Kings and Conversion in the Thirteenth Century: Where Politics and Religion Meet?*

Rois et conversion au XIII^e siècle : où se rencontrent la politique et la religion ?

Reyes y conversión en el siglo XIII: ¿dónde se encuentran la política y la religión?

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Kings and Conversion in the Thirteenth Century: Where Politics and Religion Meet?*

It is, perhaps, a commonplace to state that one of the goals of Christians was to convert the Jews. However, from the outset, there was a built in tension between this objective and the reality, where conversions, unless forced, rarely occurred.¹ Yes, there were Jews who converted for love, and others who converted to better their social status, but in general, there seems to have been little sustained effort to achieve Jewish conversion, and where there was, it was the exception that proved the rule.² One of the main reasons for this lack of conversionary zeal was the status of the Jews in many of the kingdoms of Christian Europe – they were *in camerae regis*, the property of the rulers (see Abulafia, 2004 and Shoval, 2010). This meant, in practice, that their alienation, or in other words, their conversion, entailed a loss of revenue for the King, or whoever had been given dominion over them. While the rulers were good Christians who were, at least in theory, interested in bringing about the conversion of the Jews, in practice, there were other considerations that often played a greater role in determining their Jewish policies. The Jews were a good source of income and could be used as tax farmers as well as filling other less savory roles in the royal administration.³

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1. See for instance the following statement by Gregory IX, playing on the Pauline motif (Romans 9: 27-28), whereby the Jews were «useful and in a way necessary, for they bear the image of our Savior... their Fathers were made friends of God, and also their remnant will be saved». Conversion of the Jews would happen, but it would be sometime in the future. Letter to the Archbishops and Bishops of France, April 1233, Grayzel, 1966: 200-201.

2. One example of mass conversion of the Jews in the late thirteenth century comes from southern Italy spearheaded by the Dominicans who took advantage of a political vacuum to force the communities to convert in the 1270's and 1290's. It is interesting that in the 15th century, in the archival records, the converts from these communities were still referred to as neophytes, perhaps reflecting the insincerity of their conversion due to it being forced and not from conviction. Sadly, the documentation about these events is sparse and incomplete. See Cassutto, 1942; Starr, 1946 and Zeldes, 2010.

3. See for example Barton, 2015, or Mundill, 1998, which looks at the background to the expulsion (note, not conversion) of the Jews from England and exemplifies why Christian rulers were not interested in their Jews converting.

The thirteenth century is often referred to as the century of mission (see for instance Cohen, 1982, and Chazan, 1989). The establishment of the mendicant orders provided the papacy with well-organized and disciplined troops in their fight against the infidel and heretics. These orders set up language schools and trained preachers who then went out to battle with Jews and Muslims trying to bring them to the baptismal font. The public disputations against the Jews in Paris in 1240, in Barcelona in 1263 and again in Paris in the early 1270's are clear indicators of the intense pressure put on the stubborn Jews to set aside their false beliefs and embrace the truth, pressure that only went and increased in the fourteenth century leading to the Tortosa disputation (1412-1414) and the eventual expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula.

This narrative is teleological in that, seemingly, one thing naturally leads to the other and the results of the pattern set in the twelfth century are clearly evident at the end of the fifteenth. However, when looked at more closely, the anti-Jewish mission of the thirteenth century takes on a different hue, and when seen in the broader context, other interpretations of events seem to make more sense. Here, I would like to look briefly at three central events: the disputations held in Paris in 1240 and 1272 and the disputation of Barcelona in 1263, which in scholarship are intimately tied together, to try to show how what seems to be part of the ever-increasing pressure to convert Jews can be understood differently.

The ascent to the throne of Louis IX of France in 1226 at the age of 12 came at a pivotal moment. The lack of a strong King in England in the first decades of the thirteenth century had meant that most of the latter's lands in the French kingdom had become fiefs of the Crown, and the supposed crusade taking place in the south against the Albigensian heresy, or Cathars, was about to enter a new stage which would bring the whole area under royal control. Louis' young age on ascendancy to the throne meant that the Kingdom was effectively under the control of his mother, Blanch of Castile and even when he achieved his majority, she continued to play a major role till her death in November 1252 (see Jordan, 1989; Le Goff, 1999; Richard, 1992: 74-83, 141-146).

Already in 1230, Louis, with the encouragement of his mother, promulgated a ban on Jewish usury. This was an issue that he would return to on his homecoming from his first crusading adventure in 1253 after a five-year absence from France including a brief period as captive of the Muslims. This ban on usury was similar to the position taken by the canonists in the schools and nascent university of Paris and was different from the more practical position adopted by the papacy, for instance in *Quanto amplius* and *Ad liberandam* both promulgated in 1215 at IV Lateran.⁴ Louis seems to have sided with the theory developed by the canonists against the popes on the question of usury. He wanted, like the canonists, to prohibit any type of usury taking whether by Jews or others while the papacy recognized the need for moderate interest

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4. See Tanner, 1990, Canon 66, p. 265-66, Canon 71, p. 267-71 respectively.

to keep the wheels of commerce turning. This seems to be counter-intuitive in that one of the main concerns of royalty was keeping the coffers full and taxing Jewish lending was a good way of doing this. Yet, as Kenneth Stow has argued, most of the Kings of western Christendom seemed to have adopted this position, at least in theory (Stow, 1981).

