

Ryan W. Szpiech

12 From Convert to Convert: Two Opposed Trends in Late Medieval and Early Modern Anti-Jewish Polemic

When Johannes Reuchlin sat down in 1510 to pen his *Ratschlag ob man den Juden alle ire bücher nemmen abthun vnnd verbrennen soll* (*Recommendation on Whether One Should Confiscate, Suppress and Burn All the Books of the Jews*) in response to a series of four pamphlets published by the convert Johannes Pfefferkorn between 1507–1509, we know he had near him a number of important medieval books by Iberian authors. In his *Ratschlag*, which he published as part of his work *Augenspiegel* (*Eyeglasses*) a year later, Iberian sources were in fact among the most important tools that Reuchlin brought to his aid in countering Pfefferkorn and the Dominicans who supported him.¹ In discussing the different types of Jewish books available to him, he concedes that some might include errors or other fatuous material. However:

But only very few will be found to contain mockery, slander, or blasphemy against our Dear Lord and God, Jesus [...] I have read no more than two examples of them; one is called *Nizzachon* [*Nizzachon*], and the other *Tolduth Ieschu ha nozri* [*Toledot Yešu ha-Nozri*]. They are considered apocryphal even by the Jews themselves, as Paul of Burgos [Pablo de Santa María] writes in the second part of *Scrutinium*, chapter six.

aber gar wenig die/ etwas spottword nachred oder lesterung unßern lieben herrn vnnd gott Jesu [...] zů legent/ Deren hab ich nit mer dann zway gelesen/ das ain wirt genant Nizahon das ander Tolduth Jeschu/ ha nozri/ das auch von den iuden selbs für apocrypho gehalten wirt/ alls Paulus Burgensis schreibt in secunda parte Scrutinij .c.vi.²

This last reference is, as various scholars have noted, to the very widely distributed Latin polemical dialogue *Scrutinium Scripturarum* (*Scrutiny of Scriptures*, finished 1432–1434), by Pablo (Paul), bishop of Burgos (d. 1435), known in the Castilian canon as Pablo de Santa María and to Latin readers of the sixteenth century as Paulus de Sancta Maria, Paulus Burgensis, or simply Burgensis.

Such references are not surprising or anomalous, because Pablo's writing was rather widely known in the early sixteenth century. Luther cites Pablo's works on numerous occasions, as do various others, including, as noted recently by Yosi Yisraeli, Denis the Carthusian (1402–1471), Alonso de Espina

¹ The best and most complete overview of the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn affair is Price 2011.

² Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. B2r; Reuchlin 1999, 29; translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 126–127.

(d. c. 1491), Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), Jacques Lefèvre (c. 1455–1536), Thomas More (1478–1535), Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), Konrad Pellikan (1478–1556), Luis de León (1527–1591), and Jean Bodin (1529/1530–1596). We know Johannes Reuchlin had Pablo's books near at hand, and many of his readers may easily have had them as well, since of the ninety-nine manuscripts of the *Scrutinium* – sixty identified by Reinhardt and Santiago-Otero and thirty-nine by Yisraeli – over a third are held in German libraries and many seem to have been copied in German-speaking areas.³ Similarly, at least nine editions are known, six already by 1478, including three from Strasburg (in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) and one from Mainz.⁴ His biblical exegesis, the *Additiones* (*Additions*, finished 1429–1431) appended to the biblical commentary (*Postillae*) of fourteenth-century Franciscan exegete Nicolaus de Lyra, was equally widespread, if not more so, being printed along with Lyra's commentary in many early modern Bibles in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁵ Pablo's works achieved very wide distribution among late medieval and early modern readers of theology, polemic, and biblical exegesis, and it is thus no surprise that his work would appear among the references marshalled by Reuchlin in his *Ratschlag* and *Augenspiegel*.

Still, Pablo's popularity notwithstanding, Reuchlin's references to Pablo are more significant than they might seem. For not only was Pablo, like Johannes Pfefferkorn, a convert from Judaism, but also his writing about Judaism was based very heavily on Jewish sources with which he was deeply familiar. Even more important is the fact that Pablo drew from earlier medieval writers on Judaism as well, some of them also converts – I will discuss these figures below – and his writing served as an important point of transmission of medieval discussions of Judaism and Jewish books to the early modern Christian world. While Reuchlin's references to Pablo have been identified and are known by many scholars, the history and context of the ideas they express has not been fully considered, especially as they bear on the central issue at hand in the conflict with Pfefferkorn: the value of Jewish books in Christian society and the place of the Talmud in Christian history.

In this article, I will consider a few of the passages in Pablo's writing to which Reuchlin makes reference, using them as a window back onto the later

³ Reinhardt and Santiago-Otero 1986, 245–247; Yisraeli 2015a, 100 n. 176.

⁴ Reinhardt and Santiago-Otero 1986, 247; Yisraeli 2015a, 101–102 n. 180.

⁵ Gosselin 1970, 407–424; Reinhardt and Santiago-Otero 1986, 241–244; Yisraeli 2015a, 98 n. 172, 99 n. 175. For a traditional overview of Pablo's works, see Serrano 1942, 101–117, and Cantera Burgos 1952, 349–345. Both works also contain biographical overviews of Pablo. However, such works must be used with caution and weighed against more recent research in Yisraeli 2015a.

medieval debates about the Talmud and other rabbinical books. Reuchlin's use of such material carried with it the implication that the use of Jewish books for Christian argumentation was already an old Christian habit, and that the confiscation and burning of the Talmud was a tactic long since proven to be counterproductive in a polemical context, undesirable in intellectual terms, and unjustified in social terms. In considering some of his sources for this argument in the *Ratschlag* and the *Augenspiegel*, I will first show that a significant part of what Reuchlin takes from Pablo de Santa María was in fact not original to him, but constituted a set of arguments adopted by Pablo from the convert Alfonso de Valladolid (Abner de Burgos, d. c. 1347); and second, that overlooking Pablo's use of Alfonso's writing makes it difficult to understand the former's position vis-à-vis thirteenth-century polemicists like Pau Cristià (Pablo Christiani/Paulus Christianus, the converted Jew who was the Christian protagonist at the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263) or Ramon Martí (Raymundus Martini, a thirteenth-century Dominican whose *Pugio fidei* [*Dagger of Faith*] developed Pau's approach and sources at great length). Although Pablo has often been linked with these thirteenth-century figures, including by Reuchlin himself, Pablo was also, in many ways, an outlier in the tradition of anti-Jewish authors, even if he is one of its most widely disseminated (yet still most poorly understood) writers. As Yisraeli has recently shown in a ground-breaking study on Pablo's Latin works, Pablo was much less of a critic of the Jews and the Talmud and much more of a *defender* of Jewish texts than he has been characterized as being. In fact, Pablo's most bold and original argument, and also his least understood and studied – an argument in defence of the ongoing place of Jewish scholars and books in Christian salvation history not just as converts or sources in Christian learning or polemic but *as Jews and Jewish books*, respectively – was something that Reuchlin did not make great use of, though it would have served his arguments rather well.

After establishing how Pablo's ideas were drawn in part from his predecessor Alfonso de Valladolid, I will argue that the medieval background of the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn debate was actually made up of two, competing strands of polemical argumentation. One of these was proffered by friars or their protégés (mostly Dominicans or those converted by them), including Nicolas Donin, Pau Cristià, Ramon Martí, Jerónimo de Santa Fe, and the Franciscan Alonso de Espina, all of whom attack and disparage the Talmud and post-biblical tradition, even when attempting to use this tradition to prove Christian arguments. This tradition has been studied in detail by Jeremy Cohen and those building on his work.⁶ I suggest, following Yisraeli, that there is a parallel but separate

⁶ See Cohen 1982 and 1999.

line of argumentation that was developed by converts who were not Dominicans or under their direct influence, including Alfonso de Valladolid and Pablo de Santa María, and to a lesser extent, we can include the Franciscan exegete Nicolaus de Lyra in this group as well. These authors argued for the value of rabbinical tradition in Christian belief and even defended rabbinical writing from attacks and censures on many occasions. By distinguishing between these two competing polemical trends rather than conflating them as part of a single, anti-Jewish tradition, we can better understand the background of the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn debate in the early sixteenth century. While Pfefferkorn, a convert with the support of the Dominicans, argued for the confiscation and destruction of the Talmud, Reuchlin, who was increasingly at odds with the Dominican order despite its role in his early education, was caught between these two competing medieval tendencies and sought to defend the Talmud and argue against its confiscation and destruction even as he often condemned its arguments.

