

DE GRUYTER

Carsten Wilke (Ed.)

# ISAAC OROBIO

THE JEWISH ARGUMENT WITH DOGMA AND DOUBT

ספקנות

Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies  
JEWISH SCEPTICISM

STUDIES AND TEXTS IN SCEPTICISM

DE  
G

**Isaac Orbio**

# **Studies and Texts in Scepticism**



Edited by  
Giuseppe Veltri

in cooperation with  
Rachel Aumiller

Editorial Board

Heidrun Eichner, Talya Fishman, Racheli Haliva, Henrik Lagerlund, Reimund Leicht,  
Stephan Schmid, Carsten Wilke, Irene Zwiép

## **Volume 2**

# Isaac Orobio

---

The Jewish Argument with Dogma and Doubt

Edited by Carsten Wilke

DE GRUYTER

The series Studies and Texts in Scepticism is published  
on behalf of the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies



ISBN 978-3-11-057561-3  
e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-057619-1  
e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-057726-6  
ISSN 2568-9614



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs  
4.0 License. For details go to <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

**Library of Congress Control Number: 2018955508**

**Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie;  
detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2018 Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

Cover image: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, Ms Cod. Levy 115, fol. 158r: Maimonides,  
Moreh Nevukhim, Beginn von Teil III.

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

# Contents

Carsten Wilke

**Introduction: Isaac Orobio, the Sceptic Dogmatiser — 1**

Yosef Kaplan

**“From Christianity to Judaism” Revisited: Some Critical Remarks More than Thirty Years after its Publication — 15**

Natalia Muchnik

**Orobio Contra Prado: A Trans-European Controversy — 31**

Carsten Wilke

**Clandestine Classics: Isaac Orobio and the Polemical Genre among the Dutch Sephardim — 57**

Harm den Boer

**Isaac Orobio de Castro as a Writer: The Importance of Literary Style in the “Divine Warnings against the Vain Idolatry of the Gentiles” — 77**

Adam Sutcliffe

**From Apologetics to Polemics: Isaac Orobio’s Defences of Judaism and their Uses in the French Enlightenment — 93**

David B. Ruderman

**Reading Orobio in Nineteenth-Century England: The Missionary Alexander McCaul’s “Israel Avenged” — 105**

**Bibliography: Studies and Editions of Isaac Orobio de Castro — 115**

**Index — 121**



Carsten Wilke

# Introduction: Isaac Orobio, the Sceptic Dogmatiser

The present volume on the Jewish physician and theological controversialist Isaac Orobio de Castro (1617–1687) has its origin in an international workshop held on February 25, 2016 at the Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies in Hamburg on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the year of Orobio's birth.<sup>1</sup> As a religious author, Orobio cannot be easily categorised with an intellectual movement, and even less with a particular philosophical school; he was a typically eclectic thinker at an age in which Neo-Scholasticism, the scientific revolution and sceptic anti-rationalism competed for acceptance and forged shifting alliances among themselves. Yet Orobio is noteworthy for the extensive use of philosophical arguments in his clandestine polemical writings. Expressing himself in exquisite Spanish rhetoric, he defended Judaism simultaneously against free thought and Christianity.

Discussing Orobio's two-front battle in the thematic context of the early modern quest for certainty is a fascinatingly ambiguous task, since his thought alternates between moments of devastating critique and of staunch traditionalism. The Portuguese physician's main polemical work, titled *Divine Warnings against the Vain Idolatry of the Gentiles*, became famous during the Enlightenment period as an arsenal of anti-Christian arguments that served to subvert religious dogma of any sort. Voltaire found this Jewish scholar "profound, yet never obscure, a man of refined literary taste, of a pleasant wit and impeccable manners."<sup>2</sup> Recent research on Orobio's eighteenth-century reception<sup>3</sup> has endowed the author with newfound relevance to the history of philosophy that transcends the Jewish-Christian encounter. He appears in this period as not only an opponent of Christianity, but also an enduring source of European anti-religious criticism. In this way, he became an involuntary antagonist of the religious worldview that he shared with his adversaries.