Yet, and however strange this may seem, most rulers also respected the bull *Sicut iudeas* which was a papal bull of protection addressed to all believers in the Christian commonwealth. Innocent III, Honorius III, Gregory IX and Innocent IV all proclaimed this text as defining official Church policy towards the Jews (Grayzel, 1966, texts 5, 35, 81, 111). Among other things, the bull prohibited forced conversion and allowed for the continuation of Jewish religious practice and custom, which included lending with (moderate) interest.

In 1239, a convert from Judaism, Nicholas Donin, approached Pope Gregory IX and in a document containing 35 articles, accused the Jews of blasphemy against Christ and Mary in the Talmud, an enormous body of literature then almost unknown to the Christian world.⁵ The Babylonian Talmud incorporates almost five centuries of legal arguments and decisions along with a host of other stories, traditions and legends which reflect the beliefs and worldviews of a myriad of Rabbis living mainly in the near East. Edited and committed to writing in the 6th century, though to some extent, remaining fluid in nature, this corpus slowly became the basis for future legalistic argument and from the 12th century, became authoritative in the Jewish communities of Europe.⁶ Not unlike the commentaries on the Decretals and the collections of canon and civil law, the Rabbis of Ashkenaz (France and Germany) starting with Rashi and continuing with what is referred to as the Tosafist school, began to write commentaries which, among other things, adapted the laws in the Talmud to the realities of daily life (see for instance Kanarfogel, 2012 and Kanarfogel, 2016).

Nicholas Donin succeeded in gaining the interest of Gregory IX in this literature and its theological ramifications. According to the Augustinian model, the Jews who would convert at the end of days were to be tolerated and protected because they were witnesses to the true faith.⁷ Their witnessing was based on the (mistaken) assumption that they lived according to the Old

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5. The first serious introduction of the Talmud to the Christian world was the work of the convert, Petrus Alfonsi in his *Dialogue Against the Jews* (Petrus, 2006). This work was incredibly popular in the twelfth century with tens of extant copies. See Tolan, 1993. On Alfonsi, see Cohen, 1987.

6. See Fishman, 2013. While there has been much controversy about the supposed mistakes in details in the book, the main purpose of which to undermine the authority of its author in the field of Rabbinics, I think that the central thesis is interesting and worthy of consideration. For the opposing view, see Soloveitchik, 2013; A quick internet search will summarily reveal the cut and thrust of the controversy and animosity.

7. The literature on the idea of Jewish witness is enormous, however, to discover how this doctrine was formulated, see Fredriksen, 2008.

Testament which was the foundation for the New which had replaced it. Donin's accusations seemed to undermine the very basis of the Augustinian doctrine of tolerance and, in addition, this work supposedly contained absurdities and blasphemies against the foundations of the Christian faith.

Gregory's response was a series of letters containing the 35 articles which he sent to William of Auvergne, the bishop of Paris, asking him to send on letters to the Kings of France, England, Aragon, Castile and Portugal along with another letter directed specifically to Paris and the university. The pope asked that on a specific date, the manuscripts of the Talmud be confiscated from the Jews and subjected to examination.⁸ While it seems that this request was ignored almost everywhere else, in Paris it was taken seriously because of three factors: the first was the King and his mother and their interest in matters Jewish; the second, the university, and the third, the Pope himself and his involvement with the university.

Regarding the latter, Gregory IX clearly envisioned great things for the university. Indeed, he saw it as a place designed to provide highly educated preachers who would transform Christendom as can be seen from the opening passages of *Parens scientiarum*, a bull the pope sent to the university in 1231 after the resolution of suspension of teaching by the secular masters because of the murder of some students (see Wei, 2014: 100-111). One of the stipulations of this important bull relates to the examination of prohibited books which after they had been purged of errors could then be used. Yet another stated that it was necessary to "dispute in the schools concerning only those questions which can be settled by theological works and the treatises of the holy fathers".⁹ Though the prohibited books above refer specifically to the works of Aristotle on natural philosophy, this concept could easily be applied to other books as well, as can be seen with the Talmud, and, a decade later, to the *Eternal Gospel* composed by the Franciscan, Gerard of Borgo San Donino.¹⁰

The timeline of events in Paris during the 1240's with regard to the Talmud is problematic even given the amount of extant evidence including letters, papal and others, a Hebrew account of events and the large compilation entitled *Extractiones de Talmut*.¹¹ The latter, extant in some ten manuscripts, is made up of a number of sections which when examined carefully, can shed light on what actually occurred.¹² The Paris manuscript of the *Extractiones*, put

8. See Merhaviah, 1970. For and English translation of the primary sources, see Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012.

9. Denifle and Châtelain, 1889: n° 87, p. 143-4. Also cited in Wei, 2014: 110.

10. See Lerner, 2001: 43-48. On censure in the university in general, see Thijssen, 1998; Bianchi, 1999 and Schwartz, 2015.

11. Much has been written on this issue. See amongst others: Baer, 1931. Rosenthal, 1956 (includes an English translation of Nicholas Donin's 35 articles); Cohen, 1982: 60-76; Eisenberg, 2008. Rose, 2011; Stow, 1999: 211-212; Galinsky, 2001-2003.