Pablo de Santa María's reliance on Alfonso de Valladolid

The first step in tracing the different strands in late medieval anti-Jewish thought is to show the deep debt Pablo seems to have owed to Alfonso de Valladolid. Pablo refers directly to Alfonso in both of his major Latin works, the *Additiones* and the *Scrutinium*. In his commentary on Psalm 58, he names a number of Jewish converts in the “sixth age”, i.e. the entire Christian era that commenced with the Resurrection. After mentioning various such converts from Spain including Petrus Alfonsi and others, he names Alfonso, calling him “Alfonso of Burgos”:

Similarly there was Alfonso of Burgos, the great philosopher and biblical scholar, who in about his sixtieth year took up faith in Christ and was baptized. He then, as sacristan of the church of Valladolid wrote numerous works for the confirmation of the faith and the confutation of Jewish perfidy.

Similiter et magister Alfonsus Burgensis magnus phylosophus et biblicus qui in LX (sexagesimo) etatis sue anno fere fidem Christi, et sacrum baptismum suscepit. Et consequenter cum esset sacrista ecclesie Balisoletanensis plura opuscula ad confirmationem fidei et confutationem Iudaice perfidie edidit.⁷

⁷ *Biblia Latina cum Postillis Nicolai de Lyra*, 1497, vol. 2, fol. 154rb. This passage is also quoted and discussed in Yisraeli 2015a, 307.

Pablo repeats this passage in very similar words at the end of his *Scrutinium Scripturarum*, but does not speak of the converts as pertaining to the “sixth age”.⁸ He states in part two (6.14):

There was in this region in the time of King Alfonso X a certain Master Alfonso of Burgos, a great biblical scholar and metaphysical philosopher who in about his sixtieth year received the true faith of Christ and holy baptism. And after that when he was a sacristan in the Church of Valladolid he composed in the Hebrew language a beautiful little work about the confirmation of the faith and the confutation of Jewish perfidy, vernacular translations of which can be found today in the house of the [order of] preachers in Valladolid.

Fuit etiam in hac regione tempore Regis Alphonsi X quidam magister Alphonsus Burgen-
sis magnus Biblicus Philosophus et Methaphisicus qui in sexagesimo anno aetatis suae
fere fidem Christi et sacrum baptismum suscepit. Et consequenter cum esset sacrista Ec-
clesiae Vallisoletanensis pulchra opuscula ad confirmationem fidei et confutationem Iu-
daicae perfidiae, in Hebraica lingua aedidit quorum translationes in vulgari in domo Predi-
catorum Vallisoletanen<si> hodie reperiri possunt.⁹

We can logically identify this “little work” mentioned by Pablo as the *Sefer Milḥamot ’Adonai (Book of the Wars of the Lord)* written by Alfonso in Hebrew just after his conversion around 1320 and then translated by him to Castilian at the behest of Blanca, Lady in the Convent of Las Huelgas in Burgos. Although lost today, a Castilian copy of this work was seen in 1572 in the library of the Benedictine monastery of Valladolid by traveller Ambrosio de Morales.¹⁰

8 In the *Additiones*, Pablo follows Augustine in calling the post-resurrection period the “sixth age”, but in his earlier Romance poem “Siete edades del mundo” (Seven Ages of the World), he calls this period the “seventh age”, a position that, as I have argued elsewhere, he made in response to Jewish chronologies. In the *Scrutinium*, he describes the Jewish model of the ages, which he attributes to Naḥmanides, seeing the seventh age as after “pure Sabbath” after the coming of the Messiah. For Pablo’s views of the “seventh age” in *Scrutinium* 1.8.14, see Pablo de Santa María, *Scrutinium*, 1591, 279. On Pablo’s views in *Siete edades* and his use of Jewish theories of history, see Szpiech 2010, 126–136.

9 Pablo de Santa María, *Scrutinium*, 1591, 533. See also Yisraeli’s comments on this passage in Yisraeli 2015a, 339–340. “Vere” emended to “fere” following various manuscripts and cf. p. 222 above.

10 Morales describes “a book on parchment of very old handwriting, with this title: *This is the Book of the Battles of God, which Master Alfonso, convert, who used to have the name Rabbi Abner when he was a Jew, composed. He translated it from Hebrew to the Castilian language by order of the Princess Blanca, Lady of the monastery of Las Huelgas in Burgos*” (un libro en pergamino de letra harto antigua, y tiene este titulo: *Este es el Libro de las Batallas de Dios, que compuso Maestre Alfonso, Converso, que solia haber nombre Rabbi Abner, quando era Judio, è trasladolo de Hebraico en lengua Castellana por mandado de la Infanta Doña Blanca, Señora del monasterio de las Huelgas de Burgos*), Ambrosio de Morales 1977, 9. Morales (1977, 11) also mentions “a big book in Hebrew, on parchment, in rather old handwriting” (un libro grande en Hebreo, en pergamino, de letra algo antigua), which I am tempted to see as a possible

Pablo actually cites from this work in the *Scrutinium*, summarizing how Alfonso “in a certain book of his called Wars of the Lord, chapter 27” (in quodam suo libro qui dicitur de Bellis Domini c. 27). Alfonso told the story of a false prophetic movement he personally witnessed as a Jew in Castile in 1295.¹¹ The final reference to the copies of Alfonso’s work held in the Dominican monastery in Valladolid (San Pablo, founded in 1276) shows that Pablo not only knew about Alfonso’s work, but also knew where to find copies of it. The specific chapter reference that Alfonso provides further confirms that Pablo directly consulted this work.

This direct knowledge of Alfonso’s work is noteworthy because such work went almost entirely unknown by Christian writers before Pablo. For example, Alfonso is not quoted or mentioned by his Christian contemporaries such as bishops Alvarus Pelagius (d. 1350) or Guido Terrena (d. 1342) in their works against heresies and non-Christians, or other anti-Jewish writers like Alfonso Buenhombre, even though the latter’s extremely popular *Epistola Rabbi Samuelis* (*Letter of Rabbi Samuel*) from 1339 and less-known *Disputatio Abutalib* (*Disputation of Abu Talib*) from 1339–1340 do make use of numerous Latin authors from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries such as Ramon Martí and Nicolaus de Lyra, respectively.¹² Similarly, Alfonso seems to have been unknown to Christian writers of the later fourteenth century like the preacher Vicente Ferrer (d. 1419), who may have influenced Pablo in the years after his conversion and who certainly had a hand in converting Pablo’s younger colleague Joshua ha-Lorqi (Jerónimo de Santa Fe). This lack of exposure was probably a result of the fact that Alfonso wrote primarily in Hebrew and when he translated his works for Christians, he did so into Castilian, not Latin. Thus it is not surprising that the majority of his influence was among Jewish writers working in Hebrew, who attacked and refuted him often.¹³ Pablo’s knowledge of and references to

reference to Alfonso’s *Moreh Zedeq* (*Teacher of Righteousness*), a work that today only survives in its Castilian translation (also probably done by Alfonso himself) as *Mostrador de justicia*. On Alfonso’s probable role in translating all of his texts, see Szpiech 2016, 134–137.

¹¹ Pablo de Santa María, *Scrutinium*, 1591, 525. Alfonso repeats this story in the opening of his *Moreh Zedeq*. See Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), Ms Esp. 43, fols 12v–13r, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 1, 14–15. On this reference in Alfonso’s work, including a full bibliography on his writing, see Szpiech 2013a, 142–173 and notes. This passage is also later copied by Alonso de Espina in the *Fortalitiū fidei*, 3.10. See Alonso de Espina, *Fortalitiū*, 1494, fol. 172rb.

¹² On Buenhombre’s use of Nicolaus de Lyra and Ramon Martí, see Biosca i Bas 2015, 91–92, and Szpiech, 2013b, 172.

¹³ Among Jewish writers who responded to Alfonso in the fourteenth century are Moses ha-Cohen de Tordesillas, Isaac Pollegar, Moses Narboni, and Shem Tov ibn Shaprut (Šem Ṭov ’ibn Šaprut). On this influence, see Szpiech 2013a, 254 n. 3.