---

Carsten Wilke, Central European University

1 We cannot exactly determine Orobio's date of birth because the parish registers of Bragança are only preserved beginning from 1654. Conjectures by I.S. Révah and Yosef Kaplan suggest that Baltasar Álvares Oróbio must have been born and baptised between February and October 1617.

2 Voltaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 34 (Paris: P. Dupont, 1827), 340–341.

3 Richard H. Popkin, "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992): 159–181; Jonathan Israel, "Orobio de Castro and the Early Enlightenment," in *Mémorial I.-S. Révah: Études sur le marranisme, l'hétérodoxie juive et Spinoza*, edited by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon (Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 2001): 227–245; Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 170–173, and other studies quoted here.



Orobio's image as a militantly sectarian polemicist did nonetheless dominate his modern reception, especially among religiously predisposed readers. The Spanish Hebraist Joseph Rodríguez de Castro offered the following horrified words on the *Divine Warnings* and its underlying controversy in 1781:

Orobio seized the pretext for spitting all the Jewish poison against the Christians. He profaned, despised and trampled underfoot the most pure and sublime of their truthful dogmas with the most offensive expressions and the most insolent and outrageous sayings, so that all across this work, Orobio showed himself as the most obdurate Jew, the most cruel enemy of the Christians.<sup>4</sup>

Appreciating this judgment from the opposite side, the scholars of the "Science of Judaism" were attracted by Orobio's energetic language. He was, Heinrich Graetz wrote, "a man of valor, an acute mind, an enthusiastic partisan of Judaism, and an adversary of Christianity."<sup>5</sup> Graetz, in 1868, recommended Orobio as a presentable hero for a future biographical monograph,<sup>6</sup> and Meyer Kayserling, chief rabbi of Switzerland, promised indeed to write such a work,<sup>7</sup> while Aristide Astruc, chief rabbi of Belgium, planned a first edition of the *Divine Warnings* in its original Spanish.<sup>8</sup> Neither of these projects ever took shape: with the rising floodtide of antisemitism, Orobio's strong Jewish self-affirmation may have appeared inappropriate. The man whom Jewish historians praised for his integrity was censored by Christians for his integralism. Nineteenth-century authors became accustomed to decrying his writings, especially his sharply polarising style of expression, as an extreme abyss of dogmatism, bigotry, and intolerance. The Spanish philologist Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo observed in 1882 that Orobio "fought the religion of the Crucified with all the rage and doggedness typical of an apostate."<sup>9</sup> The historian of Protestant missionary activity Johannes de le Roi gave the following biased summary of the *Friendly Conversation* between Orobio and the Protestant theologian Philip van Limborch: "Orobio attacked Christianity in the most aggressive way, Limborch however, even

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Rodríguez de Castro, *Biblioteca española. Tomo primero, que contiene la noticia de los escritores rabinos españoles* (Madrid: Imprenta Real de la Gazeta, 1781), I 606.

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Graetz, "Don Balthasar Isaak Orobio de Castro: Eine biographische Skizze," *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 16 (1867): 321–330, here 321; *Geschichte der Juden*, 204: "als muthiger und geschickter Kämpfer für die Religion seiner Väter."

<sup>6</sup> Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig: Leiner, 1868), Vol. X, appendix, x: "Noch ist keine Monographie über sein Leben und seine literarische Thätigkeit geschrieben, obwohl er sie weit eher verdiente, als so viele Andere, die weiter nichts als viel Papier und Tinte verbraucht haben."

<sup>7</sup> Kayserling, *Geschichte der Juden in Portugal* (Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1867), 304: "Das Weitere über Orobio de Castro in einer demnächst erscheinenden Monographie."

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*, January 1875, 85.