12. Merhaviah, 1970; Sirat, 1999; Fidora, 2015b. There are two complete manuscripts, four containing just the sequential section and four containing the thematic compilation only.

together by an anonymous compiler, is actually made up of four separate parts. A sequential translation of passages from the Talmud, a thematic compilation, and the thirty-five articles by Nicholas Donin followed by the short notarial document recording the evidence given by two rabbis, Yehiel and Judah, who were called before the commission set up to examine the Talmud in the aftermath of the Pope's aforementioned letter.¹³

From the introduction written by the compiler of the manuscript, we can learn a number of interesting facts. Firstly, that there was more interest in the Talmud and Hebrew in the university than originally thought, as the sequential translation which follows the order of the Talmudic tractates was carried out by two Catholics «who were very learned in the Hebrew language».¹⁴

In a recent article, Alexander Fidora and Ulisse Cecini suggest that one of these translators was Nicholas Donin as in the prologue to the 35 articles, the compiler writes:

I thought it useful to repeat and to add some passages which were translated from the mouth of the other translator (*ex ore alterius interpretis*) some five or six years before, even though here they are given afterwards. [...] Around the year 1236 of the Incarnation of our Lord, the Father of mercies [i.e. God] called to the faith a certain Jew, named Nicholas Donin of La Rochelle, who was so knowledgeable in Hebrew, even according to the Jews, that one could hardly find anybody who knew so much of the nature and grammar of the Hebrew language as he did. He addressed himself to the Apostolic See and pointed out to Pope Gregory [Gregory IX, 1227-1241] of happy memory in the twelfth year of his pontificate [i.e. 1238-39] the impious wickedness of the aforesaid books, and summarised in particular some Articles [...].¹⁵

The implication is that «the other translator» mentioned here is one of the translators mentioned earlier who were very learned in the Hebrew

13. Fidora, 2015b: 66-70. For the 35 articles, see Loeb, 1880-1881; Rosenthal, "The Talmud on Trial" (note 18 above) and Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012, for an English translation of the articles.

14. *Praefatio in Extractiones de Talmud*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 9^{ra}: 'Deus autem duos sibi providit interpretes catholicos in hebraea lingua quam plurimum eruditos. Hoc autem fidelitatis eorum infallibile mihi praestitit argumentum, quod, cum multa magna et notabilia de praedictis libris diversis temporibus, posteriore ignorante quae vel qualiter, ab ore prioris interpretis transtuleram, etsi propter difficultatem et obscuritatem hebraici, quandoque variaverint verba, eadem tamen sententiam et sensum tenuerunt.'

15. *Prologus in secundam partem*, MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 211^{rb}: 'Quoniam in ore duorum vel trium testium stat omne verbum [Mt 18.15, Dt 19.15] ad maiorem praecedentium firmitatem et certitudinem quaedam repetere, quaedam superaddere utile iudicavi quae ex ore alterius interpretis sunt translata quinque vel sex annis prius, licet hic ponantur posterius. [...] Anno enim ab incarnatione Domini .MCCXXXVI. circiter, Pater misericordiarum Iudaeum quemdam nomine Nicolaum Donin de Rupella vocavit ad fidem, in hebraeo plurimum eruditum etiam secundum testimonium Iudaeorum, ita ut in natura et grammatica sermonis hebraici vix sibi similem inveniret. Hic accessit ad sedem apostolicam et bonae memoriae Gregorio Papae, pontificatus eius anno XII^o, praedictorum librorum nefandam detexit malitiam et quosdam specialiter expressit articulos [...]'. See Fidora and Cecini, forthcoming.

language and who translated orally for the compiler.¹⁶ This, however, does not ring true as in the passage above, Donin is explicitly referred to as a convert from Judaism, as he is in the introductory letter sent by Gregory IX to William of Auvergne «our dear son, Nicholas, formerly a Jew»,¹⁷ which makes it hard to believe that he could be one of the translators referred to by the compiler as a Catholic. Had he indeed been one of the translators of the sequential version, the compiler would surely have referred to him as he does later on as a converted Jew.¹⁸

Hence, some five or six years after Nicholas presented his articles to the Pope in 1238-39, the aforementioned sequential translation was carried out in Paris by two Catholics well versed in Hebrew.¹⁹ However, before this translation was prepared, the manuscripts of the Talmud in Paris had been confiscated and had been the subject of examination by a commission headed by Odo of Chateauroux, the bishop of Tusculum, chancellor of the university in 1238, later papal legate to France and apostolic legate on Louis IX's crusade to the Holy Land between 1248-1254.²⁰ According to an undated letter that Odo wrote to Innocent IV, probably late 1247 or early 1248, the other members of the commission in 1240 included Walter, the archbishop of Sens, William of Auvergne, bishop of Paris, the bishop of Senlis, and Brother Godfried of Blevel, the pope's chaplain, then regent in Paris, and other unnamed masters of theology from the university.²¹

This commission examined the manuscripts of the Talmud along with the glosses, and also heard the testimony of two Rabbis, Yehiel of Paris and Judah ben David of Melun, who, according to Odo and the extant texts, admitted that the Talmud included blasphemy against Christ and His mother.²² This inquisitorial process resulted in the public burning of the book in 1241 or 1242.

However, this was not the end of the story as Odo's letter shows. He writes that a further «diligent examination was subsequently made» which clearly indicated that «the said books were full of errors... to such an extent that

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16. It was an unquestionable proof of their reliability for me that, having translated some time before from the mouth of the first translator (*ab ore prioris interpretis transtuleram*) many important and remarkable passages from the aforesaid books, this translation, as well as that of the second translator, who did not know what I had translated previously and how it had been rendered – they both expressed the same opinions and yielded the same sense, though they sometimes used different words because of the difficulty and obscurity of the Hebrew language.

17. ...*per dilectum filium Nicolaum quondam Judeum*». See Grayzel, 1966: 240.