Alfonso and his works is undoubtedly a result of his Jewish background and fluency in Hebrew. In addition, although Pablo mentions the copies of Alfonso's *Sefer Milḥamot 'Adonai* in Valladolid, he may also have come into contact with the Castilian versions of Alfonso's other works (*Moreh Zedeq* and *Tešuvot la-Meḥaref*, under the titles *Mostrador de justicia* and *Respuestas al blasfemo*, respectively) through his friendship with Pedro de Luna, who became the papal contender in Avignon, Benedict XIII. It is known that manuscripts of these works in Castilian, almost certainly the same manuscripts that survive today, were held in the papal library in Avignon from around 1370 until 1403. It is also known that Pablo spent extended time with Luna in Avignon in the middle years of the 1390s, after Luna's election in 1394.¹⁴

However, Pablo's explicit references to Alfonso and his certain contact with copies of his writing are not the only proof of Pablo's direct use of his works. A close comparison of a few passages from the Talmud and rabbinic literature cited by both authors also points to Pablo's direct consultation of and dependence on Alfonso's writing. We can in fact trace to Alfonso one telling argument that was attributed by Reuchlin to Pablo. In the *Augenspiegel*, Reuchlin explicitly cites or discusses Pablo's work in at least five passages. In what seems to be the longest such passage, he states,

In theology, the Talmud is in many instances our handbook against the misconceived beliefs of the Jews. This is evident in the Bishop of Burgos's books on the Bible, which he wrote in a praiseworthy way and Christian manner, and in his *Scrutinium*, where he clearly defends our faith using arguments from the Talmud [...] In the preface he writes that the glosses and statements in the Talmud are so presented by the scholars that we can extract strong and decisive arguments from them for use against the Jews, for sometimes their masters have predicted and prophesied matters, though inadvertently, concerning divine mystery, as Caiaphas did in John 11. Therefore, he writes in the aforementioned preface, "The statement of the adversary is strong evidence."

Vnnd in der theologi ist der Thalmud an vil ortten vnser handthab wider der iuden vnghaubigs für nemmen. Als das erscheint auß des bischoffs von Burgis büchern die er

14 Moreover, the Paris BNF manuscript of the *Mostrador de justicia* (*Moreh Zedeq*) appeared in a catalogue of the library at Avignon made in 1375 (but did not appear in the 1369 catalogue). This copy can be followed from Avignon to Peñíscola (in 1403), then to Foix (c. 1428), and finally to Paris (1680), and it is undoubtedly the same copy now held in the Bibliothèque Nationale today. For the catalogue list of 1375, see Ehrle 1890, 559 (no. 1648), compared with the earlier catalogue of 1369 indexed on 438–450. This item was also listed in the 1424 library of Pedro de Luna in Peñíscola. See Martí de Barcelona 1922, 422, no. 124. We can similarly trace the Vatican manuscript to the fourteenth century, for it too was held in the papal library in Avignon, appearing anonymously in the 1369 catalogue list. See Ehrle 1890, 372, no. 1121. For a full consideration of these references and the history of the manuscripts, see Szpiech 2016, notes 52–56.

cristenlich vnd löblich über die bibel/ vnnd in Scrutinio geschriben hat/ dar in er vnsern glauben clarlich beschirmt vß dem Thalmud [...] Vnd in der vorred schreibt er das die großen vnnd sprüch der doctors im Thalmud seient also gestalt/ das wir darvß mögen hefftige vnnd vßrichlitliche argumenten vnns nemmen wider die iuden/ dann ire maister haben vnderthwylen so es verborgene göttliche haimlichait betroffen hat/ prophetiziert vnnd geweissagt/ vnd doch vnwissend was sie redten/ wie auch der Cayphas Johannis .xi. So ist dannoch die bekantnus des widertails ain crefftige bewerung.¹⁵

This final phrase, “the sentence of the adversary is strong evidence” is quite telling. It would not be easy to guess the source of Reuchlin’s words, “So ist dannoch die bekantnus des widertails ain crefftige bewerung”, but Pablo’s *Scrutinium*, puts it slightly differently, and adds a key detail that helps to identify the passage. The passage to which Reuchlin refers begins with a citation of Acts 17. 11, in which the Jews of Thessalonica “examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so”.

Truly, in the above verse it is to be noted that testimonies of Christ are to be received not only through the scriptures of the sacred canon, that is the Old Testament, but also through other scriptures that are considered authoritative by those Jews [...] Such scriptures are the glosses or authoritative passages of the Talmud and other writings considered authentic among them. From such as these can one bring a most efficient argument against them. For, without knowing they prophesied about not a few divine mysteries and other things, as it is read about Caiaphas in John 11. Both in legal matters as in dialectical disputations, the confession of the adversary is taken as sufficient proof.

Vero, quod in praedicto verbo notatum est, quod non solum (scrutando scripturas) ex scripturis sacri canonis, scilicet veteris testamenti sunt accipienda testamonia Christi, sed etiam ab aliis scripturis apud ipsos Hebraeos autenticis [...] Quae quidem scripturae sunt glossae seu auctoritates Talmudicae et alia scripta apud ipsos autentica. Ex talibus enim possunt summi efficacia argumenta contra eos. Tum quia in nonnullis misteris Divinis quantum ad aliqua quandoque prophetabant nescientes, ut legitur de Ciapha Ioan 11. Tum quia in iudicialibus et in disputationibus dialecticis confessio adversarii pro sufficienti habetur probatione.¹⁶

¹⁵ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. D1r; Reuchlin 1999, 42; translation in O’Callaghan 2013, 154.

¹⁶ He continues, “If against this it be said that Talmudic writing and other like this had not yet been composed in the time of Christ, it should be answered that it is true [only] with regard to the way in which they are presently compiled and arranged all together in books. In fact, they had been written before over a long time, piecemeal, as if in an apocryphal way, and [only] later compiled or gathered [...] just as among us Gratian compiled the decrees and sayings of the Saints that had been given a long time back” (Si autem contra haec dicatur, quod scriptura Talmudica et huiusmodi nondum erant tempore Christi scripta, dicendum quod verum est quantum ad modum, quo nunc sunt in voluminibus totaliter compilata seu ordinata sed erant scripta per longum tempus ante, per partes, et quasi per modum apocripharium et postea fuerunt compilata seu coniuncta [...] sicut Gratianus inter nos compilavit decreta et dicta sanctorum quae antea a magnis temporibus fuerunt aedita), Pablo de Santa María, *Scruti-*

Reuchlin has clearly consulted this passage directly, as the conjunction of references to the passage in John and the “statement of the adversary”, as well as the notion that Jews “prophesied without knowing” (*unwissend / nescientes*) makes evident. In this passage, the statement “of the adversary” (*des wider-tails / adversarii*) seems to refer explicitly to the Jews. But it is important to note that in Pablo’s version, the understanding of this phrase is not only polemical – what is said *in disputationibus* – but also explicitly legal – what is said *in iudicialibus*. Based on this meaning, it is possible to identify Pablo’s words as a paraphrase of the Talmudic dictum, *Hoda’at ba’al din ke-me’ah ‘edim dami* (BT Gittin 40b; Kiddushin 65b; Bava Me’zia 3b), which carries this legal meaning: “the admission of the litigant [*ba’al din*] is like a hundred witnesses [*‘edim*]”, meaning that any admission favouring the defendant that is given by the litigant or adversary is as convincing as one hundred witnesses called to testify by the defendant himself. Although Pablo does not translate this statement literally, the fact that he specifies that he is speaking not only about polemics but also what applies *in iudicialibus* allows us to understand the source of his reference to a “*confessio adversarii*”.

What Reuchlin does not seem to know – or at least does not indicate – is that this Talmudic statement is a key phrase used repeatedly by Alfonso de Valladolid in multiple works. The use of this statement in this context stands out as a certain indication that Pablo had read Alfonso, because there are no other polemical writers who make explicit use of this besides him. For example, this phrase does not appear among the hundreds of Talmudic and rabbinical citations by Ramon Martí in the *Pugio fidei*,¹⁷ nor is it recorded as part of the arguments made at the Disputation of Barcelona.¹⁸ Alfonso, by contrast, cites this more than once in his *Moreh* and again in his *Tešuvot*, and in each case, the text gives a version of the statement “the admission of the one who is part of the litigation is worth as much as one hundred witnesses”.¹⁹ There is

nium, 1591, 101–102. For an extended reading of this passage and its use by Reuchlin, see the important analysis by Yisraeli 2015a, 156–168.

¹⁷ This is according to the printed edition of Leipzig in Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687. For an index of Ramon Martí’s citations of Rabbinical literature in that printing, see Merchavia 1988. Ramon Martí’s citations of these tractates are indexed on pp. 226–227. I have not completed a full study of the additional citations that can occasionally be found in the Sainte-Geneviève manuscript (1405) but thus far, I have not found this passage cited there either.

¹⁸ For the texts associated with the Disputation, see the recent volume prepared by Caputo 2016.

¹⁹ In the *Moreh*, surviving in Castilian, this phrase is rendered variously as “the admission of the one who is part of the litigation is worth as much as one hundred witnesses” (*el otorgamiento del qui es parte del pleito vale tanto como cien testigos*), Paris, BNF Ms Esp. 43, fol. 32v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 1, 52; and, more telegraphically, “What is admitted by the side (of the litigation) is worth as much as one hundred witnesses” (*lo que otorga la parte*

no mistaking the source of Pablo's idea or of Reuchlin's repetition of it, even if Reuchlin would not have picked up on this.

