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Fidora, Alexander/Lutz-Bachmann, Matthias (Hg.): Christian Readings of Rabbinic Sources in Medieval Polemic. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2024. 294 S. (Religiöse Dynamiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart 3), € 94,00 ISBN: 978-3-16-163907-4

In this edited collection, we are invited to listen to an ongoing conversation between an international group of scholars who have all made numerous and important contributions to the subject, medieval Christian (and, in the final chap., Muslim) knowledge and interpretations of rabbinic literature. Amos Funkenstein's influential typology of Christian anti-Jewish polemic methodologically underpins the volume and demonstrates the interrelatedness of the four distinct patterns that Funkenstein identified. The first three chapters shed new light on the trial staged against the Talmud in Paris 1240 and its aftermath.

Drawing on Latin translations from the 13th century investigation of the Talmud, *Ursula Ragacs* offers an intriguing discussion of a Talmudic description of the trial of Jesus prepared for the investigation of the Talmud in Paris. She suggests that rather than Schäfer's widely accepted understanding of a "daring and powerful counter-Gospel to the New Testament" (15), we might be encountering a complex rabbinic discussion on a halakhic process. *Isaac Lampurlanés Farré* discusses a dossier on the Talmud by Odo of Châteauroux, collected in a revision of the Paris Disputation initiated by Pope Innocent IV to evidence why the Talmud should not be returned to the Jewish community. The chap. also includes the first critical edition of the papal letters collected in the dossier which allows the reader to appreciate the complexity of the process and the relationships between Jews and different Christian authorities. In a stimulating chap., *Moisés Orfali* discusses the theological concept of a personal God that "represents religion at its best" as it "has helped monotheists to value sacred and inalienable rights of the individual and to cultivate an appreciation of human personality" (81). However, during the Paris trial Christian polemicists seeking to undermine the authority of the Talmud took issue with anthropomorphic imagery and claimed that Jews worship this God in a literal sense without the deep spirituality of Christians. The chap. highlights the profound Christian misunderstanding of the difference between Midrash Haggadah and Midrash Halakhah, attributing theological authority to the former with far-reaching consequences.

Proceeding chronologically to the Barcelona Disputation of 1263 where Moses ben Nahman debated with the Dominican friar (and former Jew) Paul. *Harvey J. Hames* insightfully compares a Hebrew and a Latin account of the event, drawing out the sophisticated strategies that both sides employed to discredit and undermine their opponent and, in Paul's case, to demonstrate the truth of Christian doctrines by arguing with Jewish post-biblical texts. The polemical *Pugio fidei* (Dagger of Faith, c. 1278) by the Ramon Martí (Raimundus Martini) had immense influence on Christian views of

rabbinic literature. The following four chap.s discuss this important work. *Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann* provides a very useful overview of Martini in the context of 13th century Spain with extensive Dominican missionary activities and the flourishing of Kabbalah and of the *Pugio fidei* and its main themes. He argues that “the most erudite example of Christian Hebraism in the Middle Ages” (117) substantially increased Christian knowledge of Jewish post-biblical literature. *Thomas E. Burmann* analyses how the biblical exegete Nicholas of Lyra borrowed directly from *Pugio Fidei* not only as a repository of rabbinic sources but a *method of exegesis* because Martí’s approach to biblical exegesis “foreshadowed the ‘extended literal’ interpretation for which Nicholas is famous” (122). This allows a more nuanced understanding of Martí in a wider theological context. *Görge K. Hasselhof* examines Martí’s Hebrew sources by carefully exploring the different versions of midrashim on Genesis that Martí had at his disposal, including one attributed to the 11th century scholar Moshe ha-Darshan. A popular anti-Jewish polemic *Victoria Porcheti adversus impios Hebraeos*, compiled by the early 14th century Carthusian monk Porchetus Salvaticus, is discussed by *Diana Di Segni*, who argues that thanks to the intervention of Agostino Giustiniani the work became an important stepping stone in the transmission history of the *Pugio Fidei* until the 16th century, mediating between Martí and the learning of Humanists who rediscovered rabbinic sources.

Ryan Szpiech argues that the *Pugio fidei* is only matched in complexity and scope by the Hebrew anti-Jewish polemic *Moreh ha-Zedeq* (Teacher of Righteousness) by the convert Alfonso of Valladolid (Avner Burgos, died c. 1347). This work makes extensive use of rabbinical sources to support Christian doctrine. Focusing on the theme of the ‘two messiahs’, Szpiech convincingly argues that Burgo was not drawing on *Pugio Fidei* and uses a much wider range of rabbinic sources and draws quite different conclusions. Szpiech rightly notes that the knowledge of medieval Christian scholars (admittedly often of Jewish background) of rabbinic sources was impressive. *Alexander Fidora* expresses similar respect for the renowned Oxford logician and mathematician Thomas Bradwardine who accessed rabbinic sources through Latin translations, including Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* and the *Pugio Fidei*. While he harnessed the former in support of his discussion of God’s names and attributes, he turns rabbinic sources he gleaned from the latter polemically against Jewish beliefs. *Yosi Yisraeli* presents a fascinating discussion of a rabbinical ‘proof’ that the messiah has already come from the Tortosa Disputation (1413–1414), which is, as he notes, one of the first Talmudic passages ever to be employed in support of a Christian doctrine. In a detailed analysis of the ‘School of Elijah’, he demonstrates how a particular rabbinical passage was used in apologetics, how Christians and Jews understood truth, historicity and authenticity and the important role played by conversos in these polemical encounters, challenging the accepted conventions of scholastic debate.

Rabbis as agents of divine knowledge also play a role in the final chap. by *Mònica Colominas Aparicio* who offers a welcome Muslim perspective, investigating mainly Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya’s work. This Muslim author believed that among the Jews “the wisest are the most wicked” (273) and that the rabbis deliberately falsified and concealed evidence, drawing parallels to the arguments by Christian authors.

Some of these chapters read more like extended footnotes based on previous research while others are lengthy discussions of new material. Both are of value and this is a stimulating and cohesive collection that demonstrates that there is still much to discover about polemical Jewish-Christian-Muslim encounters in the Middle Ages, how converts from Judaism and Hebraists shaped Christian views of Judaism, how knowledge is transmitted and how authority is constructed and challenged.

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