jewish contention that Christianity’s main fault is its failure to recognize the Talmud and the Christian contention that Judaism ought to recognize the New Testament. Implicitly, Peter sees in the Talmud a Jewish, man-made equivalent to the New Testament—a different *nova lex*, and therefore a heresy even in terms of Judaism proper.⁶⁶

On another front, Peter the Venerable—more like Alfonsi and more so—was engaged in polemics against the Koran and in the endeavors to convert Moslems to Christianity. He may have initiated the translation of the Koran; he wrote the first systematic critique of it in the West.⁶⁷ In view of the chances of a successful mission, Peter objected to a second crusade and drew instead the attention of the crusaders to “the Jews who are much worse than the Saracens, desecrating contumaciously the name of the savior and everything sacred to the Christians in public . . . and they do not live far from us, but among us.”⁶⁸ The language is reminiscent of that of the “popular” crusaders in 1096.

65. Ibid., col. 636: “Cur Christiani damnati sunt? Ait: tu nescis? respondit: scio, sed a te audire desidero. Ait: Quia credunt in filium Mariae, et non observant legem Moysi, et maxime quia non credunt Talmut.” On the source, cf. Lieberman, *Shekhin*, pp. 31 ff. In the original anecdote we read: “And in that house are ten nations of the nations of the world (מאותומות העולם). . . . And one nation says to the other: if we sinned because we failed to accept the *Torah*, what is your sin? They answered: We, too, are like you”: A. Jellineck (ed.), *Beth hamidrash* II, p. 50. Here or elsewhere there is no specific mention of the Talmud or even the oral law.

66. Since its publication (1968), my thesis of radical change in Christian polemics—the accusation that Judaism became heretical even on its own premises—has more often than not been accepted. See, e.g., Benjamin Z. Kedar, “Canon Law and the Burning of the Talmud,” *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, NS 9 (1979): pp. 79–82. Some modified it, as e.g., J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca and London, 1982), esp. pp. 51 ff., 129 ff., who concurs in the evaluation of the nature of the change but places it a hundred years later. That the thirteenth century saw the practical consequences of the change was also my contention; it still seems clear to me that Peter the Venerable exhibits the first signs of that change.

67. P. Kritzeck, *Peter the Venerable and Islam* (Princeton, 1964).

68. *Epistulae Petri Venerabilis*, RHPG 15, pp. 641–43; J. Praver, *A History of the Crusaders Kingdom* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1963) I, p. 226; Praver shows that objection to the crusade, tolerance towards Moslems (as a missionary target), intolerance towards Jews, belong into one agenda. It was the less irenic aspect of that notorious peacemaker. See now also Gavin I. Langmuir, *Towards A Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 197–208, esp. 201 ff.

Such is the context in which we ought to place the Cluniacenic allegation—which may have grown out of Alfonsi's story about Mohammed's Jewish helpers—that the Jews made Mohammed into a heretic *with the aid of the Talmud*.⁶⁹ In short: the new polemical stand of Peter the Venerable carried a strong potential for the erosion of the hitherto existing *modus vivendi* between tolerating Christianity and tolerated Judaism. On a lower, more popular level of discourse, the new attitude found its expression in the first blood libels—very close to Peter's time. Their beginning, much as the allegations against the Talmud in the twelfth century, were not as dangerous as they became later, when they eroded the very physical basis of Jewish existence. While the unequivocal curial stand against them barred blood libels from the subsequent trials against the Talmud, they reflect nonetheless the same tendency to alienate and demonize the image of Jews and Judaism. Underlying the blood libels was likewise the perception that Jews hold to esoteric, satanic traditions beside their exoteric traditions. Thomas of Monmouth, to validate the accusations at Norwich, marshals the testimony of the apostate Theobald: "he told us sincerely that in the ancient writing of their fathers it is stipulated that the Jews can not regain freedom and return to their land without shedding human blood."⁷⁰ Thomas continues to describe periodic clandestine rabbinical synods which determine the community whose turn it is to shed Christian blood. His account, he says, is authenticated by the circumstance that a convert revealed to him "the secrets of the enemy."