18. The language used to describe Nicholas' conversion is interesting in itself: «*vocavit ad fidem*», and not, as was usual, some form of the Latin verb *conversio*.

19. Fidora, 2015a suggests, among other things, that Thibaud, thought to be one of the aforementioned translators, was not involved. Dahan, 1999b, however, is of the opinion that Thibaud was one of the translators.

20. See Hames, 2004, and Behrman, 1999.

21. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fols 232^{va}-233^{vb}. For a transcription, see Merhaviah, 1970: 450-451 and for a translation, Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 98-100, specifically, p. 99.

22. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fols 230^{va}-231^{va}; Merhaviah, 1970: 453-455; Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 122-125.

these works turn the Jews away not only from a spiritual understanding, but even from a literal one and towards fables and fictions». It seems to me that this «diligent examination» refers to the sequential translation referred to above which had no recourse whatsoever to Nicholas Donin's 35 articles and seems to be an attempt to look anew and objectively at the Talmud. According to Odo, however, this close examination by masters of theology and canon law only served to confirm the first impressions gained at the inquisition, and the Talmud was again consigned to the flames «according to the apostolic decree» in 1244 or 1245.²³

This is confirmed by the letter Innocent IV, the newly elected pope after a two year inter-regnum caused by Frederick II's abduction of cardinals, sent to Louis IX in May 1244 («in the first year of our papacy»)²⁴ However, representatives of the Jewish community seem to have managed to persuade the new pope that they were unable to understand the Bible without the Talmud and hence, because the practice of their law is to be tolerated, they should not be deprived of the Talmud which aids them in keeping their law. In August 1247, Innocent IV wrote again to Louis IX informing him that he had asked Odo to again examine the Talmud with this fact in mind.²⁵ Odo's aforementioned letter was written in reply to the letter from the Pope, laying out the history of events from the earlier letter of Gregory IX to the present, stating explicitly that this re-examination was a waste of time and a disgrace, but submitting to the papal wish to have the (five) volumes that the Jews submitted to him examined again.

The thematic version in the *Extractiones* is the result of this re-examination. What is interesting is that, this time, the compilers made use of the sequential translation made earlier in the decade along with Donin's 35 articles even adopting the latter's structure for ordering the materials.²⁶ The upshot of this re-examination was the re-condemnation of the Talmud signed by forty four theologians among them the Dominicans Albert the Great, Theobald of Sezanne, Henry of Cologne, and perhaps also Louis IX's confessor Gaufridus de Belloloco.²⁷

23. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 230^{vb}; Merhaviah, 1970: 450; Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 99.

24. Merhaviah, 1970: 448-449; Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 95-97.

25. Merhaviah, 1970: 449; Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 97-98.

26. See Fidora, 2015b: 67.

27. MS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16558, fol. 234^{ra-va}; Merhaviah, 1970: 451-452; Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 100-101. The signees are divided into four groups: Archbishop and Abbots, Masters of Theology, Masters of Canon Law and Other Men of Good Standing. Henry of Cologne (*Frater Henricus teuthonicus*) is in the third group. According to some sources, he knew Hebrew and is possibly a good candidate for the compiler of the Paris manuscript. See Fidora and Cecini, forthcoming, and also Schwartz, 2015: 101. The King's confessor, if it indeed him, is listed as «*Magister gaufridus cantor duarantensis*», a professor of decretal law. The problem with this identification is that he is not called «*frater*», as are the other Dominicans on the list. Schwartz's article which touches on many of the issues raised in this paper has helped me clarify my thoughts on the matter. However, our interpretations differ in places.

The involvement of the Dominican order in the process against the suspected blasphemies in the Talmud is noteworthy. Though a relatively new order, they were the long arm of the papacy in the university, they policed the boundaries of orthodoxy and they also received the support of the monarch. However, their status in the university in general and the theological faculty in particular was rather tenuous during this period given their opposition to the dispersion of the university by its masters in 1229 and they were seen as encroaching on local authority and the secular clergy.²⁸ In the 1250's the Dominicans along with the Franciscans themselves became targets of an investigation into heresy instigated by the secular masters of the university focused on the issue of poverty and the controversy over the *Eternal Gospel*.²⁹

Up to this point, no mention has been made of the Hebrew document supposedly very central to understanding what happened in the 1240's in Paris. This is because the Hebrew text, composed at least two decades after the events it describes, is less important for understanding the events of the 1240's, but more for understanding the concerns of the Jewish leadership regarding their standing with royalty on the one hand, and the fear of conversion in the early 1270's on the other.³⁰ As has been noted, it is clear that the King played a role in the events of the 1240's, was the addressee of letters from the pope, helped set up the commission and in general, was involved in matters concerning the Jews and the university.³¹ Yet, in all the documents looked at so far, there is no mention of loci specifically connected to royalty and it would seem that after setting the ball in motion, the King left matters to the Archbishop and the university. Yet in the Hebrew document, we find something else entirely, and even given the differences between the two most important extant manuscripts – royalty is very present, both in loci and participation, in the public disputation concerning the blasphemies in the Talmud which purportedly took place between Nicholas Donin and Rabbi Yehiel of Paris.³² For example: using the Book of Esther (1:5) as a reference, «in the courtyard of the garden in the house of the King, all those who worship idols gathered», «and when the Rabbi and the heretic met in the presence of the Queen and the ministers in the King's court», «and when the Rabbi had finished speaking, the heretic said: give us people who will judge between us... and the King commanded that this be done».³³

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28. See McKeon, 1964.

