

CHAPTER 8

HOW, WHEN, AND TO WHAT DEGREE WAS THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DEBATE TRANSFORMED IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES?

David Berger

Discussions of transformations—or lack thereof—in Jewish-Christian polemic in the High Middle Ages traditionally begin with reference to Amos Funkenstein's 1968 article in *Zion*, which then appeared in abridged form in *Viator* and with various modifications in his 1993 book, *Perceptions of Jewish History*.¹ Thus, in 1982, Jeremy Cohen set the stage for his own analysis by expressing reservations about Funkenstein's thesis;² in 1996, the first paragraph of Daniel Lasker's assessment of the twelfth century as a turning point in polemic addresses Funkenstein's argument;³ and Ora Limor's recently published article⁴ contrasting the Barcelona and Majorca disputations also begins with Funkenstein although the thrust of her concerns lies elsewhere.

I cannot help but defer to the judgment of such distinguished scholars, and so I too will approach the question before us with initial reference to Funkenstein's thesis. Funkenstein argued that old-fashioned polemics resting primarily on biblical proof-texts were joined in the twelfth century by works emphasizing unaided reason as a means of establishing the truth of Christianity. The prime text here is Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. This is not itself a polemical work, but Anselm probably influenced Gilbert Crispin⁵ and may have had an impact on the polemic of Odo of Tournai (or Cambrai) on the incarnation⁶ as well as the *Dialogus* attributed to William of Champeaux.⁷ In addition to the new emphasis on *ratio*, says Funkenstein, we begin to encounter arguments based on the Talmud asserting that it is blasphemous and, more important, that it constitutes heresy—a set of diabolical Jewish

secrets. The primary evidence here comes from Peter the Venerable,⁸ although Petrus Alfonsi's citation of Talmudic anthropomorphisms has also been presented in John Tolan's study as an assertion that it is a heretical work.⁹ The other approach to the Talmud—to wit, its use to demonstrate the truth of Christianity—also makes its first appearance in the twelfth century in Alan of Lille's *De Fide Catholica Contra Haereticos*.¹⁰

Some scholars, most notably Jeremy Cohen, have argued that the real watershed belongs in the thirteenth century. Needless to say, an assessment of continuity and change in thirteenth-century polemic depends on one's evaluation of the depiction by Funkenstein and others of the Jewish-Christian debate in the twelfth. Moreover, as Lasker's article emphasizes, assessing the impact of new Christian approaches requires an examination of Jewish works as well. On both counts, we need to recognize several methodological constraints. First, there is the elementary consideration that the boundary between centuries is arbitrary. If we see Petrus Alfonsi or Peter the Venerable as bearers of a significant new message with an uninterrupted history, we can surely speak of the twelfth century as the source and incubator of that message. Alan of Lille, on the other hand, wrote his relevant work between 1185 and 1195; this, to be sure, is the twelfth century, but had he written in 1201, our periodization for the Christological use of the Talmud would hardly have changed.

This point also bears on a second methodological concern associated with the paucity of sources. Alan's use of the Talmudic assertion that the world will last 6,000 years—2,000 chaos, 2,000 Torah, and 2,000 the messianic age—introduced what was to become a central weapon in the Christian polemical arsenal, but this citation is the only example of such Christian utilization of the Talmud before the third quarter of the thirteenth century.¹¹ (I regard this use of the Talmud as considerably more striking than the few other allegedly similar citations that scholars have noted, and so I follow Funkenstein by placing it in a category of its own.) On the one hand, Alan's lack of familiarity with the Talmud means that this argument had gained enough currency to have come to his attention through other channels; on the other, it is difficult to attribute great historical significance to a lone quotation. Similarly, if the argument that the Talmud is a heretical, satanic work appears in Peter the Venerable and nowhere else (or hardly anywhere else), we can see the reference as the harbinger of future developments but not as an indication of a deep change or even as a key influence on the later phenomenon. The more time that passes between the work in question and the later development, the more wary we must become about drawing a direct line between the two. And so we come to the paucity of Jewish polemics. Lasker had precisely two twelfth-century polemics to work with—Jacob b. Reuben's *Milhamot ha-Shem* (*Wars of the Lord*) and Joseph Kimhi's *Sefer ha-berit* (*Book of the Covenant*)—both written around 1170 in southern France. They are surely valuable in revealing aspects of polemical interchange in that

narrow time and space, but we must be careful not to extrapolate beyond the area that we can assess in a reasonably informed fashion.