The twelfth century thus revived the classical pagan polemical tradition that accused Judaism of "misanthropy" (*odium humani generis*), of "secrecy" (*arcana*).⁷¹ Christian apologists, who regarded these traditions as part of their own, were bound to exchange the accusation of secrecy with the claim that the Jews misunderstood their own traditions. Now the classical suspicions of conspiracy and secrecy were revived—and this, too, was an aspect of the "renaissance of the twelfth century."

How efficacious were the allegations against the postbiblical Jewish

69. See N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 62, 84–85, 188 ff.

70. Thomas of Monmouth, *De vita et passione Sancti Willibaldi Martyris Norwicensis* II, 9, ed. A. Jessop and M. R. James (Cambridge, 1896), p. 93: *referebat quidem in antiquis patrum suorum scriptis [!] haberi Iudeos sine sanguinis humani effusione nec libertatem adipisci nec ad patrios fines quandoque regredi*. See also Langmuir, *Antisemitism* pp. 209–236 (Thomas of Monmouth).

71. Cf. above, pp. 36–38.

literature? They led, in the thirteenth century, to the trial, confiscation, and burning of the Talmud in France. It has been customary to identify the accusation of blasphemy as the main driving force in these persecutions—perhaps because they became prevalent later.⁷² Yet the collection of materials for the trial,⁷³ as well as the letters of Gregory IX and Innocent IV,⁷⁴ show clearly that the "authority" of the Talmud, replacing that of the Bible, as well as its function as a "new law" (*nova lex*) were the primary concerns then.

While charges against the Talmud were not to cease down to the age of counterreformation, their grounds shifted. The accusation of heresy was mostly abandoned. But why? Why did censors and theologians assiduously collect instances of possible defamation of Christianity if they had at their hand a much better, much more fundamental charge? We can but speculate. Perhaps it became clear to the Church that if at all it wishes to tolerate Jews, however conditionally, they must be permitted "to live according to their own laws" (*secundum legem suam vivere* was the standing phrase in all privileges granted to Jews). Or again, it may also be that accusing Jews of heresy on account of the Talmud was dangerous from the Church's own vantage point. Had the Church insisted that Jews must stick to "Scriptures only," that oral traditions

72. S. Dubnow, *World History of the Jewish People* (Hebrew trans.: Tel Aviv, 1958) V, p. 21 (defamation of Christianity); I. Baer, "Lebikoret havikuchim shel rabbi Yechiel mi-Paris veshel ha-Ramban," *Tarbitz* 2 (1931): pp. 172 ff.; J. Rosenthal, "The Talmud on Trial: The Disputation at Paris in the Year 1240," *JQR* 47 (1956–57): pp. 58 ff., 145 ff. (emphasizes the role of Karaism in the trial); S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Philadelphia, 1933), pp. 250 ff.; B. Z. Dinur, *Yisrael Bagola* II, 2 (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 507 ff., 521 ff. (Dinur is right in assuming that defamation was not the only charge against the Talmud, but he did not try to assess the role and function of the various charges); Urbach, *Be'ale hatsofot*, pp. 371 ff.; Baron, *Social and Religious History* IX, pp. 62 ff. (recognized the charge of heresy, pp. 64 ff.); J. Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, pp. 106–133; Silver (above n. 8); and below n. 73 (Kedar). The Hebrew version of the disputation—R. Yechiel's account—while starting with the charge of blasphemy, soon continues with echoes of the disputation over the authority of the Talmud; *Viknuach Rabbi Yechiel* (Thorn, 1873): *האמת מאמין . . . האתה מאמין . . . ויקם החסיל המין הכסיל וישאל: . . . האתה מאמין . . . ויקם החסיל המין הכסיל וישאל: . . . האתה מאמין לכל החוקים והמשפטים הכתובים בהם . . . ונקרא בן-אברהם אלה? ויען ויעץ הפלא, אני מאמין לאלה ומקרא ולימדתם את בניכם . . . תלמוד ע"ש*.