Reuchlin's polemical predecessors

The fact that Alfonso was Pablo's source in the citation above would not have surprised or bothered Reuchlin, for he praises Alfonso elsewhere in the *Augenspiegel* when he speaks of the "honourable teachers Petrus Alfonsi and master Alfonsus Conversus in his *Libri de bellis dei*, master Johannes de Podico and master Jerome, and others" (würdigen lerer Petrus alfonsi vnd maister Alfonsus conuersus in libris de bellis dei vnd maister Johannes de podico vnnnd maister Hieronymus et ceteri).²⁰ He later gives this same list of converts, naming "Jerome" as "Jerome the convert" and adds Pablo's name as well.²¹ Jerome the convert is Pablo's younger protégé Jerónimo de Santa Fe, who is best known for his role leading the Christian arguments in the disputation of Tortosa in the early fifteenth century. This Alphonsus Conversus he mentions is none other than our Alfonso de Valladolid and his *Librum de bellis dei* is his *Sefer Milhamot 'Adonai*, a work Reuchlin must have known only indirectly through Pablo's or Alonso de Espina's references to it.²² Reuchlin seems to follow Pablo's own likening of his conversion to Alfonso's when he lists these converts as a group,

val tanto como cient testigos), Ms Esp. 43, fol. 28v; Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 1, 44. In the *Tešuvot*, the phrase is cited in the original Hebrew (Parma, Biblioteca Palatina Ms 2440, fol. 53b, printed in Hecht 1993, 436 and translation on 287) and survives in the Castilian version as "the admission of the side (of the litigation) is worth as much as one hundred witnesses" (el otorgamiento de la parte uale tanto como çiento testigos), Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, Ms Lat. 6423, fol. 82d, printed in Alfonso de Valladolid 1998, 117.

²⁰ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. D1v; Reuchlin 1999, 43. Translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 156.

²¹ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. E2r: "maister Paulus Burgensis"; Reuchlin 1999, 59. Translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 190.

²² The identity of Johannes de Podico is less certain. He has been identified, seemingly logically, as Juan de Valladolid, a convert in the fifteenth century who took part in the Disputation of Tortosa. However, he may also be a convert of the fourteenth century who, with a converted disciple of Alfonso, allegedly forced Jews in Ávila, with royal approval, to attend their anti-Jewish sermons. There is some confusion over the dates of this affair. A certain "Juan" is mentioned in the shelf note of the *Mostrador* manuscript in Paris as having died in 1370 while the events in Ávila seem to have taken place in 1375. But this convert named Juan in Ávila is mentioned by Alonso de Espina in his *Fortalitium fidei*, which would be the most likely source for Reuchlin to have found his name. See Shamir 2011, 2–4. On the extracts from the *Sefer Milhamot 'Adonai* that survive in Pablo's and Alonso's writing, see Del Valle 1992.

stressing that they “have all been converted” (bekert worden) and concluding, “I would much rather have these in our religion than four hundred card-painting or other profiteering [or ‘usurious’] Jews” (die ich wolt nemen inn vnßern glauben für vier hundert kartten maler oder wücherer vnndern iuden).²³ Of all of these converts, he holds up Pablo as the best. In his *De rudimentis hebraicis*, he calls Pablo “that illustrious teacher Pablo, most learned Bishop of Burgos, formerly of the Jews” (insignem magistrum illum Pabloum episcopum burgensem iudeorum olim doctissimum), stressing again the link between his knowledge and his converted status.²⁴

Reuchlin, however, links Pablo not only to converts but also to other polemical authors who are not part of this group. As Posset notes, “in his list of anti-Talmudic authors Reuchlin also included Paul of Burgos”.²⁵ In one telling passage, he links Pablo to past and present critics of the Talmud:

One might counter and say, “I need not understand the Talmud because there are so many books written against the Jews where I can read that the Talmud is an evil book.” Master Raymond writes such scurrilous things about the Talmud in his *Pugione* 3 par. Dis iii. C. xx that respectable people do not like to hear it. Similar expressions are to be found in the books *Fortalitiu fidei* and in Pablo of Burgos’s *Additiones*, chapter 34 on Isaiah and 5 on Zechariah [...] and in Brother Petrus Nigri’s *Stern des Messias*. Johannes Pfefferkorn, the instigator of this case, also writes in a similar vein that the teaching of the Talmud is abominable and obscene and contains many defamatory and profane words.

Dar wider möcht aber ainer sagen mir ist nit not das ich den thalmud verstand/ die weil man so vil büchlen wider die iuden truckt/ darin ich ließ das der Thalmud ain böß ding ist/ vnd magister Raimundus in pugione .3. par. dis. iij. c. xx. von dem Thalmud so schantliche ding || sagt das es erber leüt nit hören mögen. Des gleichen Fortaliciu fidei/ vnnd Paulus Burgensis in additione capituli xxxiiij. Jsaie. et Zacharie quinto/ vnnd bruder Petrus Nigri inn dem stern des Messias/ auch Johann Pfefferkorn der sollicitator dis hannedels schreibet das die lere des Thalmud sei wüst vnnd vnrayn/ mitt vill bößen scheltworten.²⁶

The writers mentioned here by Reuchlin were indeed critical of the Talmud, and Ramon Martí may have been the most virulent of the lot. It is true that Ramon makes use of the Talmud to support his arguments, treating it in places as a source of knowledge and proof. He concedes that such traditions “in a most wondrous and incredible way express the [...] Christian faith [...] Here

²³ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. E2r; Reuchlin 1999, 43. Translation in O’Callaghan 2013, 190.

²⁴ Reuchlin, *De rudimentis Hebraicis*, 1506, 547.

²⁵ Posset 2015, 341.

²⁶ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fols C1v–C2r; Reuchlin 1999, 36. Translation in O’Callaghan 2013, 143–144.

such as these are not to be rejected” (Christianam fidem [...] miro valde modo et incredibili exprimunt [...] Hic ergo ista talia non erunt respuenda).²⁷ At the same time, however, he sees such valuable material as the exception and not the rule, likening the Talmud to a “huge dung heap” (maximum fimarium) “on account of the absurdities which it contains, it is to be taken as nothing other than the insanity of a ruined mind” (propter innumeras absurditates quas continet, nihil aliud reputandum est, quam praecipitate mentis insania).²⁸ Later, he urges his reader, “Let your prudence take note, reader, that the Talmud, which teaches them to cheat so perniciously and to kill Christians, is not the law of God but the fiction of the devil” (Animaduertat tua prudentia, lector, quod Talmud quod ita perditiose docet eos mentiri, et Christianos occidere, non est lex dei, sed ficmentum diaboli).²⁹

With this view, Ramon Martí argues that anything of value that can come out of the Talmud is like pearls (*margaritas*) in the mire. In one oft-cited passage in the prologue to the *Pugio*, he says,

A wise man never despises a precious stone, even if it is found on the head of a dragon or a toad. Honey is the spit of bees, or maybe something of those with a poisonous stinger that is worth even less [than spit]. Nevertheless, he is not to be deemed foolish who shall know how to turn it to his own beneficial uses, as long as he shall know how to avoid the harm of its stinger.

Lapidem enim preciosum prudens nequaquam despicit, licet inventus fuerit in drachonis capite, vel bufonis. Mel quoque sputum est apium, uel aliquid forsitan aliud minus dignum, habentium quidem uenenosum aculeum; non tamen reputandus erit insipiens, qui illud in suos suorumque usus perutiles conuertere nouerit; dummodo nocumentum aculei sciuerit deuitare.³⁰

One can find similar, although less elaborated, condemnations in later writers who drew from Ramon Martí, including Petrus Nigri (Schwartz, d. 1483/1484), who condemned the “damned book of the Talmud” and urged leaders to burn it.³¹ His Castilian contemporary Alonso de Espina (d. c. 1491), who wrote little original material himself but compiled the work of others, had likewise anthologized the anti-Jewish views of his Iberian predecessors such as Ramon Martí, including a handful of critical references to the Talmud in his *Fortalitium fidei*

²⁷ Paris, Bib. Ste-Geneviève Ms 1405, fol. 3r; cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687, 3.

²⁸ Paris, Bib. Ste-Geneviève Ms 1405, fol. 2v; cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687, 3.

²⁹ Paris, Bib. Ste-Geneviève Ms 1405, fol. 422v; cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687, 936.

³⁰ Paris, Bib. Ste-Geneviève Ms 1405, fol. 3r; cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687, 3. For an analysis of this passage and its use by Ramon to argue for modern Jewish “heresy”, see Cohen 1982, 137–139, and Cohen 1999, 354–356.

³¹ Diemling 2015, 308.