We shall eventually have to address issues that Funkenstein did not engage, but his typology serves as a convenient means of organizing the discussion. Let us begin, then, with the innovative Christian use of reason. There is no question that many twelfth-century Christian works are suffused with references to *ratio* as a means of demonstrating Christian truth. Anna Sapir Abulafia has devoted the better part of an entire book to an exploration of this theme, arguing that some Christians—here again Peter the Venerable is the primary figure—had begun to question the degree to which Jews, who were after all impervious to reason, were fully human.¹² The rhetoric and even the substance of arguments from *ratio* appear already in Crispin's late eleventh-century work, and Lasker has noted that both twelfth-century Jewish polemics stress the resort to reason.

Nonetheless, I believe that Gilbert Dahan was correct in a very brief passage in his work on Christian polemic against Judaism to note the non-philosophical nature of most of the arguments from reason in pre-fourteenth-century works.¹³ That the terminology of "reason" was sometimes invoked for purely Scriptural arguments did not escape the notice of Sapir Abulafia either and, in such cases, we must markedly discount its importance. Of course, the use of the term tells us something, but substance matters, to put the point moderately, at least as much as language. If we are to trust Bernhard Blumenkranz—and he certainly deserves the presumption of trustworthiness—the first person to assert explicitly that he was going to use an argument based on reason without recourse to Scripture was hardly an arch-rationalist. Peter Damian, writing as early as the mid-eleventh century, declared, "With the prophetic passages having been set forth, it pleases us to contend with you by reason alone."¹⁴ However, as I noted in my very first publication, the argument itself—that the interminable Jewish exile can be explained only by the sin of the crucifixion—was very far from novel and does not appeal to *ratio* in any innovative sense.¹⁵ When Avraham Grossman sought to provide an example of the new Christian emphasis on *ratio* (*tevunah sikhletanit*), he also fixed on the argument from the Jewish exile.¹⁶ This striking choice of the very same point made by Damian serves to underscore the lack of novelty in many arguments labeled rational.

The next level of *ratio* is philosophical, but here again we need to be sensitive to the use to which such arguments are put. On quite rare occasions, Christians maintained that a disputed doctrine could be demonstrated by reason alone, but, for the most part, philosophy was mobilized only to show that an apparently unreasonable doctrine is possible. To the degree that specific arguments of this sort appear for the first time in the twelfth or thirteenth century, the fact that they do not directly challenge Jewish belief does not diminish their novelty, but it does diminish their danger to Jews and, therefore, their ultimate significance. Moreover, some of these arguments

are, in fact, not novel but go back to the patristic age and are reflected in philosophical discourse in the Islamic world preceding our period.

If we look at the one late twelfth-century Jewish polemic that cites Christian philosophical contentions characterized as arguments based on “*sekhel*,” we find that Jacob ben Reuben’s interlocutor does begin with a very strong declaration: “I will show you from the wisdom of the intellect that everyone with understanding should truly believe in the worship of the trinity.”¹⁷ The continuation, however, presents what Lasker has characterized as an “image” of the trinity—to wit, a glowing coal consisting of matter, fire, and flame—and the argument ends in a fashion guaranteed to disappoint the expectations raised by the opening promise: “When you see this among one of the created entities, you are obligated not to express wonderment with respect to the Creator, for everything is in accordance with his will. Thus, I believe and strengthen myself in the worship of the trinity.”¹⁸

The next argument from reason alone reported by Jacob also proffers a strong assertion—that God recognized that the world cannot be saved without His entering the womb of a woman who was and would remain a virgin. However, although Jacob provides a refutation, the contention is presented almost as an aside, and, in the final analysis, all the Christian argues is that it is possible for divinity to enter a womb without contamination. Following this, we are presented with various scenarios imagining a king’s forced or voluntary degradation, with the Christian maintaining and the Jew denying that some of them render the incarnation plausible, but once again (despite the longstanding availability of *Cur Deus Homo*), there is no argument from reason that even purports to demonstrate that God in fact became or had to become man.¹⁹

Thus—the *language of ratio* as distinct from *auctoritas* or of *sekhel* as distinct from *ketuvim* appears and even becomes standard in some Christian works and in Jewish circles familiar with more sophisticated Christian polemics, but its polemical force leaves much to be desired. The Christian formula, we recall, was 100 years old by the time we get to *Millhamot ha-Shem* and *Sefer ha-berit*. After all this time, it manifests itself in the former work in the relatively weak fashion that we have just examined. As to *Sefer ha-berit*, Lasker notes that it uses the rhetoric of *sekhel* constantly but does not contain a section devoted to rational arguments; it surely presents no argument designed to provide a philosophical proof of the validity of a Christian doctrine.