<sup>9</sup> Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (Madrid: Librería Católica de San José, 1880), vol. II, 599.

when he was facing such an utterly undignified individual, defended the Christian cause in a calm and even friendly manner.”<sup>10</sup>

Building on a well-entrenched cliché of Orobio as an enraged dogmatist, Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg in his *The Jew's Trace in History* (1920) presented the author as the embodiment of Jewish fanaticism. “His worldview is based on typically Jewish pillars: an unshakeable dogma (in this case, the Sinaitic Law), the hatred of Christians, and the desire for world domination.”<sup>11</sup> Orobio’s mind is locked “with unmistakable evidence in a closed and immobile inner structure ... When reading Jewish writings, even greatly erudite ones, one can be driven to despair by their block-headedness and narrow-mindedness.”<sup>12</sup> Rosenberg then creates a direct historical connection from Orobio to Marx by showing that the destructive Jewish dogmatism of the former flows into the latter’s fanatical belief in human equality. Marx, in short, is Orobio for proletarians.

The Amsterdam polemicist did not, however, fare any better among Marxist readers. Gabriel Albiac, a Spanish philosopher of the far left who in 1987 published a highly acclaimed essay *The Empty Synagogue: Marranic Roots of Spinozism*, lashed out against Orobio in terms that are strangely akin to Rosenberg’s, though the grief is about the author’s disciplining of Jews rather than his contradicting of Christians. Orobio, Albiac writes, is “the thinker of the radical rabbinic orthodoxy,” he is “the ghetto inside the ghetto, with the thinly veiled incitement to purify the People in the name of the Torah,” he is dubbed “the merciless hammer of heretics and epicureans,” a fanatic, an ultra-orthodox, a “great blacksmith of orthodoxy,” a narrow-minded “fool,” he has the “insolent self-indulgence of an heresy-exterminator.”<sup>13</sup> With a quick exercise in psychoanalysis, the author concludes that when “Don [!] Isaac Orobio de Castro” opposed the deist Juan de Prado in 1663, he had become a Jewish copy of the Spanish Inquisitors who tortured him seven years earlier. By giving the defender of Judaism a fictional title of nobility, Albiac accuses him of clerical

---

**10** Johannes F. A. de le Roi, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden unter dem Gesichtspunkte der Mission geschichtlich betrachtet* (Karlsruhe: Reuther, 1884), I 158.

**11** Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der Zeiten* (Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1920), 154: “Dieses Weltbild ruht auf den typisch jüdischen Tragsäulen: eines unabänderlichen Dogmas (hier das Gesetz vom Sinai), dem Christenhaß, der jüdischen Weltherrschaft.”

**12** Alfred Rosenberg, *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der Zeiten*, 157: “Ich muß mich mit diesen Andeutungen begnügen, aber schon sie zeigen mit nicht mißzuverstehender Deutlichkeit ein in sich abgeschlossenes, unbewegliches Wesensgefüge [...] beim Lesen der jüdischen Schriften kann man über die Hartköpfigkeit und, bei großer Gelehrsamkeit, Borniertheit zur Verzweiflung getrieben werden.”

**13** Gabriel Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía: un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo* (Madrid: Hiperión, 1987), 89: “pensador de la radical ortodoxia rabínica,” “el ‘gueto’ dentro del ‘gueto,’ la incitación, apenas velada, a depurar al Pueblo en el nombre de la Torá,” 93: “luminaria y orgullo de la comunidad israelita de Amsterdam, martillo implacable de herejes y epicúreos,” 97: “fanatismo no exento de lucidez,” 342: “el ortodoxísimo Orobio de Castro,” 334: “ese gran forjador de ortodoxia que fuera Isaac Orobio de Castro”; 382: “necio,” 149: “la insolente autocomplacencia del fulminador aquel de herejes que fuera el portugués Orobio de Castro.”

as well as feudal arrogance. The theological fight once again resounds with fanfares of class war.<sup>14</sup>