29. Wei, 2014: 114-118, and in general on learning in the Dominican order, Mulchahey, 1998.

30. See Hames, 2015.

31. Schwartz, 2015: 95-102. See also Miethke, 2004.

32. See Galinsky, 2012.

33. Moscow-Guenzburg, Ms. 1390, ff. 85v-86r. The last of these citations is interesting because the King, not the Queen is mentioned, whereas, the King does not seem to have been present at all earlier in the text. This is either a copyist's mistake or an attempt to upgrade the disputation (so that it be more like Barcelona 1263) by having the king present, or at least, involved in choosing the judges.

All this sounds very similar to what occurred in Barcelona some 20 years later where the King, James I, seems to have been involved in all stages of the famous disputation between a convert and Dominican, Friar Paul and one of the leaders of Catalan Jewry, Nahmanides.³⁴ The loci of this disputation included the royal palace and chapel. Like Paris, there are two sources for what occurred: a Latin document authorized by the King, and Nahmanides' Hebrew rendering.³⁵ Naturally, while both documents have some things in common, they were intended for different audiences and differ greatly in style. The Latin text was written by a notary and sums up the main points made by Friar Paul against Nahmanides while the Hebrew is a literary text put together with great care after the event wishfully reflecting Nahmanides standing vis-à-vis the King and the Dominicans and demonstrating his undermining of the Christian argument.

What is significant is that the Barcelona disputation marks a change of tack in the Christian use of the Talmud, a change which is reflected in almost every further use of this corpus by Christians after this date. Instead of just denigrating passages in the Talmud, though this continues, it is mined for proof of the truth of Christianity. Friar Paul, a converted Jew who became a member of the Dominican order and a protégée of Ramon de Penyafort, one of the first minister generals of the order turned royal confessor, understood the potential of the Talmudic text for strengthening Christian belief. According to the Latin text, Friar Paul demonstrated that central Christian truths are substantiated by the Talmud whereas his opponent, Nahmanides, blatantly lied about what the texts meant. The point being made was that the authoritative texts used widely by the Jews do not lie when they illuminate Christian truths, contemporary Rabbis, on the other hand, can and do.³⁶

The Latin text starts: «In the year of the Lord 1263, on the 20th of July, in the presence of the lord King of Aragon, and many others, barons, prelates and religious and military persons in the palace of the lord King at Barcelona, when Moses, called Master, a Jew, had been summoned from Gerona by the Lord King himself at the instance of the Friar Preachers...». The involvement of the King in facilitating the disputation is clear and it is even hosted in the palace. This is supported by Nahmanides who claims that the disputation took place over four days and writes³⁷: «And the King commanded me to debate

34. Much has been written on this disputation. See amongst others Cohen, 1982; Chazan, 1989; Chazan, 1992; Cohen, 1964; Fox, 1989; Hames, 2004; and Caputo, 2007: 91-127.

35. For the Latin text, see Baer, 1931: 185-187. For the Hebrew text, see *The Writings of Nahmanides*, 1965, I: 300-321. On the state of the Hebrew text and the extant manuscripts, see Ragacs, 2010, esp. 87-89. For an English translation of both the Latin and Hebrew texts (which has to be read with care), see Maccoby, 1993: 102-146 and 147-150 respectively.

36. See Baer, 1931: 186, line 61; 187, line respectively: 'Therefore it is plain that the Messiah has come, since authority cannot lie (*autoritas mentiri non posuit*)' and 'From this it is plain that he [Nahmanides] was trying to escape from the disputation by lies (*per mendacia*).'

37. All the following citations are taken from *The Writings of Nahmanides*, 1965 and the numbers in brackets refer to the respective paragraph (numbered consecutively) in the edition.

with Friar Paul in his palace in Barcelona before him» (2), «On that day, the King went to the cloisters in town where the townsfolk gathered, Christians and Jews» (36), «On the Thursday (or perhaps the third day) after that, the King hosted the debate in his palace saying it should be held in private and we sat at the entrance to the chamber» (72), «On the morrow, it was a Friday (or the fourth day) seats were arranged in the palace and the King sat on his throne as was his custom» (79). According to both the Latin and Hebrew texts, the King was very involved in the debate itself interjecting remarks and opinions and in one place in the Hebrew account, Nahmanides had to remind the King that: «one of the conditions was that I would not debate with you and that you would not respond during the debate» (32).

The King's involvement is important for Nahmanides as, in his portrayal of events, it allows him, as a member of the Jewish minority, to address the inherent imbalance in the situation.³⁸ Friar Paul and his Dominican supporters set the date of the disputation for the week before the 9th Ab, the date commemorating the destruction of both Temples, a time which exemplifies more than any other the exilic and sorry state of Jewry. As mentioned above, Ramon de Penyafort was the King's confessor, suggesting that he would have been able to set the agenda and decide who was to be invited. Though according to the Hebrew text, Nahmanides was given freedom to speak freely as long as he did not blaspheme Christianity (2-3), the Latin text shows that this was more fiction than reality. Hence, in the Hebrew, Nahmanides puts great emphasis on his relationship with the King, almost suggesting that they are equals and that they are working in tandem to undermine the Dominican agenda. He suggests that he has the ear of the King, even going so far as to comment that he did not give the full interpretation of a certain Midrash because it would have angered the Christians present as it was related to the destruction of Rome, but «I said all this [later] to the King in private» (42). Unlike the Latin report where Nahmanides makes his escape the moment the King is mentioned as being absent, thus vindicating the Christian position, the Hebrew text concludes with a meeting between the King and Nahmanides where the latter takes his leave from the former and is given 300 dinars for his troubles – «and I took my leave from him with great affection» (108; In the modern play of the disputation by Maccoby, this scene includes the King asking Nahmanides to bless him...).³⁹