As I have already noted, the use of the term reason for Scriptural arguments is, from a substantive perspective, window dressing, even if it is revealing window dressing. Arguments for the christological interpretation of biblical verses are arguments from *auctoritas* par excellence, and they do not change one whit if they are described as so compelling that any reasonable

person will be persuaded by them. It is true that such an assertion can lead to a more hostile perception of the unreasonable Jew, which is manifestly a matter of deep seriousness, but the consequences do not follow from any innovation in the argumentation itself.

In the thirteenth century, by far the most sophisticated philosophical polemic by a Jew was that of Moses of Salerno. The twenty pages of the printed edition consist almost entirely of Jewish arguments directed against fundamental Christian doctrines as well as refutations of Christian responses to those arguments. At one point, Moses says clearly that he does not need to deal with efforts at affirmative demonstration of the doctrines in question. "It is known," he writes, "that Christians have no proof for the unity of the threefold God other than the analogies with the sun, fire, and the soul."²⁰ Toward the very end, however, we finally encounter one argument that actually attempts a philosophical demonstration of a Christian doctrine. Since God can be shown to be intellect, one who engages in intellection, and the object of intellection, he is thus triune (pp. xviii–xix).²¹ Setting aside this exceptional argument, and keeping in mind the unusually philosophical character of Moses' polemic, we can assert with some confidence that *ratio* in the strong, philosophical sense did not pose a major threat to Jews in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. To a significant degree, Aquinas's position—noted by Funkenstein—that the mysteries of the faith can be shown to be consistent with reason but not demonstrable by reason underscored the Jewish advantage in this portion of the polemical arena and helped to undermine further the already meager efforts to provide such demonstrations. At the same time, there is no denying that Jewish self-confidence was greatly reinforced by the conviction that Christian beliefs were logically indefensible, and from that perspective, arguments that they were in fact within the realm of possibility decidedly mattered.

In thirteenth-century France, we have two major polemical works: Meir of Narbonne's *Milḥemet mitsvah* (*Religious War*) in the South²² and *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* (*The Book of Joseph the Zealous*) in the North.²³ As we might expect, the former contains some philosophical material, but the latter does not; neither does the *Nitsahon Vetus* (*Nitsahon yashan*, *The Older Book of Polemic*), the other major polemic from the Ashkenazic orbit, in this case from Ashkenaz proper,²⁴ nor—with one exception—does the material in Rome manuscript 53, a mélange of Ashkenazic polemic. This characteristic underscores the point about geography and culture rather than periodization. Not only do these works not utilize or react to *ratio* in the strong sense; they do not even use the rhetoric of *ratio*. Whatever importance we may wish to ascribe to arguments from reason, we must keep in mind their restriction to limited cultural contexts.²⁵

Such context is relevant to another consideration as well. *Milḥamot ha-Shem* and *Sefer ha-berit* are relatively restrained in their characterization

of Christianity and Christians. *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* and the *Nitsahon Vetus* are not. If we confined our attention to the polemical genre alone, we would be tempted to say that the thirteenth century gave birth to the use of profoundly insulting rhetoric or at least that polemic was transformed in that century by its utilization of such rhetoric. But it is obvious that the thirteenth century has nothing to do with this development, which is found in northern Europe almost from time immemorial. It is the product of a culture, not of a century or a genre. Once Ashkenazic Jews began writing polemical works—which happened in the thirteenth century—they naturally incorporated the tone that marked their discourse about Christianity in the eleventh and twelfth.²⁶

While it is hardly necessary to demonstrate this, I point out a remarkably uninformed passage in the prefatory section added by Funkenstein to the version of his article published in *Perceptions of Jewish History*.²⁷ Here, he recognizes the existence of such rhetoric as a characteristic of Ashkenazic popular culture but inexplicably maintains that it is not to be found in formal polemics. By the time Funkenstein's book appeared, convenient editions of *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* and the *Nitsahon Vetus* had long been available. Nonetheless, here is what we are told:

Religious polemics...hardly reflects...the whole gamut of attitudes of one religion towards the other. For one thing, the written treatises seldom reflect the situations and arguments of a live altercation. And then, written polemics focuses, overemphasizes dogmatic issues; it tends to reflect the normative, official stand of each camp. Officially, as we shall see, both Judaism and Christianity developed a doctrine of relative tolerance towards each other. Judaism (in Christian terms) was to remain as a testimony to the veracity of Christianity until the end of days. Christianity (in Jewish terms) was eventually classified as a monotheistic religion of sorts—at least removed from the category of idolatry. How different though were the less official voices! The very language of the *tossafists* (sic) deciding that Christians are not idolatrous testifies to the rift between reason and sentiment: "As to today's idolaters, we hold it that they do not worship idolatry."²⁸

An entire semantics of hatred towards each other was part of the everyday attitude that seldom comes to the fore in the stylized polemical tracts.²⁹ Nor does it reflect the considerable fascination of each to the other.