Albiac cannot be suspected of anti-Jewish bias;<sup>15</sup> his negative image of Orobio may reflect an established narrative of Spinoza's rebellion, which has turned Orobio into the dark foil of emerging modern philosophy. From the moment in which Spinoza's rupture with the Sephardic community of Amsterdam was given some kind of historical contextualisation, two dichotomic reconstructions emerged. The earlier one placed Spinoza's rebellion on the fault line between Judaic tradition and Christian modernity: the young philosopher was saved from his backward Jewish upbringing when he met rationally-minded Christians, such as his three lifelong friends among the Collegiants (*Collegianten*), or his ex-Jesuit Latin teacher Franciscus van den Enden. Carl Gebhardt, a non-Jewish historian of philosophy, advanced an alternative reconstruction in 1922. He located the modernist counter-movement in the midst of Jewish society, his main proof being the collective self-portrait that opens Orobio's *Invective Epistle* of 1663. In this passage, Orobio described the situation of Iberian intellectuals who joined the Sephardic communities: some adopted an attitude of humility towards the unstudied coreligionists from whom they had to learn their new cult and faith, while others would not easily renounce their academic hubris and tried a selective rationalist appropriation of traditional Judaism, if not an open rebellion against it.<sup>16</sup> As Gebhardt recognised, Orobio's remarks fit not only the jurist Uriel da Costa, banned in 1618, but also the physician Juan de Prado, who, in 1656, dragged the young merchant Spinoza into anti-religious rebellion.<sup>17</sup> Of Gebhardt's followers, I.S. Révah stressed the particular networks that transmitted this intra-Jewish scepticism from the "Marranos" to Spinoza, while Yirmiyahu Yovel insisted on the structural motivations that in his view favored it.

Quite commonly, the struggle between these anti-religious rebels and the synagogue authorities was interpreted as a fight between innovation and backwardness. When evoking the world of bigotry and oppression against which the young philosopher rebelled, Spinozist hagiography pointed to the rabbi who proclaimed the ban, Saul Levi Mortera, a man of Ashkenazi origin who was raised in the ghetto of Venice in traditionalist ways of thought. Orobio's case was more complicated, and, perhaps, even worse. The famed doctor was not a Jew from the ghetto; he was of Sephardic

---

**14** Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía*, 150: "el retorno callado del rostro preciso del Inquisidor, poco a poco, va tomando posesión precisa de Don Isaac Orobio de Castro."

**15** As a public intellectual, Albiac has repeatedly expressed himself in support of Israel, which is a courageous standpoint for a Spanish leftist. See, for example, his essay "Meditar Yenín," in Marcos Aguinís et al., *En defensa de Israel* (Zaragoza: Libros Certeza, 2004): 21–32.

**16** Orobio, *Epístola*, in I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado* (Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959), 90.

**17** Carl Gebhardt, *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1922), XX–XXI; Gebhardt, "Juan de Prado," *Chronicon Spinozanum* 3 (1923): 269–291; Gebhardt, *Spinoza* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1932), 26; cf. Révah, *Spinoza*, 15, 21–22; Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía*, 72–73; Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989), 149–150; Yovel, *Spinoza and other Heretics*, I 51–52.

ancestry, raised as a Christian, and was an accomplished intellectual nourished within the academic culture of seventeenth-century Europe. Prado and Orobio had very similar origins and paths in life; however, the former became a free-thinker, and the latter a reactionary who had deliberately chosen the ghetto.