(*Fortress of Faith*), from c. 1458–1464. Although such references are very few compared to Ramon and Alfonso, Reuchlin does not mischaracterize Alonso de Espina’s negative views by associating him with Ramon or Petrus Nigri.³²

Following such assessments, and perhaps because of them in part, the idea that Pablo too was a harsh critic of the Talmud and a hater of all things Jewish has also been the view of many historians over the last two centuries, from Heinrich Graetz to Chen Merchavia to Benzion Netanyahu, who claims that for Pablo, “hatred of the Jews [...] who had stuck to their religion [...] seethed in his later writings”.³³ Indeed, Netanyahu, in his characteristic hyperbole, calls “Alfonso de Valladolid, Paul of Burgos, and Joshua ha-Lorki [...] militant converts whose writings were filled with hatred of Judaism” whose “final aim” was “the total extinction of Judaism”.³⁴ Against such views, Yisraeli has maintained that, “In contrast to Pablo’s reputation as a reviler of rabbinic literature and the Talmud in particular, [Pablo] laboured [...] for their endorsement by the Church. [He argued] that rabbinic traditions contained treasures of Christian knowledge (that exceeded their polemical utility).”³⁵ Despite the fact that assessments such as Netanyahu’s do not seem to be supported by Pablo’s actual words, the condemnation of Pablo as an anti-Jewish writer in the same vein as Alonso de Espina or Ramon Martí has been widely accepted by historians of anti-Judaism.³⁶ A closer examination of Pablo’s writing and of his sources allows us not only to question this characterization, as Yisraeli has done, but it also allows us, I believe, to identify Pablo, along with Alfonso de Valladolid, as part of a separate strain of thinking about Jewish sources in the later Middle Ages, a biblical-Hebraist outlook running parallel to but not identical with that polemical strain of thinking found in more explicitly anti-Jewish authors.

Untangling two polemical strands

When Reuchlin lumps Pablo together with writers like Ramon Martí and Petrus Nigri, as well as Pfefferkorn himself, he is sending a mixed message about

³² For an overview of Alonso de Espina’s references to “historias Thalmudicas”, see McMichael 1994, 94–95.

³³ Netanyahu 1995, 171; Merchavia 1965. On this characterization, see Yisraeli 2015a, 154.

³⁴ Netanyahu 1995, 931.

³⁵ Yisraeli 2015a, 152 (also 168).

³⁶ Yisraeli further notes, Merchavia “drew completely misguided conclusions with regard to the scope of Pablo’s Hebraist practices and his alleged animosity towards rabbinic writings” (2015a, 69–70). “Merchavia’s sweeping judgment [about Pablo] could not be further from the converted bishop’s real ambitions and intentions. In fact, Pablo’s efforts for the endorsement

what Pablo's views on the Talmud are. On the one hand, he likens Pablo's judgment to these Dominican writers who explicitly denounce the Talmud as, on the whole, a "dung heap". On the other, however, he associates Pablo with a string of converts such as Alfonso and those who followed him. However, although Alfonso's career came just after that of Ramon Martí's, and his use of rabbinical writing was equally extensive, if not more so, his views of the Talmud are notably different than those of the friars. Compared with Ramon, Alfonso's rhetoric about the Talmud is mostly benign. Alfonso says he sets out to argue "in a straightforward and clean way, free of all contradictions and evasions, and according to the opinions of most of the sages of the Talmud who disputed and long ago gave subtle explanations on these issues" (*en manera llana e linpia e escusada de todas las contradiciones e las esquivizas, e segund opiniones de los mayores sabios del Talmud que disputaron e asotilizaron en esta rrazon de luengos tienpos*).³⁷ Similarly, rather than condemn the Jews for writing the Talmud, the Christian voice in the *Moreh Zedeq* accuses his Jewish interlocutor of not believing or supporting the Talmud enough, unlike the Christians who follow its basic message:

You deny the sayings of the prophets and the great sages of the Talmud and the philosophers, who concur about this incarnation, as it is called, as stated. But we, the Christians, who do believe in it, have no fear of stumbling [...] because we believe firmly in the sayings of the prophets and the great sages who are authentic among you and among other gentiles.

Negades los dichos de los prophetas e de los grandes sabios del Talmud e de los filosofos, que concuerdan en este enuestimiento, segund dicho es. Mas nos, los christianos, que lo creemos, non auemos miedo de entrepeçar [...] pues que nos fallamos e creemos bien firmemiente los dichos de los prophetas e de los grandes ssabios abtenticos entre uos e entre otros gentiles.³⁸

These "great sages" include the rabbis of the Talmud, those authorities "authentic among you".

We can see the stark differences between Ramon Martí and Alfonso by comparing the metaphors they use to characterize the Talmud and its writers. Apart from the former's likening of truths of the Talmud to the spit of a stinging bee, he also likens Jews themselves to scorpions, stating, "Jews, like the scorpion, are always armed so as to injure the soul even more than the bodily pow-

of rabbinic teachings and Jewish exegesis by the Church were unprecedented" (154). On Pablo's views in the context of contemporary Jewish colleagues, see Yisraeli 2014.

³⁷ Paris, BNF Ms Esp. 43, fol. 193v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 119.

³⁸ Paris, BNF Ms Esp. 43, fol. 165r, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 57–58.

ers” (Iudaei velud scorpius armati sunt magis semper animo nocendi quam viribus).³⁹ Alfonso, on the other hand, does not consider the Talmud itself simply the sweet by-product of a stinging creature, an image that suggests that only a small portion of it is of value. Rather, Alfonso sees it as a mostly valuable source, and condemns the Jews of his own day for not following the Talmud closely enough. Although he likens them to snakes, scorpions, and bears, he does so to stress that all are a rightful part of creation, although each behaves differently.

God did not create anything which is not good in itself [...] and so the Jews are in the world as part of the known [or absolute] good, like other gentiles, and like serpents and scorpions and lions and bears, but they are bad in terms of their opinions, which are contrary to good and certain opinions that fittingly lead to eternal glory. Just as serpents and scorpions are bad compared to man because their poison, which would confuse man. Thus the sages of the Talmud who gave reasonable words to support certain opinions, and who remained Jews, were of the lineage of absolute good, but were bad in terms of their will and their works, since they did not want to act according to what they understood.

Non crio Dios cosa que non ssea bona en ssí [...] e assi los judios sson en el mundo de parte del bien sabido [or ssoluto], como los otros gentiles, e como las sserpientes e los escorpiones, e como los leones e los ossos, sinon que sson malos por parte de las sus opinions, que sson contrarias a las opinions bonas, çiertas e conuinientes para dar la gloria eterna, assi como las sserpientes e los escorpiones son malos en comparaçion del omne por la poçonna dellos, que coffondrie el omne. E assi los sabios del Talmud que dixieron palabras de rrazon para conffirmar las opiniones çiertas e ellos ffincaron judios, ffueron del linage del bien ssoluto, sinon que ffueron malos por parte de la voluntad e de las obras, que no quisieron fazer como lo entendia<n>.⁴⁰

Unlike Ramon Martí, who sees the Talmud as the product of an “insane mind” and the majority of Rabbinic writing as a “dragon” or “toad” from which a jewel must be rescued, Alfonso sees the majority of the Talmud as a valuable testimony to Christian truth. Rather than calling the Talmud a “dung heap” from which he will extract pearls, he paraphrases Maimonides in stating “I help myself to the truth no matter who says it” (Yo me ayudo de la verdad de quien quier que la diga).⁴¹ Although both Alfonso and Ramon, like Pablo, at-

³⁹ Paris, Bib. Ste-Geneviève Ms 1405, fol. 306r; cf. Ramon Martí, *Pugio fidei*, 1687, 782.

⁴⁰ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 342v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 444.

⁴¹ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 32v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 1, 52. Maimonides makes this statement in the introduction to the *Eight Chapters* (*Thamāniyah fusūl/Šemonah Peraqim*), found within his Arabic commentary on the *Mišnah 'Avot*. He says: “Wa-isma‘ l-ḥaḳ mimman qaluhu [šema‘ ha-’emet mi-mi še-’amarah]” (Maimonides 1912, 6).

tempt to use the Talmud to prove Christian truths, their approach to and regard for the text is not at all the same.