Then, in a postscript to the article, he recapitulates the key assertions in this passage: "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."³⁰

I begin my comments with an aside: The Tosafists did not write the word "idolaters" (*akum*) in the sentence "As to today's idolaters, we hold it that they do not worship idolatry." The term *akum* is an artifact of later censorship.

The Tosafists surely wrote that today's *gentiles* do not worship idolatry, so that "the rift between reason and sentiment" disappears, at least in this passage. As to more critical matters, the Tosafists are no less "official" than whatever works Funkenstein had in mind. Indeed, since "Judaism" never "officially" removed Christianity from the category of idolatry, surely not in the Middle Ages, it is difficult to imagine to what works he was alluding. The legal and philosophical classification of Christianity affirmed by Funkenstein did not "prevail" and can by no means be characterized as normative.³¹ And, of course, the "semantics of hatred" comes very much to the fore in the "stylized polemical tracts" of Ashkenaz that Funkenstein appears not to have read. But to return to our concerns, the material to which he points underscores the fact that the presence of invective in thirteenth-century polemic has little to do with the polemical genre and nothing to do with the thirteenth century.

Ashkenazic culture is also a critical factor in matters that go beyond the virtual absence of philosophy and the presence of vitriol. There is an aggressiveness that appears to invite confrontation. Polemical works are not structured with care once the biblical order—whether of the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament—ceases to govern. This was a culture attuned—often brilliantly—to ad hoc exegesis and analysis; it was not suited to architectonic literary composition. This exegetical bent may also be responsible for one of the important contributions of thirteenth-century northern polemics—to wit, a major expansion of the Jewish critique of the New Testament. Unlike the later work of Profiat Duran, the Ashkenazic critique is unsystematic and does not strive for overall coherence, but it is marked by the sharp aperçus and sensitivity to contradiction that one expects of the bearers of this culture. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, approaches to Jesus himself are a *mélange* of whatever points appear useful in a particular context with little or no effort to establish a coherent picture.³²

And so we turn to the Talmud, where something critically important decidedly took place in the thirteenth century. Nicholas Donin's attack on the Talmud came almost a century after the attack by Peter the Venerable. Donin appears to have known the Talmud well and there is no evidence of his reliance on the earlier work. While I have doubts about the impact that the "Talmud as other law" argument had on the actual treatment of Jews in the thirteenth century, I am convinced by Jeremy Cohen's thesis that it was Donin's intention to undermine the toleration of Jews through the use of that argument—to wit, that the Jews are not really governed by the Hebrew Bible and, therefore, do not serve as witnesses to its authenticity. Others have emphasized Donin's assertion that the Talmud contains blasphemies against Jesus as well as R. Yehi'el's proposal that the Jesus of the Talmud is not the Jesus of Christianity. But I am inclined to think that the most dangerous argument of all was Donin's collection of Talmudic laws that discriminate against gentiles. Here the assertion that *aggadah* is not binding

accomplished nothing, so the Jews responded—both in Paris and later in southern Europe—by affirming that Christians have a legal status different from that of the gentiles of the Talmud, who were, of course, ancient pagans. For Ashkenazic Jews, these assertions were never internalized to the point of concluding that Christianity is not *'avodah zarah*, but it is likely that they ultimately had some effect on the classification of Christians in Jewish law.

At this point, we come to the second and final public disputation in thirteenth-century France, where Pablo Christiani of Barcelona fame made another appearance.³³ This article does not analyze the Barcelona disputation precisely because its significance is so well known and it has been so thoroughly studied and debated that the departure that it represents can be taken for granted.³⁴ In a word, Pablo is known for his introduction of a different approach to the Talmud—the one adumbrated in Alan of Lille's citation about the threefold division of history—that uses it to prove the truth of Christianity. In Barcelona, Pablo neither articulated a hostile attitude toward the Talmud, nor did he argue for a revocation of the toleration of Jews. In Paris, however, he is depicted as asserting that he will prove that Jews are without faith just like the *Bougres* and are deserving of destruction. Cohen, who had argued that even in Barcelona Pablo saw the Talmud as a book that deviates from biblical religion and has no legitimate place in Christian society, naturally saw the discovery of the manuscript of the second Paris disputation as vindication, although he does concede that Pablo's attitude could have undergone some development between 1263 and 1270.³⁵ There is no question in my mind that Pablo never had a positive evaluation of the Talmud, but there does appear to be significant development, certainly on the rhetorical level and, probably, even in substance.