Though in 1243, James I had stated that Jews and Muslims who converted would not lose all their property and on a number of occasions, he provided permits allowing preaching by the mendicants in the synagogues and mosques

38. See H.J. Hames, «Fear God, my son, and King»: Relations between Nahmanides and King James I at the Barcelona Disputation», *Hispania Judaica Bulletin* 10, 2014, [*Between Edom and Kedar: Studies in Memory of Yom Tov Assis*], p. 6-19.

39. No matter that the money was loaned to the King by another Jew. See Régéné, 1978: 57-58, num. 319.

of his realm, he does not seem to have encouraged conversionary activity.⁴⁰ Indeed, where he was able to enforce his will, James protected the Jews, regulated their money lending, appointed Jewish officials for tax purposes, did not permit ecclesiastical courts to prosecute Jews and defended their freedom of worship from encroachment by the Church.⁴¹ Though certain that his life reflected divine providence (see Smith, 2007; see also Burns, 1976), James' relationship with the Church was not without its problems as he reveals in his *Llibre del feyts*: he did not hesitate to cut out the tongue of the bishop of Gerona for telling him off, to take tithes from the Church in his realms without papal approval and did not feel that he should pay arrears to the Church. For instance, when asked to do so by Gregory X at the second council of Lyon in 1274, James stated: «I had done such service to God and the Church of Rome that those trifles should not intervene between me and them».⁴²

Hence, Nahmanides' portrayal of the King in his account, aside from addressing the inherent imbalance of the disputation, is a closer reflection of the reality in the Crown of Aragon than that of the Jews in the French kingdom. However, the presence of royalty and the place where the event was held in the Hebrew account of the disputation between Nicholas Donin and Rabbi Yehiel attempts to imitate Nahmanides' account of Barcelona 1263. The most significant and telling difference is that in the latter, the King was actually present, while in the former, the royal figure who plays a major role in the disputation itself is an unnamed queen.⁴³ This is significant because it allows the author of the Paris text, probably a disciple of Rabbi Yehiel, Joseph ben Nathan, writing around 1270, to claim that royalty was present giving more gravitas to the occasion and accentuates for the Jewish readership the clear victory of Rabbi Yehiel as well as his standing with the unnamed queen.⁴⁴ It also diminishes the possibility that if the text fell into the wrong hands, the Jews could be accused of lying about the King's presence. Hence, like Nahmanides' literary presentation of Barcelona 1263,

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40. See Hames, 1996; Grayzel, 1966, doc. 105, p. 254-57 which contains a letter from Innocent IV to Peter de Albalte, the Archbishop of Tarragona (1238-52), citing James I's provisions regarding conversion and preaching. See also Assis, 1997: 19-34; see p. 20, the letter of protection sent to the community in Montpellier in 1258, where James I states that though the Jews should live a life of servitude, he was opposed to their humiliation, oppression and persecution anywhere under his rule.

41. Thomas Barton's recent monograph (Barton, 2015) has demonstrated how royal power was not all encompassing and James' Jewish policies, in the same manner as his policies in general, were dependent on the local lords who often acted autonomously. This nuanced picture makes the whole issue of Christian-Jewish relations more complex and interesting.

42. P. Linehan, *The Spanish Church and the Papacy in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1971, p. 210.

43. Normally identified in scholarship as Blanche of Castile. My argument here suggests that this Queen is intentionally unnamed hence she has no real identity.

44. Joseph ben Nathan also authored the first anti-Christian polemical work written in Northern France. See H.J. Hames, 2013 and Lasker, 2015.

royalty is carefully written into the text to accentuate its importance from the Jewish perspective and show that the Jews have nothing to fear from the imminent arrival of Friar Paul, the protagonist of Barcelona, in Paris in order to hold similar disputations.

The Hebrew text which appears in the Moscow manuscript after Yehiel and Donin's Paris disputation is what has become known as the second Paris disputation between Abraham ben Samuel of Rouen and Friar Paul and its placement in the manuscript is not accidental. The first text is connected to the second by the anonymous compiler of the manuscript in his short introduction to the second text writing: «And these are the responses of the heretic who arose against us in 1272 who came from Spain to destroy the remnant of Israel and his name was Paul the Destroyer / Dominican (*ba-Hovel*)... and he took some of the arguments (lit: secrets) of the first heretic (i.e. Donin) who was active in the time of R. Yehiel, and there were others before him...» (Moscow-Guenzburg, Ms. 1390, ff. 102r). Hence, for the compiler, the two events were connected and Paul, in his opinion, used similar arguments to those used earlier by Donin which Yehiel had dealt with adeptly (as we see from the compiler's conclusion to the first disputation).