Most significantly, although both Alfonso and Pablo are very critical of the Jews of their day for not following closely enough the teachings of their own tradition about the Messiah, neither advocated for the confiscation or burning of Jewish books because both held that these books contained many truths worth being preserved in Christian society. In Pablo's case, there is no evidence, despite Netanyahu's assertions, of his direct role in the promulgation of the anti-Jewish legislation of 1412 in Valladolid or in the praise of Talmud burning and recommendation for confiscation and censorship given by his erstwhile friend Benedict XIII in his bull *Etsi doctores gentium* (1415), although Pablo did allude favourably to the consequences of such measures.⁴² Writing about the anti-Jewish violence and forced conversions of 1391, Pablo called these events an "uproar" (*tumultus*) and a "trouble/hardship" (*vexatio*). He stated that "God who is so good brings good out of evil" (*Deus autem qui adeo bonus est, ut ex malis eliciat bona*), referring to what he saw as sincere conversions that resulted after the riots. In response, many Jews spoke the words of Deuteronomy 31. 17, "In that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?'" Pablo claims that the pogroms gave a certain new meaning to their words that led to the positive outcome of their doubts and conversions: "With trouble giving meaning to what was heard, they began to scrutinize scriptures" (*vexatione dante intellectum auditui scripturas scrutari caeperunt*).⁴³ Pablo does not seem to differ in his view of forced conversion from earlier ecclesiastical understanding based fundamentally on the policies of Pope Gregory I, which rejected coercion as a

⁴² Baer 1961, vol. 2, 167. Netanyahu discusses Pablo at length in Netanyahu 1995, 168–206. His assertion, for which he provides no direct proof, that Pablo was responsible for the laws of 1412 follows nineteenth-century scholarship on the question and attempts to go against more recent assessments in the second half of the twentieth century (198–200). For the bull, see Döllinger 1862–1882, vol. 2, 393–403. On the renewed pressure against the Talmud around the time of the Disputation of Tortosa of 1413–1414, see Baer 1961, vol. 2, 224–231. Yisraeli notes that "there is no archival evidence that corroborates these claims" that Pablo had any hand in the papal bull or the anti-Jewish laws of 1408 and 1412 (Yisraeli 2015a, 60). In the *Scrutinium*, Pablo notes that "many things were decided against Jewish impiety, which in his reign [of Juan II] for the most part have been observed in councils and kingdoms so that with the help of Heaven we see that heresy, both Jewish and Saracen, has assuredly been suppressed" (*Multa fuerunt instituta contra Iudaicam impietatem, quae in suis curiis et regnis pro maiori parte obseruabantur, sub quo diuino auxilio opitulante fideliter spectatur, quod infidelitas tam Iudica, quam Sarracenicam, supprimetur*), Pablo de Santa María, *Scrutinium*, 1591, 524.

⁴³ Glatzer, who translates this passage somewhat differently, concludes that Pablo's attitude was that "the riots yielded favorable results" (Glatzer 1988, 135; see also 133–134).

practice but always encouraged and praised Jewish conversion, seeing it as a positive outcome no matter how it was brought about.⁴⁴

Alfonso de Valladolid's views on forced conversion are more nuanced, and have, in my assessment, been mischaracterized by modern scholars. Despite assertions by various historians, especially Baer, that Alfonso advocated strongly for forced conversions, a close reading of his comments on this question show that Alfonso advocated for argumentation, and if this failed, he favoured social pressure (through taxes, for example) over physical force and violent coercion. When, in certain passages, Alfonso speaks about the use of force in religious debate – passages cited by Baer as evidence of Alfonso's own beliefs – he argues that such things have been prophesied but he does not explicitly recommend them himself. In fact, Alfonso states that force does not work because, “it is necessary to proceed against [the Jew] gently and to move him from [the wrong] reasoning little by little, as is appropriate for human nature. It is necessary to convince him” (*Es mester de venir contra él mansamiento e tollerle de aquella razon poco a poco, segund que conviene a la natura de los omnes, e es mester a convencerle*).⁴⁵ Moreover, what he sees as the lack of pressure to convert in Christian kingdoms is itself part of God's punishment of the Jews for their failure to accept Jesus as the Messiah, for it is a way for God to prolong their captivity. The lack of persecution of Jews is due to:

the damnation and ongoing captivity that you were sentenced with, in which you should have tribulations with gentleness and without a great harshness. For if you had them with great harshness in such a way that you could not endure them or that you were wiped out with one blow, in this way your dishonour, which was to be ongoing, would be ended, and the honour of God, now gives you trials every so often, would be limited.

Mas esto es de la maldicion e captiuidad perdurable que ffue sse<n>tenciada ssobre uos en que ayades las tribulaciones con manssedunbre e ssin grand graueza. Ca ssi las ouiesedes con grand graueza, en guisa que las non pudiesedes sofrir o que ffuessedes astragados en vna uegada, seria la uuestra desonrra otrossi acabada, que auie a ser perdura-

44 The words of Dominican Master Ramon de Penyafort in the thirteenth century express this clearly: “Jews as well as Muslims should, as Gregory says, be provoked anew to take up the Christian faith with authorities and soothing reasons, rather than harsh ones. They should not be compelled, because they do not please God with forced service” (*Debent, sicut ait Gregorius, tam iudaei quam sarraceni auctoritatibus, rationibus et blandimentis, potius quam asperitatibus, ad fidem christianam de novo suscipiendam provocari, non autem compelli, quia coacta servitia non placent Deo*). Ramon de Penyafort, *Summa de Poenitentia*, 1976, 309.

45 Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 42r, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 1, 68. A shortened version of this section is found in Parma, Biblioteca Palatina Ms 2440, fols 58a–59a, printed in Hecht 1993, 445–448 and translation on 301–304. Cf. Baer's different reading of this language in Baer 1961, vol. 1, 351–354.

ble, e sseria encubierta la onrra de Dios, que a agora en que uos da tribulaçiones cada tiempo.⁴⁶

Great harshness might, he says, save the Jews by moving them to all convert quickly. However, this is not God's will:

God takes away that hard switch that could give you wisdom and turn you to good, and this is always because it is not the will of God to give you salvation or remove from you the universal and eternal dishonour that he gave you as a sentence.

<T>uelga Dios de ssobre uos aquella uerdasca dura que uos podria dar ssapiençia e tornar a bien; e esto en todo tienpo que no ffuere voluntad de Dios de uos dar saluaçion nin toller de uos la desonrra vniuersal e eterna que puso por ssentencia sobre uos.⁴⁷

Based on these passages, it seems that Alfonso would have considered the forced conversions such as those of 1391 as contrary to God's own will to keep the Jews in a prolonged state of servitude. Obviously, this is not a doctrine of tolerance for the Jews, but it is also not an explicit call for or defence of their forced conversion either. As he states plainly, "it is necessary to convince them".

On the question of the need to protect the Talmud from being burned, he is even more explicit, condemning those who sought to do this and distancing himself from them. When mentioning Nicolas Donin, the convert who seems to have been responsible for the burning and censorship of the Talmud in the 1240s in Paris, Alfonso suggests that Donin's campaign of Talmud burning was a sign of the infidelity of many Jews and converts who do not follow the Talmud closely enough.

There are among the Jews many men who deny their Talmud, by which they also deny the Trinity and the incarnation of divinity in humanity, and they demand of the bishops and other Christian princes to burn that Talmud.

Sson fallados en los judios muchos omnes que niegan el ssu Talmud dellos, con que niegan otrossi las perssonas de la Trinidat e el enuestimiento de la divinidat en la vmanidat, e demandan a los obispos e a los otros prinçipes christianos que quemassen aquel Talmud.⁴⁸

The Jewish character, in turn, parries this accusation by instead *thanking* the Christian disputant for helping to defend the Talmud from its Christian assailants:

⁴⁶ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 336v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 434.

⁴⁷ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 337v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 435.

⁴⁸ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fol. 328r–v, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 419.

You always used the sayings of the sages of the Talmud for help and proof and testimony of your Christian faith. And we Jews should thank you very much for this, even if we do not believe you, because you gave honour to our sages and our Law before the Christians, and you did a great good for us. This will be a reason, with the help of God, to dissuade the Christians, who want ill for us, in their attempt to burn our Law and our Talmud and destroy it from the world.

Tomaste ssienpre los dichos de los ssabios del Talmud por ayuda e prueua e testimonio ssobre ueestra ffe de los christianos. E sobre esto deuemos te lo agradecer mucho los judios, como quier que non te lo creamos, porque diste onrra a nuestros sabios e a nuestra Ley ante los christianos, e que nos ffiziste en ello grand bien. Ca esto será rrazon, con la ayuda de Dios, para sacar de ssus voluntades de los christianos, que nos mal quieren, de lo que cudauan quemar nuestra Ley e nuestro Talmud e tollerlo del mundo.⁴⁹

Two decades after the *Moreh Zedeq* was written, Alfonso returned to this argument in his *Tešuvot la-Meharef* (*Response to the Blasphemer*), accusing his former colleague Isaac Pollegar, to whom he addressed the work, of setting out to destroy the Talmud as well, while painting *himself* as one of its champions and defenders:

You asked some bishops, powerful through the Pope, that they burn the Talmud of the Jews and destroy it from the world, but God did not give you what you wanted or help you, because he did not want all of the “pearls of wisdom” and “medicines for the soul” that are in it, which are the hope of the righteous of Israel, to be lost. The True God knows how much I worked so that it would not be burned!