Two explanations for this change come to mind. If we see the change as rhetorical, then it may result from the fact that James I of Aragon was not likely to have been receptive to calls for the destruction of the Jews; the thirteenth-century French monarchy was rather different. If we see it as substantive, it may well result from the radicalization engendered by failure to achieve the intended objective at Barcelona and even the bitterness engendered by this failure. Since I have argued for the general accuracy of Nahmanides' account of his disputation and, therefore, for his relative success in deflecting—temporarily to be sure—the impact of Pablo's efforts, I am entitled to make this argument more readily than those who are skeptical.³⁶ In any event, when Pablo says that he will prove that Jews have no faith, he may mean, as Cohen understands him, that the Talmud is a heretical work, but he may also mean that since the Jews do not believe what he will prove is taught in their own sacred works—whether the Bible or the Talmud—it follows that they believe in nothing at all.

It is of no small interest that the Jewish protagonist R. Abraham ben Samuel sees Pablo's attack on the Jews' "Torah," which here means Talmud, as a continuation of Donin's although the content of the argumentation is

very different. It is of great interest indeed—and of considerable historical importance—that he sees the long-term result of the Paris disputation as the discrediting of Donin despite the fact that its immediate result was the burning of the Talmud:

There was a heretic in the time of R. Yeḥi'el about twenty years ago who chattered and collected the *aggadot* and the story of Jesus and all his stench and sought to destroy our entire remnant. At the end of the affair, you perceived in light of the rabbi's words that there was no substance to the assertions of the heretic, and he was vanquished. He was fearful and provided no further answers. Thus, you should have honored precedent and reviled this heretic whose words are of no use. The little finger of the first heretic was thicker than the loins of this one (cf. I Kings 12:10), who would not have been valued in comparison to his predecessor as the skin of garlic, for all his days he has not understood anything properly.³⁷

Although such an assertion was in R. Abraham's interest, it would have been bereft of credibility if French Jewry did not feel that in the long run the Talmud had been protected. This passage allows us to conclude with a high degree of confidence that, approximately one generation after the first Paris disputation and the subsequent burning of the Talmud and related works, the availability of such works in France was sufficient to enable the rabbinic leadership to see the outcome of the disputation as a Jewish victory. Thus, the oft-expressed speculation that the relative decline in French Jewry's leading role in the rabbinic constellation of Ashkenazic Jewry resulted from a shortage of books stemming from the events of the early 1240s appears implausible.³⁸ Moreover, for all the long-term dangers of the attack on the Talmud, it is striking that the encyclopedic *Nitsahon Vetus* contains precisely one paragraph—the very last one in the book—on the subject,³⁹ Meir of Narbonne's work also contains a single discussion (once again at the end),⁴⁰ and *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* contains nothing at all.

There is much more to be said about the second Paris disputation. A very brief comment by R. Yeḥi'el marginalizing *aggadah*⁴¹—perhaps unexpected in an Ashkenazic work—is echoed by R. Abraham. Despite the precedent in the earlier disputation, the language here is striking to the point where it would elicit surprise even if it came from a philosophically oriented Spanish or Provençal Jew: “This Friar Paul has come to bring proofs to us on the strength of the *aggadah*, which contains neither Torah nor fear [of God] and in many places was formulated only to attract the hearts of the people in accordance with the meaning of biblical verses, just as your archpriest Jerome did for you.”⁴² A remark by R. Moses Taku in a very different context distinguishing the authoritative *aggadot* of the Babylonian Talmud from those in other collections also reappears, as R. Abraham chastises Pablo for “setting aside the Talmud and bringing us proofs from *midreshé aggadah*—even though they too will do you no good.”⁴³

Alan of Lille's talmudic passage about the ages of chaos, Torah, and the Messiah appears at the very end.⁴⁴ As I noted in a recent article, this placement helps explain the otherwise puzzling absence of that passage from the Barcelona disputation. The assertion that the world would last 6,000 years—2,000 chaos, 2,000 Torah, and 2,000 the messianic age—purportedly confirmed two crucial Christian contentions: that the Messiah has already come, and that the messianic age will not be (or is not) an age of Torah. Thus, it could have been used at Barcelona to support the Christian position regarding the first item on the agenda (whether or not the Messiah has already come), but it is overwhelmingly likely that Pablo was saving it, as he did in Paris, for the final item ("that the laws and ceremonials ceased and should have ceased after the advent of the . . . Messiah"). But because the Barcelona disputation was cut short, that final topic was never discussed.⁴⁵

Finally, in light of the argument that I made many years ago that twelfth-century Christians were not committed to a serious missionary effort aimed at Jews,⁴⁶ Pablo's activities in both Spain and France reflect a very different reality. That this disputation reflects a missionary and not just a persecutory objective is evident from the following passage about royal intentions:

This is what the king commanded us: Whenever Paul the heretic wants to debate with you, you must all gather, old and young. Perhaps there is among you an individual who will understand his responses and his proofs and will decide to turn to the Torah of Jesus, and I will thus take from you "one from a city and two from a family" (Jeremiah 3:14).⁴⁷

Since the literary—not merely polemical—output of northern European Jewry was largely interrupted by expulsion and other forms of persecution in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the reaction of this Jewry to the Christian use of the Talmud was never fully developed. No less important, northern Christians did not develop that approach to a point that exploited its full potential. What that potential was became all too clear in late medieval Spain.