However, the Hebrew account of this encounter with Friar Paul reflects the situation of the Jews in France, not that of Barcelona, and comes on the heels of the permission granted by Louis IX to Friar Paul in June 1269 to preach to the Jews and examine their books along with his crackdown on Jewish moneylending.⁴⁵ Philip III (1270-1285) followed in the footsteps of his saintly father, and the text reflects this mood, as Friar Paul says, according to the Hebrew: «For I want to put forward the argument that you are a people without faith, [like] the people called Bougres and are deserving of being burned».⁴⁶ The term «Bougres» might refer to heretics, but was also used in this period to describe immoral people who behave against nature.⁴⁷ However, in context, this strong statement seems to hark back to Donin's original claim against the Talmud, found in Gregory IX's letter starting the whole process, that the Jews had completely neglected the old law in favor of another law, the Talmud.⁴⁸ In other words, the Jewish protagonist, Abraham ben David's understanding is that the Christian attack against the Talmud, like almost

45. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 35-36. On the way to Paris in 1269, Friar Paul held at least one other disputation / discussion with a Rabbi called Menahem who was well aware of what had happened in Barcelona with Nahmanides and knew how to undermine the arguments by showing that the cited passages could not be talking about Jesus. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 37-39.

46. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 44.

47. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 22, n° 26. However, see the etymological section at <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/bougre>, consulted 25 April 2016. If the origin of the term is indeed from northern France (as suggested by its origins in the Chronicle of St. Denis and in the article by M. Zerner cited by Shatzmiller), then it is interesting to consider why the Jewish scribe puts this term in the mouth of Friar Paul. Why sodomites of all things? Burning was, of course, the punishment meted out to Sodom – the place that gave the practice its name.

48. Friedman, Hoff, and Chazan, 2012: 93-94.

thirty years earlier, is being continued by Friar Paul.⁴⁹ In his opening remarks, Abraham reminds the Christians present that:

Only one heretic who lived in the days of Rabbi Yehiel, some twenty years have passed since then, and he chattered and gathered all the Aggadot and the stories of Jesus' origins and rotten smell and he wished to destroy what remains of us. And eventually [literally, at the end of his words], you examined everything according to the words of the Rabbi, and saw that there was nothing in the claims of the heretic, and he was moved away, and was fearful and said no more. And you should have taken an example from this and disgrace this [present] heretic for there is no benefit in his words. And the little finger of the first heretic was broader than the hips of the present one...⁵⁰

Abraham sees Friar Paul's attack in the same light as the one by Donin and by diminution of Friar Paul's knowledge compared to Donin, attempts to deflect the attack by saying that when all was said and done, the Jews were allowed by the papacy to continue using the Talmud. This is, of course, a very selective presentation of the events of the 1240's which all but ignores the burnings and condemnations of the Talmud by Odo and his commission, but does emphasize that the Talmud was, in the end, not prohibited for use by the Jewish community.

The Hebrew text reflects the lack of sophistication and the miscomprehension of either Abraham ben David or the anonymous scribe as to the main differences between Nicholas Donin's original accusations against the Talmud and Friar Paul's very different agenda. While he lists the issues to be discussed, which correctly reflect Barcelona 1263, he portrays what happens in terms of Donin's attack on the Talmud, and as an attempt to bring about the conversion of the community to Christianity.⁵¹

This is very different from the earlier Paris and Barcelona texts where conversion was not an immediate threat. It is not that Nicholas Donin or Friar Paul and their Christian supporters would not have been delighted if members of the Jewish community had decided to convert as a result of events; they certainly would have been overjoyed. However, Nahmanides was well aware that conversion was not the primary purpose of the Barcelona

49. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 45, n° 14 – the manuscript has «kaf» = 20 years. Nearer 1250, perhaps reflecting the ten year process against the Talmud and the involvement of Donin in the thematic part of the *Extractiones* although he is not one of the signatories.

50. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 45. What is said here by Abraham ben Samuel may support the supposition that there was no disputation between Rabbi Yehiel and Nicholas Donin, but an examination of the words of Yehiel, who, according to Abraham, was able to undermine the claims of Donin. This is an attempt to re-write what happened at the commission examining the Talmud (see above), but this is far less problematic than claiming that there had actually been a public disputation.

51. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 44: «The first, you say, according to the Prophets, that the Messiah has not come, I will prove to you using your books that He has already come. The second, that same Messiah talked about by the Prophets, I will prove to you that he was born without a father from a virgin who had no intercourse...»

disputation and his answers, at least in their literary representation, are geared and formulated accordingly. He is aware of Friar Paul's agenda which was to demonstrate how the Talmud could be used profitably to prove the truth of Christianity and he did everything in his power to show that the texts being cited had nothing to do with Jesus. Friar Paul wanted to show that the Talmudic texts proved that the messiah had already come; Nahmanides to illustrate that even if the text could be interpreted to as demonstrating that the messiah had come, it could not have been Jesus.

Unlike Nahmanides, Abraham ben Samuel, or his anonymous scribe, perceived this disputation, or series of confrontations in 1272 as conversionary with the active support of the monarchy. Thus, one of the royal officials orders the summoning of the rabbis «in the name of the king and his ministers» to debate with Friar Paul. One of the king's senior representatives tells Abraham ben David not to preach lies because the king ordered their presence. He also comments that «the Bishop is always in Paris and here the truth will come to light».⁵² The scribe at one point when danger seemed very imminent explains that the Jews had no choice but to attend because of the letter Louis IX had given Friar Paul in 1269, «maybe there will be some of you who will understand his answers and proofs and will want to convert to the law of Jesus»; interestingly the letter itself says nothing explicitly about conversion.⁵³ At this point the scribe also tells us that these gatherings took place either in the royal palace or the Dominican cloister on the Rue Saint-Jacques.⁵⁴

Hence, the actuality reflected in this text is one that shows the difference between royal policy regarding the Jews in France and in the Crown of Aragon. It does not reflect Friar Paul's actual agenda which was geared towards the university and aimed at showing that there were new Jewish texts which could be used to bolster Christian truth. The pattern is clear from Louis IX's earliest interventions regarding matters Jewish till the text of the second Paris disputation. The only monarch to actively encourage the confiscation and examination of the Talmud also actively supported Jewish conversion in his realms.