Ca pidiedes a algunos obispos poderossos de parte del Papa que quemassen el Talmud de los judios e lo astragassen del mundo, sinon que non se uos aguissó nin uos ayudó Dios a ello. Ca non quisso que se perdiessen todas aquellas margaritas e las melezinas de las almas que son en él, las quales cossas son sperança de los justos de Israel. ¡E Dios uerdadero sabe cuánto me trabajé por que non se quemasse!⁵⁰

It is clear from such statements that Alfonso did not seek the destruction or censure of the Talmud, and instead advocated for a more Christian reading of it.

Alfonso expresses the desire to *protect* the Talmud from aggressive Christian readers like Nicolas Donin and, we can assume, Ramon Martí (and we can easily imagine what Alfonso might have said to Pfefferkorn, had they crossed paths). It was, I believe, on the basis of Alfonso’s unconventional position that Pablo developed his own radical views, which similarly rejected destruction of the Talmud and which praised it as a source in which rabbis prophesied

⁴⁹ Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fols 341v–342r, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 443.

⁵⁰ Vatican, Biblioteca Vaticana, Ms Lat. 6423, fol. 63ra, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1998, 71. This passage is not found in the surviving Hebrew original.

unconsciously about Christian truths. We can recall Pablo's explanation, cited above, that, "Evidence of Christ can be received not only through the scriptures of the sacred canon, that is the Old Testament, but also through other scriptures that are considered authoritative by the Jews." This argument had important consequences for the Church and for later writers about Jewish sources. Most importantly for our focus here, as Yisraeli explains, "Pablo's arguments served as a first step towards a systematic Christian defence of rabbinic literature, providing the theological ground upon which Johannes Reuchlin would object almost a century later to the burning of the Talmud."⁵¹ If Pablo's ideas can be linked to Alfonso's, as I am suggesting here, then what culminates in Reuchlin's arguments against Pfefferkorn about defending the Talmud from destruction had its origins in the fourteenth century. Drawing this connection is important in showing not only how significant Pablo's influence was for at least a century after his death, but also how the impact of Alfonso's ideas went far beyond his original intended audience. This is so because unlike Pablo, who wrote explicitly for a Christian readership in Latin, Alfonso directed almost all of his work to fellow Jews in Hebrew and made comparatively little effort to bring his ideas to bear on Christian thinking or policies.⁵² Through Pablo, however, his approach to the Talmud was brought into mainstream Christian intellectual circles.

Taking a long view of the distinct positions on the Talmud presented above, I argue that historians must carefully distinguish between two separate strains of argumentation in late-medieval Christian anti-Judaism. On the one hand, we can logically link together those writers – the majority – whose explicit goals were to counter all Jewish positions against Christianity and prove what they saw as the error or heresy of the Jews, including their belief in and use of rabbinical traditions. Such writers characterize the Talmud as largely corrupt and heretical. Even if it may be found to contain some Christian truths, the Talmud, in this view, is only of value for refuting Jewish positions or proving Christians truths to Jews, and is otherwise largely to be condemned and rejected. It is, in other words, more proof of Jewish infidelity and deviation from the biblical covenant than evidence of the value of Jewish ideas for Christian tradition per se. This line of thinking runs at least from Petrus Alfonsi in

⁵¹ Yisraeli 2015a, 152 (also 168).

⁵² As he says in the *Mostrador*, "my words and my arguments here are not with the Christians but rather with contrary Jews. For the sages do not have need of medicine as the sick have need" (mis palabras e mis rrazones aqui non son con los christianos, ssinon con los judios contradezidores; ca los sabios non an menester melezina, como lo an me<ne>ster los enfermos), Paris, BNF, Ms Esp. 43, fols 151v–152r, in Alfonso de Valladolid 1994/1996, vol. 2, 28.

the twelfth century to Nicolas Donin and the convert Pau Cristià in the thirteenth, who argued against Nahmanides at the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263.⁵³ It reaches its most elaborate form in the extensive writings of Ramon Martí, and is largely continued in the fifteenth-century by Jerónimo de Santa Fe at the Disputation of Tortosa and after and later writers such as Pedro de la Cavallería in the *Zelus Christi contra Iudaeos, Sarracenos et Infideles* (*Zeal of Christ against the Jews, Saracens, and Infidels*) from 1450 and Alonso de Espina in the *Fortalitium fidei*.⁵⁴ This tradition of thought, as Jeremy Cohen pointed out over two decades ago, is largely dominated by mendicant friars, mostly Dominicans (Pau Cristià, Ramon Martí, Victor von Carben, and probably Nicolas Donin as well) but also includes some Franciscans (for example, Alonso de Espina).⁵⁵

On the other hand, there is a line of argumentation that runs between Alfonso and Pablo, and should include Alfonso's French contemporary, the Franciscan Nicolaus de Lyra, in which rabbinical writing comes to constitute a source for Christian belief and history and a resource to be protected and used rather than destroyed. While Nicolaus de Lyra is polemical in dealing with Talmudic discussions of Christological issues, he also often prefers Jewish exegesis (mostly Rashi) over Christian interpretations, including even patristic sources. As Ari Geiger has argued, Lyra tempers traditional Christian polemical thought with an often-irenical Christian Hebraism, and his "tactics blend several strands of the anti-Jewish polemics of his age".⁵⁶ It is no coincidence, in this sense, that Pablo's biblical exegesis was written in the form of additions and corrections to Nicolaus de Lyra's *Postilla* commentary, and the two commentaries often circulated together, even though Pablo was largely critical of Nicolaus de Lyra's limited knowledge of rabbinical sources and poor mastery of Hebrew.⁵⁷ To single these figures out is not, by any means, to argue that they

⁵³ For an overview of Petrus Alfonsi's use of rabbinical sources, see Cohen 1999, 201–218.

⁵⁴ For examples of Jerónimo de Santa Fe's virulent position against the Talmud, see Jerónimo de Santa Fe, *Hebraeomastix*, 1677 and 2006 and the extracts made available in Jerónimo de Santa Fe 1987. For an overview of Pedro's views, see Ferrero Hernández and Gómez Llaguer 2013.

⁵⁵ Cohen's classic study of this group of authors is Cohen 1982. A similar position was further developed by Robert Chazan (see Chazan 1989 and 1992). On Victor von Carben and his link with the Dominicans, see Carlebach 2001, 178–179, and Werhahn 2013, 25–38. Another possible source to consult is Diemling 1999, which I have unfortunately not yet been able to access. On Reuchlin's distancing from the Dominicans, see Posset 2015, 375–376.

⁵⁶ Geiger 2011, 200, and see the discussion between 193–202.

⁵⁷ On Nicolaus de Lyra's characterization of Hebrew sources and his polemical stance, see Geiger 2008; Geiger 2011; Klepper 2007, esp. 43–60 and 82–108. Klepper has suggested that Lyra's perspective on the value of rabbinical sources was influential for his follower, Catalan philosopher Ponç Carbonell (c. 1260–1336, exactly contemporary with Alfonso of Valladolid),

were not polemical authors just like Petrus Alfonsi, Ramon Martí and Alonso de Espina were; all of these writers made critical remarks about Jews of their day and wrote polemical works to argue against Jewish positions. However, the distinction I wish to make is meant to highlight two different approaches to Jewish sources by Christians. In the more aggressive tradition of the friars, as Cohen has shown, such sources serve *only* a polemical, offensive position. In this second tradition I am proposing, the value of post-biblical sources lies not simply in their use as arsenal to support anti-Jewish arguments or proofs of Christian truths, but also in the actual content of those sources, which provide sound teachings worth preserving and studying in Christian tradition. This second tradition treats rabbinical sources somewhat like Augustine had regarded Old Testament prophecies and biblical Hebraist scholars of the twelfth century had regarded the Hebrew Bible: true and valuable in themselves, and carefully preserved and transmitted by Jews who themselves do not understand all of their meaning. This reading represents a notable resurgence of the “Augustinian doctrine of witness”, which as Cohen and others have shown, was significantly eroded in Christian thinking by the thirteenth century.⁵⁸ It also suggests that the connection between the biblical Hebraism of the Victorines in the twelfth century and that of the humanists in the sixteenth, which Ari Geiger has identified with Nicolaus de Lyra, should logically be broadened to include Alfonso’s and Pablo’s writing as well.⁵⁹

In limning out these two positions – or rather, in distinguishing the stance of Alfonso and Pablo from the already familiar tradition of anti-Judaism running from Petrus Alfonsi to Alonso de Espina – we might further see Johannes Pfefferkorn and his aggressive anti-Talmudic stance as the somewhat unwitting heir of the latter anti-Talmud position of the friars and see Reuchlin (along with the convert Paulus Ricius) as the somewhat confused and partial heir of the former pro-Talmud position of the non-mendicant converts. Reuchlin is, in a sense, only a partial heir because although he sometimes defends the value of Hebrew books *in themselves* for Christian society, his justifications still argue that their primary value lies in their role as proof-texts against the Jews, offering *ain crefftige bewerbung*. In many places, Reuchlin’s views echo Ramon Mar-

who can be logically compared with Pablo in this respect. On Pablo’s critique of Nicolaus, see Yisraeli 2015b, 128–132.