Notes

1. Amos Funkenstein, "Ha-temurot be-vikkuaḥ ha-dat she-bein yehudim le-notsrin ba-me'ah ha-yod-bet," *Zion* 33 (1968): 122–144; Amos Funkenstein, "Basic Types of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages," *Viator* 2 (1971): 373–382. The final version appears as the major component of chapter 6 of Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford, 1993), 169–219.
2. Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: the Evolution of Medieval anti-Judaism* (Ithaca, 1982), 25–32.

3. Daniel Lasker, "Polemics at the Turning Point: Jewish Evidence from the Twelfth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 89 (1996): 161–173.
4. Ora Limor, "Polemical Varieties: Religious Disputation in 13th Century Spain," *Iberia Judaica* 11 (2010): 55–79.
5. *Disputatio Judei et Christiani*, in *The Works of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia and G.R. Evans (London, 1986), 9–61.
6. Odo of Tournai, *On Original Sin: and A Disputation With the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God; Two Theological Treatises*, translated with an introduction and notes by Irvén M. Resnick (Philadelphia, 1994).
7. *Dialogus inter Christianum et Judaeum de Fide Catholica*, *Patrologia Latina* (henceforth *PL*) 163: 1045–1072.
8. Yvonne Friedman, ed., *Petri Venerabilis Adversus Iudaeorum Inveteratam Duritiam* (Brepols, 1985).
9. John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and His Medieval Readers* (Gainesville, 1993), 19, 22–25.
10. *PL* 210: 410.
11. I have discussed the role of this passage in medieval and early modern Jewish-Christian polemic in "Torah and the Messianic Age: The Polemical and Exegetical History of a Rabbinic Text," in *Studies in Medieval Jewish Social and Intellectual History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, ed. David Engel, Lawrence Schiffmann, and Elliot Wolfson (Leiden, 2012), 169–187.
12. Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London and New York, 1995).
13. Gilbert Dahan, *La polémique chrétienne contre le Judaïsme au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1991), 115–116.
14. *Dialogus inter Judaeum Requirentem et Christianum e Contrario Respondentem*, *PL* 145: 64. Blumenkranz noted this in *Juifs et Chrétiens dans le monde occidental, 430–1096* (Paris, 1960), 217–218.
15. See my "St. Peter Damian: His Attitude toward the Jews and the Old Testament," *Yavneh Review* 4 (1965): 80–112, reprinted in David Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue: Essays in Jewish-Christian Relations* (Boston, 2010), 261–288, at 275–276.
16. Avraham Grossman, "Ha-metaḥ ben torah le-ḥokhmah' be-ferush Rashi le-sifrut ha-ḥokhmah she-ba-mikra," in *Teshurah le-'Amos : asufat meḥkarim be-farshanut ha-mikra muggeshet le-'Amos Ḥakham*, ed. Moshe bar Asher et al. (Alon Shevut, 2007), 13–27, at 23. For my reaction to Grossman's over-all thesis, see David Berger, "Polemic, Exegesis, Philosophy, and Science: Reflections on the Tenacity of Ashkenazic Modes of Thought" in *Jahrbuch des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts* 8 (2009): 27–39, reprinted in David Berger, *Cultures in Collision and Conversation: Essays in the Intellectual History of the Jews* (Boston, 2011), 152–166.
17. Jacob ben Reuben, *Milḥamot ha-Shem*, ed. Judah Rosenthal (Jerusalem, 1963), 7. The relevant chapter of this work has now been translated into English in Wendy Schor-Haim, *Jacob ben Reuben's Sefer Milḥamot Hashem, Chapter One: A Jewish Philosophical Critique of Christianity*, (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2012).

