analysis in chapters three and four (p. 129 the reference to “Chapter Five” is misleading).

The second Appendix lists 31 Rashi manuscripts (without any description). From these 31 manuscripts, the author mentions and/or quotes the main differences to the critical editions by Avraham Berliner, Hayim Dov Chavel, and Menachem Cohen.

The book is concluded by the notes (p. 174–206), a “Bibliography” which again lists all manuscripts as well as sources and literature (some titles are written falsely, e.g. Börner-Klein’s edition of the Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, p. 210 R. Eliyahu bar Rabbi Menahem is listed with two manuscripts ‘Hamburg 92 and Vatican 331’; some are simply missing: e.g., Smith from p. 174 n. 13), and an “Index”.

To sum up, this book promises much, but unfortunately, the promise is not kept. Although some details are worth mentioning with regard to Rashi and his school, the real comparison of the two traditions remains superficial because the author presents only a superficial knowledge of the matter treated. In addition, the basis for research – comments on only one chapter of one biblical book – is rather small.


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The thirteen articles of this volume go back to a conference held in October 2011 at the University of Michigan. Nine further authors who are listed twice (p. XI and p. 217 n. 2) did not contribute. According to the editor, the articles collected ‘explore the double nature of scriptural commentary in Judaism, Christianity,

3 Several mistakes can be found throughout the book, e.g., unclear grammar and other mistakes: p. 28 (translation), 40 (mistake in the Hebrew), 44, 48 and 68; on p. 71, 73, 76, 78 and 81 the subheadings are wrongly formatted.
and Islam, considering exegesis in all three religions as both a praxis of communal faith and a tool for demarcating the boundaries between religious communities and their rivals and neighbors’ (p. 2). One wonders whether the nine authors missing would have enriched the spectrum covered.

The volume itself is divided into four sections and framed with an introduction and appendices including endnotes, a bibliography and an index. The four parts containing the articles treat “Strategies of Reading on the Borders of Islam”, “Dominicans and Their Disputations”, “Authority and Scripture between Jewish and Christian Readers”, and “Exegesis and Gender: Vocabularies of Difference”.

The first part, which comprises three articles, mainly focuses on the Arabic-speaking world. Sarah Stroumsa compares the Muslim Ibn Masarra and the Jew Moses Maimonides and their respective understandings of the biblical figure Abraham. Both philosophers, who stem from al-Andalus, ‘present the patriarch Abraham as the model of independent contemplation, where inborn human resources allow a human being – every human being – to find the way to the creator’ (p. 38). Ibn Masarra puts emphasis on contemplation of the individual whereas Maimonides is more interested in the spiritual needs of the majority of his people. Sidney H. Griffith concentrates on two thinkers from Baghdad (is this town part of the Mediterranean as the book title suggests?), one Jewish, the other Christian, who wrote on biblical law. The Jew Ibn Kammūnah wrote on the understanding of true prophecy and true religion (which is closely connected with ‘law’) in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. He was attacked in writings as well as physically mainly by Muslims of his times, but only Ibn al-Mahrūmah’s (a Christian’s) critical notes have survived. Although the latter strongly opposed the oral Torah, he nonetheless maintained the importance of the written Torah. Finally, Walid Saleh compares the Christian Hebraist Johannes Reuchlin1 with the Mamluk scholar al-Biqā‘ī.

The second part discusses three different Dominican attitudes towards Judaism and Islam. Thomas E. Burman compares Riccoldo da Monte di Croce with his teacher Ramon Martí, who, according to him, in different ways made use of a Muslim text (Book of Denuding) that survived only in Latin translation in a sixteenth-century manuscript. Burman claims that Martí knew the Qur’ān and Hadith traditions whereas Riccoldo only relied on the Qur’ān. Although he claims that Martí used both, i.e. the alleged Arabic ‘Vorlage’ of the Book of Denuding and Mark of Toledo’s Qur’ān translation, he does not give proof for this hypothesis. In my eyes, both points are untenable. Antoni Biosca i Bas shows that Alfonso Buenhombre, who claimed to have translated all his

1 The name is separated as Reuch-lin, not as is differently done throughout the text.
treatises from the Arabic, seems to have written them originally in Latin
including translations provided, for example, by Ramon Martí and Rodrigo
Jiménez de Rada. Ursula Ragacs gives an – updated – English translation of an
article on Nahmanides’ account of the Barcelona disputation of 1263, which
was published in 2002 (p. 238 n. 1). Here one wonders why the editor maintains
that Ragacs offers ‘a suggestive new approach’ (p. 22). Ragacs mainly discusses
two points: first, why the Hebrew report in some manuscripts mentions a
passage from the Babylonian Talmud only in abbreviated form whereas other
Hebrew versions have the text quoted at length. Second, she gives an apology
for Pau Cristià’s way of arguing which, according to her, was ridiculed by
Nahmanides and could be reconstructed from Martí’s Capistrum Iudeorum
(‘Muzzle of the Jews’).