73. Bibliothèque Nationale Ms. lat. 16558, starts with the alleged *auctoritas* that the Talmud has among the Jews. The elaboration of this accusation, as well as the absurdity of talmudic legends, occupies a much greater role in this compilation of talmudic materials—the basis for the trial—than the accusation of blasphemy. See also H. Merchavja, *Hatalmud bire'i hanisrut* (Jerusalem, 1970), pp. 259 ff.

74. Grayzel, *ibid.*, p. 240, n. 96; p. 250, n. 104. On the reflection in canon law see B. Z. Kedar, "Canon Law and the Burning of the Talmud," *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, NS 9 (1979): pp. 79–82.

distort Scriptures, then the Church would have taken a stand that, in the context of its internal struggles, was the trademark of heretical sectarians, of Wycliffians, Hussites, and Protestants. I do not claim that the Church was always shy to contradict itself, yet raising consciously the principle *sola scriptura* may have constituted a taboo in any context.

POLEMICS AIDED BY THE TALMUD

The third polemical pattern, I said, was the employment of the Talmud (or of Jewish oral traditions in general) to corroborate Christian arguments, to demonstrate that already the Jewish sages of antiquity recognized, however obliquely, the messianity of Jesus and the details of the dogma. The public disputation in Barcelona (1263) already abounded with such arguments, which were then systematized in Raymundus Martini's famous *Sword of Faith* (*Pugio fidei*), a book that became a major sourcebook for anti-Jewish treatises. I added that I can demonstrate the beginning also of this mode of polemics in the twelfth century—a mode that led eventually to a distinction between authentic and inauthentic, valuable and pernicious Jewish traditions.

Indirect, vague knowledge of Jewish messianic traditions can be found in the Latin literature throughout the early Middle Ages.⁷⁵ But the first instance of an actual quotation from the Talmud (or the *midrash*) as a proof-text for Christian tenets of faith—or, rather, as a proof-text for the implicit Jewish acceptance of their veracity—occurred in the treatise against heretics of Alanus ab Insulis. The passage, hitherto overlooked, says:

We see among Jews that, in the main part, everything pertaining to the law has ceased: there is no sacrifice among Jews. . . . The law has mainly been abolished. We see, therefore, that the law has no place. In *Sehale* Elija also says, that the world will endure for six thousand years, and two thousand years were emptiness, which refers to the time before the Mosaic law; two thousand years of the Mosaic law, and the following two, of the Messiah. But it is apparent that more than four thousand years have passed. Therefore it is clear that the law has passed and that the Messiah has come.⁷⁶

75. In the seventh century, Julian of Toledo wrote his *De comprobatione aetate sexta* to refute Jewish apocalyptic calculations, but he does not seem to have known the traditions attacked by him from first hand. In the ninth century, Amulo of Lyons (above n. 60) knows of the Jewish tradition of two Messiahs, son of David and son of Ephraim. Cf. Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs*, pp. 124 n. 39; 197; Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos*, pp. 358 ff.

76. Alanus ab Insulis, *De fide catholica contra haereticos libri quatuor* IV, 3, Migne, PL 210, col. 410: *Videmus etiam apud Iudaeos in magna parte cessare quae ad legem pertinent:*

Alanus recombines here two traditions that indeed may have had once a common origin but then drifted apart: Jewish apocalyptic traditions based on the realization of a metaphor in Psalms 90:4 (for a thousand years in your eyes are as a day that passes) and a parallel between the days of creation and the duration of the old *aeon* on the one hand, and the Pauline division of times before the law, under the law, under grace (*ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia*).⁷⁷ Needless to say, Alanus does not quote the addition that follows the passage just quoted in the original—“and because of our sins however many of them have already passed.” Alanus's reference to “*Sehale*” is odd. It may be a metathesis of the Hebrew *chasal*,⁷⁸ the anagram for “our sages of blessed memory,” in which case his source was probably hearsay.