18. *Ibid.*, 8.
19. *Ibid.*, 11–20.
20. *Ta'anut (Arguments)*, ed. Stanislaus Simon, *Mose ben Salomo von Salerno und seine philosophischen Auseinandersetzung mit den Lehren des Christentums* (Breslau, 1932), xi.
21. *Ibid.*, xviii–xix. An additional brief but highly sophisticated philosophical polemic to which no attention has been paid is to be published shortly in 'Iyyun by Israel Netanel Rubin. The two manuscripts of this anonymous polemic provide different titles; Rubin has chosen "She'elot ha-pilosof." The work, like Moses of Salerno's, was composed in Italy—and at virtually the same time (1264 for the former, 1270 for the latter.) Here too the Christian aims to refute an important Jewish philosophical argument against Christianity but does not pose arguments demonstrating the truth of Christian dogmas.
22. Parma manuscript 2749. Substantial sections of the work have been transcribed or published in William K. Herskowitz, *Judaeo-Christian dialogue in Provence as reflected in "Milhemet Mitzva" of R. Meir Hameli* (D.H.L. dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1974), and Moshe Blau, *Shittat ha-kadmonim 'al massekhot nazir, zevaḥim, 'arakhin, u-temurah, ye-sefer milhemet mitsvah* (New York, 1973).
23. Judah Rosenthal, ed., *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* (Jerusalem, 1970).
24. David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nitzzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1979).
25. In chapter 7 of this volume ("Joseph ben Nathan's *Sefer Yosef ha-Mekanné* and the Medieval Jewish Critique of Christianity"), Daniel Lasker defends his position that Ashkenazic polemicists omitted philosophical arguments only because they did not believe that their audience could absorb them. As he indicates, I had argued that this is unlikely and that the absence of such polemic in northern Europe results from the fact that such arguments were alien to the *mentalité* of the authors themselves. Despite Lasker's characteristically well-formulated presentation, I remain unpersuaded. Let me note the following: (1) Lasker's argument refers to the very specific circumstances of Joseph Official's background and lineage and cannot be applied directly to the unknown author of the *Nitsahon Vetus*, though one who is persuaded by it could be open to an expanded application. (2) Lasker concedes that philosophical arguments were "undoubtedly" foreign even to Joseph Official's "world outlook." (3) He asserts that Joseph would not have withheld effective arguments from his audience unless he was convinced that they could not absorb them. The argument that a polemicist would not have withheld effective arguments from his Jewish audience was precisely my argument for the position that the problem lay with the author. I asserted that a particular philosophical argument that the author of the *Nitsahon Vetus* was likely to have known but failed to transmit was hardly so complex as to be incomprehensible to an Ashkenazic audience. "A Tosafot passage of average difficulty," I wrote, "is considerably more daunting." Thus, it is far more likely that the utilization of a much less sophisticated version of the argument reflects the fact that the philosophical formulation did not resonate with the author himself. If it had, he would not have withheld it from his most capable readers. It

is, of course, the case that once we assume that such arguments were alien to the thought pattern of the authors, there is every reason to believe that this was also true of their readers even though they, like the authors, were capable of understanding them in purely intellectual terms. In the final analysis, Lasker too agrees, indeed insists, that philosophical arguments did not speak to Ashkenazic Jews. Consequently, our disagreement about the authors of these works does not affect the larger point.

26. Mordechai Breuer published a one-page appendix to his edition of the *Nitsahon Vetus* (*Sefer nitsahon yashan: sefer vikkuah neged ha-notsrin* [Ramat Gan, 1978], 194) in which he listed 33 of these pejorative terms. See too Anna Sapir Abulafia, "Invectives against Christianity in the Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade," in Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute: Disputational Literature and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)* (Aldershot, Hampshire and Brookville, Vermont, 1998).
27. P. 171.
28. Funkenstein's footnote: "B.T. 'Avoda Zara 2a and the *tossafot* (sic) ad locum: *nir'eh de-ta'am ha-hetter mi-shum de-'akum she-beineinu kim lan de-la palhu la-'avodat kokhavim*. On this issue, see Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Studies in Jewish-Gentile Relations in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1961), 24–47."
29. Funkenstein's footnote: "A cursory reading of the *tossafists* (sic) or early responses (sic)—e.g., the *tossafists* (sic) on 'Avoda Zara—reveals a whole network of semantic substitutions to everything sacred to Christians. Christ was referred to as 'the hanged one' (*ha-talui*), an allusion to the biblical verse 'for the hanged one is a curse of God.' Churches were not houses of prayer (*tefila*) but of vain (sic) (*tifla*). Relics were 'the filth of their bones' (*rekev 'atsmoteihem*). Saints (*kedoshim*) were prostitutes (*kedeshim*). The cross was *sheti va-'erev*, an illicit mixture. Maria was *Haria*, and so on." (*Tefila, tifla, kedoshim, and kedeshim* are Funkenstein's transliterations; the other Hebrew words appear in Hebrew typeface.)
30. P. 200.
31. This matter is not central to our concerns here, and a full discussion would take us far afield. Let me say the following with ruthless brevity: The only medieval authority of stature who is very likely to have taken the position that Christianity is not to be considered 'avodah zarah (usually translated "idolatry," though the English term is really inappropriate for Christianity) was R. Menaḥem ha-Me'iri, and even in his case some scholars dissent. A tosafist passage (*Sanhedrin* 63b and parallels) affirms that *shittuf*, or association, is permissible for non-Jews. Many early modern and modern authorities took this to mean that Christian worship is permitted to non-Jews, though it is unlikely that this understanding is correct. Other Tosafist passages clearly presuppose that Christianity is 'avodah zarah even for non-Jews; see *Tosafot 'Avodah Zarah* 14b, s.v. *ḥatsav kashba* and *Tosafot 'Avodah Zarah* 50a s.v. *ba'einan ke'ein penim ve-lekka*. During R. Yeḥi'el of Paris's disputation, he was placed in a very difficult position and reluctantly allowed that Christians might be saved through their faith, but it is perfectly clear that he did not want to say this; see my discussion of this passage in David Berger, "On the Image and Destiny of Gentiles in Ashkenazic Polemical Literature," in *Cultures in Collision and Conversation*, 118–120. There are passages in *Tosafot* and related