The articles of the third part focus on Christian-Jewish relations mainly
in the Iberian Peninsula. Harvey J. Hames suggests that the report on the
Talmud Disputation from Paris in 1240 was written only after Nahmanides’
report on the Barcelona Disputation. He claims that there ‘was no disputation’
(p. 121, cf. p. 125). Although Hames’ argumentation is highly hypothetical, it
deserves further discussion because the literal character of the 1240 report and the
similarities of both the 1240 and the 1263 texts are indeed striking. Nonetheless his
hypothesis finds its limits in Judah Galinsky’s findings of two different manuscript
versions of the 1240 reports – see Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies 1 (2014)
p. 304 – which Hames discusses in a postscript to the article (p. 126 sq.). Yosi
Yisraeli demonstrates that Pablo de Santa María’s criticism of Nicholas of Lyra
continues an inner-Jewish debate on Rashi’s literal (“Peshat”) exegesis. Although
the author seems familiar with only parts of current research on the Rashi-into-
Latin topic, his findings are an important contribution. The late Ángel Sáenz-
Badillos demonstrates in one of his last publications that Rabbi Moses Arragel
added quite a number of comments to his Castilian Bible translation, which in
many cases were left for Christian readers, but quite often the Christian corrector
changed or deleted Arragel’s comments: ‘What seems clear enough is that the
revisers substantially modified the glosses of some books and passages, in many
ways changing the meaning of Arragel’s work’ (p. 151).

The final section contains four articles. In contrast to its own claims, it does
not offer ‘a kind of comprehensive review of all the essays in the first three parts’
(p. 17), but rather further contributions which are less connected to each other.
Alexandra Cuffel reassesses recent research on the Toledot Yeshu traditions. She
shows that these traditions owe much to the interreligious encounters especially
in Syria and were introduced to the West much later than suggested in recent
research. Whether it was really ‘counterexegesis’ as the author holds (p. 161 and
169) needs further discussion. Nina Caputo examines Nahmanides’ exegesis of
Gn 6, 1–4, the story of the God’s or Gods’ sons. Esperanza Alfonso gives a survey of some medieval Jewish interpretations of the ‘strange woman’ (“ishshah zarah”). Finally, Steven Kruger portrays Guillaume de Bourges, a Jewish-Christian convert of the thirteenth century.

As shown, the volume title does not cover all articles included. Furthermore, some articles are not on the height of current research. Nonetheless, most articles indeed enrich discussions on medieval encounters and are thereby important contributions. They deserve interested readers.


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In recent years, several studies have started to reinvestigate the philosophical underpinnings of al-Ghazālī’s work. Alexander Treiger’s book *Inspired knowledge in Islamic thought* continues and expands upon this trend. He begins with the assumption that al-Ghazālī must have already obtained a profound knowledge of the Arabic Aristotelian philosophy of Ibn Sinā at an early stage of his career under the guidance of his Ash’arite teacher al-Juwaynī in Nīshāpūr. This introduction to Avicennian philosophy would significantly impact all of his later work. Treiger, therefore, asserts that ‘Avicenna’s philosophy is a key for understanding al-Ghazālī’ (p. 5) and argues for a paradigm shift in the research. In order to deal with the problem that al-Ghazālī sometimes seems inconsistent in his theological and philosophical writings, Treiger lays out five fundamental methodological assumptions that make it possible to interpret his writings as a single coherent entity: 1) al-Ghazālī should be considered an author who is engaged in theology, as ‘a thinker who engages in the discourse about God’ (ibid.); 2) the work of al-Ghazālī can only be understood against the backdrop of the philosophy of Ibn Sinā; 3) it is necessary to take into account the entirety of al-Ghazālī’s works; 4) al-Ghazālī’s thought is in fact inherently consistent, even if it does not always appear to be the case at the first sight; 5) al-Ghazālī’s approach is first and foremost pedagogical, not scientific.

In the discussion that follows, Treiger focuses in five separate chapters on the investigation of the Avicennian background of al-Ghazālī’s concept of mystical