Distinguishing genuine and valuable from worthless and offensive traditions within the Jewish literature became, after the thirteenth century, a standing practice. It reflects the growing knowledge of Jewish sources among a small group of scholastics, and later among a somewhat larger group of humanists. The distinction is certainly already noticeable in Martini's *Pugio fidei*.⁷⁹ While rejecting talmudic law and lore no less vehemently than Peter the Venerable,⁸⁰ he also uses talmudic proof-texts as authentic eschatological-christological tradition.⁸¹ His thorough crudition makes it difficult to decide whether some of them

*non enim est apud Iudaeos sacrificium. . . . In maxima parte abolita est lex. Videtur ergo quod lex locum non habeat. In Sehale etiam loquitur Elias, quod mundus duraturus est per sex milia annorum, et duo milia fuisse vanitatis, quod refertur ad tempus quod fuit ante legem Mosaicam; duo vero milia legis Mosaeicae, sequentia duo milia. Messiae. Sed manifestum est plus quam quattuor annorum milia transiisse, ergo manifestum est legem transiisse, et Messiam venisse. I wonder why Merchavja, *The Talmud*, p. 128, notes that I have been “the last” to discuss the passage; as best I know I first found it. For later polemical usages cf., e.g., Shlomo Ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehuda*, ed. M. Wiener (Hannover, 1924), p. 70.*

77. See above, p. 77.

78. Another less plausible explanation is the contraction of the name of the treatise (*Sanhedrin*) and of the chapter (*Chelek*): I still prefer my other reading, though Merchavja, *ibid.*, mentions only this one.

79. Raymundus Martini, *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos* (Lipsia, 1687), Praem. p. 3.

80. *Ibid.* III, 12 p. 931. See J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, p. 51 ff., 129 ff., while agreeing with me about the nature of Martini's polemics, disagrees in that he sees no anticipation of it in the twelfth century; cf. above n. 66. What the book lacks is a thorough comparison of the Talmud trial with other “*Lehrprozess*” of the thirteenth century. Cf. J. Mierhke, “Papst, Ortsbischof und Universität in den Pariser Theologenprozessen des 13ten Jahrhunderts,” *Miscellanea Medievalea* 10 (1978), pp. 52–94.

81. And at times even illustrates general philosophical principles with rabbinical dicta, e.g., I, 12 p. 246 (human and divine cognition).

are genuine lost midrashim or the product of his creative invention. To some humanists and Renaissance Neoplatonists, the Jewish *kabbala* appeared as such an authentic tradition, a veritable *pristina philosophia*, in contradistinction to the Talmud. Reuchlin used the passage quoted by Alanus—now known as the *vaticinium Eliae*—alongside with other, similar midrashim to defend the preservation of the Talmud against Pfefferkorn.⁸² This particular tradition enjoyed a modest popularity in the sixteenth century: Melancthon quoted it approvingly; Jean Bodin made it a basis for historical periodization.⁸³

Perhaps there was less danger in this line of argument than in the outright condemnation of the entire postbiblical Jewish literature. But the Christian differentiation between authentic and inauthentic, permissible and impermissible Jewish tradition meant much more than the nuisance of censorship. No longer could a Jewish intellectual feel safe at home, free from the scrutiny of aliens, while engaged in his own tradition. He had to put up with the situation of “being seen.”

THE DIALECTICS OF POLEMICS AND INFLUENCE

The general trend of the later medieval Christian polemics, we said, was that of increasing isolation and alienation. While in the early Middle Ages the Jewish religion appeared at best as an anachronism, in the later Middle Ages the image is rather that of a closed, secret, destructive and diabolical religion. This process went hand in hand with the geographic, social, and economic marginalization of the Jews in Western Europe. The founders of the *Wissenschaft vom Judentum* in the nineteenth century, imbued with the pedagogical ethos of the Enlightenment,⁸⁴ believe that information and knowledge about the Jewish culture will of itself remove prejudices. The course of late medieval history teaches an opposite lesson. The growing alienation of Jews in Western Europe happened in spite of the circumstance—if not because of it—that intellectual links between Jews and Christians were almost nonexistent in the early Middle Ages and grew rapidly from the twelfth century onward, and so also did the knowledge of each other.