literature suggesting that ordinary medieval Christians may not for various reasons be treated as worshippers of *'avodah zarah*, but this is not a judgment about the Christian religion itself.

32. David Berger, "On the Uses of History in Medieval Jewish Polemic against Christianity: The Search for the Historical Jesus," in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers (Hanover and London, 1998), 25–39, reprinted in David Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue*, 139–157, at 142–146.
33. See Joseph Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse de Paris: Un chapitre dans la polémique entre chrétiens et juifs au moyen âge* (Paris and Louvain, 1994).
34. The major book-length treatment is Robert Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath* (Berkeley, 1992). For my approach to some of the issues, see my assessment of the book in "The Barcelona Disputation: Review Essay," *AJS Review* 20 (1995): 379–388, reprinted in David Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue*, 199–208.
35. "Vikkuaḥ Paris ha-sheni ve-ha-pulmos ha-yehudi-notsri shel ha-me'ah ha-shelosh 'esreh," *Tarbiz* 68 (1999): 558–579, at 567–570.
36. Berger, "The Barcelona Disputation."
37. Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 45.
38. I completed this article just before the appearance of *The Trial of the Talmud, Paris, 1240*, Hebrew texts translated by John Friedman, Latin texts translated by Jean Connell Hoff, historical essay by Robert Chazan (Toronto, 2012). In his valuable essay, Chazan notes this "somewhat strange" passage and suggests that despite the repeated condemnations of the Talmud by the French monarchy after the 1240's, these "condemnations had not in fact impinged on the actual practice of the Oral Torah by French Jewry" (p. 84) and that they did not cause a decline (to the extent that there was a decline) in Jewish intellectual activity (p. 87). The difference between our assessments is that I consider it difficult to account for this passage unless even written versions of the Talmud and the literature surrounding it remained more or less available.
39. Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate* # 245, Hebrew section, 163–164, English section, 230.
40. Parma ms., 214aff.
41. *Vikkuaḥ R. Yehi'el mi-Paris*, ed. S. Gruenebaum (Thorn, 1973), 2; English translation in *The Trial of the Talmud*, trans. Friedman and Hoff, 131.
42. Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 51. I have translated *peshat ha-mikra'ot* as "the meaning of biblical verses" even though *peshat* can signify "straight-forward meaning." It is difficult for me to accept the assumption that even an Ashkenazic Jew would regard aggadic interpretation of biblical verses as straightforward. I am grateful to Prof. Mordechai Cohen for confirming that R. Abraham could have used the term *peshat* in this sense.
43. *Ibid.* I consider it unlikely that R. Abraham meant that Pablo was setting aside the legal material in the Talmud. The earlier passage is in Taku's *Ketav tamim*, Paris ms. fol.7b (facsimile published by Joseph Dan [Jerusalem, 1984], *Ozar Nehmad* 3, 63).

44. Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 57.
45. Berger, "Torah and the Messianic Age", 172, n.8. Even before the discovery of the manuscript of the second Paris disputation, I had speculated (orally but not in writing) that this is the likely explanation. I would like to think that this speculation is now close to being confirmed.
46. "Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 576–591, reprinted in David Berger, *Persecution, Polemic, and Dialogue*, 177–198.
47. Shatzmiller, *La deuxième controverse*, 47. It cannot be ruled out that this was a Jewish misperception of the king's intention, but there appears to be no concrete reason to reject the report.

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