The Jewish defense was to try and use royalty in a way that, at least for interior consumption, gave the appearance of good standing, protection and care. Perhaps that was what was needed, or that needed to be assumed so that the community could continue to flourish. The reality, however, was different. This is also probably the reason that unlike Nahmanides' text, the names of the King and Queen are not mentioned, as this would have been too dangerous

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52. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 45. The Hebrew has *rav ha-galahut*. In the French translation, Shatzmiller translates this as «most of the clergy», however, later in the text there is a reference to *rav ha-hovel* (p. 52), presumably the senior Dominican who was in charge of affairs. Given the interest of the Church in the Talmud in the earlier cycle, the Bishop of Paris is more likely to be the figure referred to here. St Jerome is also called *rav galah* (p. 51).

53. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 35 (Annexe 1).

54. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 47.

had the works fallen into the hands of Christian Hebraists of which there were clearly a number in Paris. The texts give the impression of royal protection and patronage, but reading between the lines and comparing the texts of Parisian origin to the Barcelona text, the pressures on the Jewish community in Paris, whether financial, intellectual or conversionary are clearly evident. When the author of the second Paris disputation emphatically states: «we will not fear you [Friar Paul] and they [the Christians present] will not listen to you. For the king tolerates us and even more so all the Christian wise men, ministers and pope who are educated and intelligent», it is, perhaps, no more than wishful thinking on his part.⁵⁵

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55. Shatzmiller, 1994, p. 56.

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Kings and Conversion in the Thirteenth Century: Where Politics and Religion Meet?

The historiography of the last century has portrayed the public disputations of the thirteenth century (in Paris and in Barcelona) as conversionary in purpose. Yet, an examination of the disputations in a broader setting suggests that they have much to do with royal policy regarding the Jews, the establishment of the university in Paris, and the rise of the mendicant orders. The extant texts, in Latin and Hebrew, show that the purpose of the disputations was different and reflect very different attitudes towards the Jews in France as opposed to the Crown of Aragon. Because of royal policy, the Jews of the Crown of Aragon did not in fact face conversionary pressure, as can be seen from Nahmanides's literary depiction of the Barcelona disputation. But in contrast the texts describing events in Paris (both in the 1240s and the early 1270s) reflect royal policy towards the Jews including pressure to convert. Hence, the way royalty is written about by the Hebrew witnesses to the disputations reflects very different realities of the Jewish communities in France and the Crown of Aragon.

Keywords: Conversion, disputation, Jews, royal policy, Dominicans, Barcelona, Paris.

Rois et conversion au XIII^e siècle : où se rencontrent la politique et la religion ?

L'historiographie du siècle dernier a dépeint les débats publics du XIII^e siècle (à Paris et à Barcelone) comme des objectifs de conversion. Pourtant, l'examen des controverses dans un cadre plus large suggère qu'elles ont beaucoup à voir avec la politique royale concernant les Juifs, la création de l'université à Paris et la montée des ordres mendiants. Les textes existants, en latin et en hébreu, montrent que le but des controverses était différent et reflétait des attitudes très différentes à l'égard des Juifs en France et dans la Couronne d'Aragon. En raison de la politique royale, les Juifs de la Couronne d'Aragon n'ont pas vraiment fait face à une exigence de conversion, comme on peut le voir dans la description littéraire par Nahmanide de la dispute de Barcelone. D'autre part, les textes décrivant les événements de Paris (à la fois dans les années 1240 et au début des années 1270) reflètent la politique royale envers les Juifs, y compris la demande de la conversion. Ainsi, la façon dont la royauté est décrite par les témoins hébraïques des disputes reflète les réalités très différentes des communautés juives en France et de la Couronne d'Aragon.

Mots-clés : conversion, dispute, Juifs, politique royale, dominicains, Barcelone, Paris.

Reyes y conversión en el siglo XIII: ¿dónde se encuentran la política y la religión?

La historiografía del siglo pasado ha retratado las disputas públicas del siglo XIII (en París y en Barcelona) como un propósito de conversión. Sin embargo, mirar las disputas en un contexto más amplio sugiere que tienen mucho que ver con la política real con respecto a los judíos, el establecimiento de la universidad en París y el aumento de las órdenes mendicantes. Los textos existentes, en latín y en hebreo, muestran que el propósito de las disputas era diferente y refleja actitudes muy diferentes hacia los judíos en Francia y en la Corona de Aragón. Debido a la política real, los judíos de la Corona de Aragón en realidad no se enfrentaron a la presión de la conversión, como se puede ver en la descripción literaria de Nahmanides de la disputa de Barcelona. Por otro lado, los textos que describen eventos en París (tanto en la década de 1240 como a principios de la década de 1270) reflejan la política real hacia los judíos, incluida la presión para la conversión. Por lo tanto, la forma en que se escribe la realeza a los testigos hebreos de las disputas refleja las muy diferentes realidades de las comunidades judías en Francia y la Corona de Aragón.

Palabras clave: Conversión, disputa, judíos, política real, dominicanos, Barcelona, París.