82. Johanus Reuchlin, *Angenspiegel* (Tübingen, 1511), Ratschlag, etc. pp. VIII ff.

83. Jean Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem* V (Strassburg, 1907), pp. 108–109, 120. Melancthon: A. Klempt, *Die Säkularisierung der universalhistorischen Auffassung* (Göttingen, 1960), pp. 67–68.

84. See below, pp. 234–238.

As for religious polemics, it changed in quantity and quality alike. It became rationalized. It shows a growing knowledge of the adversary's culture and letters. Of the Christian polemics we saw some examples above. As to the Jewish polemical literature, the *Sefer milchamot hashem* of Jacob ben Reuben is a good example. It was the first thorough critical examination of the New Testament—an immanent analysis in its first eleven chapters, a philosophical refutation in the last chapter. Nor was the intellectual exchange confined to polemics; a growing body of evidence points at more and more instances of mutual influence and parallel cultural movements.

Yet these growing contacts did not increase mutual understanding or tolerance. To the measure to which the similarity between Christian and Jewish patterns of thought grew, so did all the subjective hiatuses between them. If we judge common notions and modes of thought to be evidence of a shared language or cultural idiom, we ought to add that this *common language* served to express *contradictory propositions*. Therefore I find the distinction between altercation and influence highly mechanical. It does not reflect the dialectical reality in which there was no polemics without reception and seldom a reception without a polemical twist. The polemical situation forced of itself the reception and internalization of some of the alien points of view. “Them you answered evasively; but what do you answer us?” asked already R. Simlai's disciples when they listened to his answer to heretics. A telling example of this inner dependence between polemics and reception is Abraham bar Chiyva's speculative doctrine of history. It is well known that he employed the Augustinian allegorical parallelization of the days of creation and the period of history—much as Nachmanides and Abrahanel after him.⁸⁵ Bar Chiyva also accepted from Augustine the doctrine of original sin in its strictest predestination sense, and it seems to me that his subjective notion of time is likewise Augustinian.⁸⁶ Bar Chiyva uses it to prove the finitude of time through its dependence on thought. The age also saw the revival of speculative historical doctrines in Western Europe. While accepting such doctrines, bar Chiyva uses them against their original intention in a clearly polemical vein. The validity

85. See above, pp. 115–117.

86. M. Wachsmann, “Hamachshava hafilosofit hadatit shel Abraham bar Chiyva hannassi,” in *H. A. Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1965), argued for the originality of bar Chiyva's notion of time. On the Augustinian notion of time see, e.g., G. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1967), pp. 203 ff. On the developments of the notion of time in later antiquity: S. Sambursky, “The Notion of Time in the Late Neoplatonic School,” *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences* II, 8 (Jerusalem, 1967).

of the doctrine of original sin he confines to the “nations of the world” only: Israel is exempt from it. The Augustinian periodization serves him to refute christological doctrines: the Messiah to come, not Christ, is Adam’s *impletio figurae*.⁸⁷ This was not merely a polemical technique. It can be compared, rather, to the patristic *eversio*, which refuted Gnostic and Manichaean doctrines by transforming them.⁸⁸ It was a real acceptance and therefore a polemical one. The same dialectics is also evident in Rashi’s appropriation of the Christian interpretations of the “suffering servant” in Isaiah 53: all of Israel is the servant of God, suffering vicariously to expiate the sins of the nations of the world.⁸⁹ And perhaps one can argue for traces of this dialectics even in Jehuda Halevi’s above-mentioned doctrine of the divine logos (*al’amer al-illahi*). He contrasted it with the Christian doctrine in which only the Messiah is the son of God and incarnate logos (which is the first instance in the *Kuzzari* in which the term appears). The Jewish understanding of God’s logos is rather such that it pertains to all of Israel, for all children of Israel are “sons of God.”⁹⁰

The Jewish image of Christianity likewise underwent considerable changes. From the twelfth century onwards, the legal and philosophical classification of Christianity as a monotheistic religion prevailed. But the gap between the normative position and the popular sentiment was considerable. A semantics of despicatory substitution for any and every sacred matter in Christianity was developed. At the same time, as we saw and will see further, Christianity also had its fascination.⁹¹ The gap between the popular and normative position was greater among Jews than in the Christian polemics, for the latter grew more aggressive