⁵⁸ On the evolution of the Augustinian doctrine of witness, see Cohen 1999, 358–363.

⁵⁹ Geiger proposes Lyra as a “bridge” between twelfth- and sixteenth-century Christian Hebraism in Geiger 2011, 203. On the twelfth-century Hebraism as a resurgence of a Hieronymian tradition in the face of a waning Augustinian tradition, see the perceptive remarks of Signer 2004, esp. 28.

tí's, such as his citation of St Jerome's quip in one of his Epistles, "It is great wisdom to search for gold in excrement" (Es ist ain grosse weißhait gold in kat süchen).⁶⁰ Only occasionally does he present such "excrement" as useful for Christians in their own right. Just before this remark, for example, he lists "doctors and masters of our Christian faith" who have converted from Judaism, including Alfonso, and states, in a remarkably different tone, "One can conclude from all of them that the Talmud is not a totally evil tree that cannot bear good fruit and which therefore should be cut down and burned, but that it has much that is admirable, and those who understand it can obtain a lot of good from it" (Ab dem allem wol zů nemmen ist, das der Thalmud nit gar vnd gantz ain bößer baum ist, der kain gütte frucht moeg bringen, des halb er sollte uß gehawen unnd verbrent werden [...] Sunder er hat vil güts inn im und die verstendigen mögen vil guets darauß nemmen).⁶¹ Similarly, he later writes, "Such commentaries cannot and should not be disposed of by the Christian Church, for they contain examples of the characteristics of the Hebrew language. They are essential for the understanding of the Holy Scriptures, especially the Old Testament" (Sollich commentarien kann vnd mag die cristenlich kirch nit von handen lasen, dan sie behaltten die hebraische sprach inn der aigenschafft übung, dero die hailig schrift nit kann mangeln besunder im alten testament).⁶² Arguments such as these on behalf of Jewish sources do defend a position elaborated, albeit in a minority of writers, over the two centuries before he wrote, and like his predecessors, Reuchlin articulated such a view largely by working apart from the main current of anti-Jewish thought proffered by the Dominicans, even if he could not shake off their influence entirely. Pfefferkorn, by contrast, developed his views under the preponderate influence of the Dominicans of Cologne, and his arguments continue the legacy of the friars.⁶³

It might be said that Reuchlin's association of Pablo with both the arguments of Ramon Martí as well as with the tradition of converts like Alfonso conflates these two lines of thought in a confusing, even self-contradictory, way. As Price notes, Reuchlin's methodology "gives rise to contradictory impulses, as Reuchlin alternates between distorting and celebrating the Hebrew-

⁶⁰ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. D1v; Reuchlin 1999, 43. Translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 157.

⁶¹ Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. D1v; Reuchlin 1999, 43. Translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 156–157.

⁶² Reuchlin, *Augenspiegel*, 1511, fol. D5v; Reuchlin 1999, 51. Translation in O'Callaghan 2013, 174.

⁶³ Carlebach 2001, 178.

Jewish tradition”.⁶⁴ Indeed, at times Reuchlin seems, as it were, to cut off his nose to spite his face, simultaneously defending ideas that work against each other. This lack of a single position, I would suggest, was itself a product of the varied ways that Christians had read and responded to Jewish books over past centuries, and this variety produced a host of somewhat contradictory recommendations by those involved in the Reuchlin-Pfefferkorn affair in the early sixteenth century.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, even if Reuchlin’s confused characterization offers a significant misreading of Pablo’s text, it is nonetheless true that his own positions relied heavily on Pablo’s innovative elaborations of Alfonso’s ideas. It also comes as no surprise that Reuchlin’s arguments were no more successful in changing the views of his contemporaries than were those of his forebears in their day. Just as Pfefferkorn’s crude positions won out against Reuchlin’s more nuanced arguments, so the advocacy of medieval converts like Pablo had likewise ultimately failed to establish the merit of post-biblical literature for Christian readers in the fifteenth century, just as that of Alfonso had convinced few readers in the fourteenth. It was, instead, the assaults on the Talmud of a different group of converts, from Petrus Alfonsi to Nicolas Donin and Pau Cristià, and from these to Victor von Carben and Johannes Pfefferkorn, that continued to have the greatest influence on fellow Christian thinkers and rulers. The origins of Christian Hebraism were in part, like those of Christian exegesis more generally, agonistic and aggressive, looking principally to demarcate boundaries of exclusion rather than gently widen the scope of authoritative tradition.

Primary sources

Archives and manuscripts

France, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms Esp. 43.

France, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, Ms 1405.

Italy, Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Ms 2440.

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms Lat. 6423.

Printed

Alfonso de Valladolid [Abner de Burgos]. *Mostrador de Justicia*. Ed. Walter Mettmann. 2 vols. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994–1996.

⁶⁴ Price 2011, 68.

⁶⁵ For an elaboration of these different views as “five readings” of Jewish literature by Christians, see the useful analysis in Shamir 2011, 95–104.

- Alfonso de Valladolid. *Teshuvot la-Meḥaref*. In Hecht 1993.
- Alfonso de Valladolid. *Tēshuvot la-Mēharef. Spanische Fassung*. Ed. Walter Mettmann. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998.
- Alonso de Espina. *Fortalitiū fidei contra iudeos saracenos aliosque fidei inimicos*. Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1494.
- Ambrosio de Morales. *Viaje a los reinos de León, y Galicia, y Principdo de Asturias*. Ed. Enrique Flórez. Oviedo: Biblioteca Popular Asturiana, 1977.
- Biblia Latina cum Postillis Nicolai de Lyra et Additionibus Pauli Burgensis*. 4 vols. Nurnberg: Anton Koberger, 1497.
- Del Valle, Carlos. “El Libro de las batallas de Dios, de Abner de Burgos.” *Polémica Judeo-Cristiana Estudios*. Ed. Carlos del Valle. Madrid: Aben Ezra Ediciones, 1992. 75–119.
- Hecht, Jonathan. *The Polemical Exchange between Isaac Pollegar and Abner of Burgos/ Alfonso of Valladolid according to Parma MS 2440 “Iggeret Teshuvat Apikoros” and “Teshuvot la-Meḥaref.”* Doctoral thesis. New York University, 1993.
- Jerónimo de Santa Fe [Joshua ha-Lorqī]. *Errores y falsedades del Talmud*. Ed. Carlos del Valle. Madrid: Aben Ezra Ediciones, 2006.
- Jerónimo de Santa Fe. *Hebraeomastix. Ad convincendum perfidiam Iudaeorum. De Iudaicis erroribus ex Talmut*. In *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*. Vol. 26. Lyon: Anisson, 1677. 528–554.
- Jerónimo de Santa Fe. *El tratado “De Iudaicis erroribus ex Talmut” de Jerónimo de Santa Fe*. Intro. and trans. Moisés Orfali. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1987.
- Johannes Reuchlin – see under Reuchlin.
- Maimonides [Moses ben Maimon]. *The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (Shemonah Perakim). A Psychological and Ethical Treatise*. Ed. and trans. Joseph Gorfinkle. New York: Columbia University Press, 1912.
- Pablo de Santa María [Solomon ha-Levi]. *Scrutinium Scripturarum*. Burgos: Philipum Iuntam, 1591.
- Ramon de Penyafort. *Summa de Poenitentia*. Ed. Xaverio Ochoa and Alisio Diez. Rome: Commentarium pro religiosis, 1976.
- Ramon Martí. *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Iudaeos*. Leipzig: Heirs of Friedrich Lankisch, at the press of the Johann Wittigav’s Widow, 1687 (repr. Farnborough: Gregg, 1967). VD17 547:635210U; VD17 23:256657X; VD17 7:705719G.
- Reuchlin, Johannes. *De rudimentis Hebraicis*. Pforzheim: Thomas Anshelm, 1506. VD16 R 1252.
- Reuchlin, Johannes. *Doctor Johannsen Reuchlins der K. M. als Ertzhertzogen zu Osterreich auch Chur fürsten vnd fürsten gemainen bundtrichters inn Schwaben warhafftige entschuldigung gegen vnd wider ains getaufften iuden genant Pfefferkorn vormals getruckt ußgangen vnwarhaftigs schmachbüchlin Augenspiegel*. Tübingen: Thomas Anshelm, 1511. VD16 R 1306.
- Reuchlin, Johannes. *Johannes Reuchlin Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Ausgabe mit Kommentar*. Vol. 4.1: *Schriften zum Bücherstreit. 1. Teil*. Ed. Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers et al. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, Frommann-Holzboog, 1999.