87. Abraham bar Chiyya, *Sefer megillat ha-megalle*, ed. Poznanski (Berlin, 1924), pp. 39 ff. and above pp. 115 ff. See chapter 4, “History and Typology.” On the dialectics of reception and polemics in bar Chiyya and Jehuda Halevi see already I. Baer, “Eine jüdische Messias prophetie auf das Jahr 1186 und der erste kreuzzug,” *MGWJ* 70 (1926), pp. 113 ff., 120 n. 1; idem, *The History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (Hebrew), pp. 39 ff.

88. Funkenstein, *Heilsplan*, p. 140, n. 84 (Irenaeus), p. 36 (Augustine).

89. H. H. Ben-Sasson, *Perakim betoldot hayehudim bi-yeme habeynayim* (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 258; and Rashi *ad locum*. Cf. also Funkenstein, *Styles in Medieval Jewish Exegesis* (Tel Aviv, 1990), p. 26.

90. Jehuda Halevi, *Kuzzari* I, 4; and, in contrast, I, 95: While for Christians the Savior is the son of God, נאמין בו ובשכנו בתוך בני ישראל לכבוד להם כאשר היה הענין האלהי, נאמין בו ובשכנו בתוך בני ישראל לכבוד להם כאשר היה הענין האלהי. The *chaver* shows the adhesion of the *‘inyan elohi* in single persons since Adam “וכבר נקרא אצלנו בן אלהים וכל הדומה לו מזרעו—בני אלהים.” The polemical intent is clear. To the origin of the notion see Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 386, n. 353 and H. Davidson, “The Active Intellect in the *Kuzzari* and Halevi’s Theory of Causality,” *REJ* 131 (1972), pp. 351–96.

91. See above, p. 171 n. 6.

while the former grew more apologetic. Already Raymundus Martini understood well that the growing contacts between the religions resulted in a growing acrimony of their confrontation: “for no foe of the Christian faith is more familiar to us, no one more inevitable than the Jews.”⁹²

Responses to Adversity

THE CONTINUITY OF ADVERSITY

Modern Jewish historiography has sometimes taken adversity against Jews almost for granted, as if it were a constant, continuous fact of Jewish existence always and nearly everywhere. In a famous article in the *Realenzyklopedie der Altertumswissenschaften*, Isaak Heinemann spoke of “ancient anti-Semitism”—as if, in essence, animosity is one, and only its outer guises changed through the ages.⁹³ Only recently have we learned to question this alleged continuity and ubiquity without falling back into an absolute denial of the phenomenon, without reducing it to momentary socioeconomic constellations. There is no continuity, we shall argue later,⁹⁴ between the pagan and the Christian anti-Jewish propaganda. Christianity was, without doubt, the single most important factor in the conservation of anti-Judaism in Europe; still, it took different, at times discontinuous forms. It was different before and after the twelfth century. It changed radically again with the Reformation.⁹⁵ It changed again—in substance, not only in insignificant predicates—with its secularization. And finally, the transition from verbal adversity to systematic extermination could neither have been predicted nor even remotely anticipated.⁹⁶

Hatred towards Jews was and is neither ubiquitous nor continuous. The myth of its inevitability was, however, not a modern-day construct, nor even a medieval one. It was a powerful element in the traditional Jewish self-perception since antiquity. Jews thought of themselves as

92. Raymundus Martini, *Pugio fidei* Proem, p. 2: “Nullus autem inimicus Christianae fidei magis fit familiaris, magisque nobis inevitabilis quam Judaeus.”

93. Isaak Heinemann, “Antiker Antisemitismus,” in Pauli-Wissowa, *RE* V, col. 389–416.

94. See below, pp. 307–309.

95. See note above.

96. See Shulamit Volkow, *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19ten und 20ten Jahrhundert* (München, 1990), pp. 54–75.