Orobio's reception had come a long way from Voltaire's praise to the contempt shared among historians of multiple schools. Whether or not the resulting image of an unsophisticated defender of the faith deterred scholars from further research on his personality, the monograph demanded by Graetz took more than a century to materialise. In a doctoral thesis defended in 1978 at the Hebrew University, Yosef Kaplan finally approached Orobio from a new angle, contextualising, individualising and complicating a historical figure who until then had the rather unpleasant function of symbolising a repressive religious mindset. In the light of Kaplan's study, which was published in Hebrew in 1982 and in English in 1989 under the title *From Christianity to Judaism*, Orobio appears not simply as a border-guard of closed religious identities but as an exemplary case of Christian-Jewish border-crossing. It is important for our purpose—and this has been the most powerful incentive for undertaking the present collective volume—that in a chapter on Orobio's philosophical outlook, Kaplan has inserted this Jewish thinker in the history of sceptic thought. "While from scholasticism Orobio took the conceptual basis of his thinking, in a significant amount of what he wrote one may distinguish his openness to the critique of scepticism, and particularly of that 'fideistic scepticism' that had struck root in Catholic circles in western Europe, with France as its centre."<sup>18</sup> Kaplan uses this term in the sense of Richard H. Popkin, who showed that the antique tropes of Academic and Pyrrhonian scepticism—which challenged theological dogma since the humanism of Erasmus and Montaigne—were frequently used by early modern Catholic thinkers in order to justify religious tradition as a default criterion of truth.<sup>19</sup> It is clear that the full thrust of fideistic scepticism, which boils down to embracing the ruling faith irrespective of its irrationality, could hardly appeal to Orobio or, for that matter, to any member of a persecuted minority. But as Terence Penelhum has shown, early modern fideism came in different shades, not all of them synonymous with religious conformism. Some fideists, for example, advocated a tentative faith grounded in action rather than doctrine.<sup>20</sup> Indeed we can and should search for ideas from the fideist school of thought that entered into coexistence and entanglement with contrasting

---

<sup>18</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 316–322, here 316; similarly, in Kaplan, "Isaac Orobio de Castro," in *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts, Band 2: Frankreich und Niederlande*, edited by Jean-Pierre Schobinger (Basel: Schwabe & Co. 1993): 889–891, here 891: "Und den Einwänden derer, die den göttlichen Charakter des mündlichen Gesetzes leugneten, begegnet er mit den Argumenten des fideistischen Skeptizismus."

<sup>19</sup> Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1979), 68.

<sup>20</sup> Terence Penelhum, *God and Scepticism: A Study in Scepticism and Fideism* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983).

intellectual tendencies in Orobio's work. While some historians, for example the present author, tended to de-emphasise their presence,<sup>21</sup> others such as Natalia Muchnik added emphasis to Kaplan's thesis by claiming that Orobio effectively "doubted the capacity of the sciences, and among them philosophy, to attain any certainty whatsoever."<sup>22</sup> Gabriel Albiac subscribed to a particularly strong formulation of the fideism thesis, connecting it with the traditional image of Orobio as an unrestrained sectarian. Albiac observed an "unappealable fulmination against the slightest rationalist inclination"<sup>23</sup> in a passage where the polemicist writes that human ignorance is only an evil if it is allied with pride.

If the understanding persuades itself that it knows what [in fact] it ignores, then it does not desire more knowledge, and nobody is able to instruct it. It is then stuck inside the abyss of its ignorance ... and bringing it back to health becomes a desperate task, because it will remain sick with the things it ignores.<sup>24</sup>

Here Orobio defends self-reflecting ignorance and provisional enlightenment through learning, *docta ignorantia*. This defense belongs to a sceptic line of thought that is not limited to authoritarianism, but relies on the progressive search for a provisional rational truth. Orobio's brand of scepticism did not mean to close down rational investigation, as Albiac suspected, but on the contrary sought to keep it open.

Graetz already perceived this commonsensical element in Orobio's religious mind-set. He praised the latter's "sober-mindedness, the normalcy of his character, his Jewish piety or, let us rather say, his attachment to Judaism, which relied on clear knowledge, though not on philosophical principles."<sup>25</sup> According to the more recent analysis of Práxedes Caballero, the Amsterdam physician adhered to a subtle balance between criticism and faith: the doctrines of religion cannot be the object of

---

**21** Carsten L. Wilke, "Conversion ou retour? La métamorphose du nouveau-chrétien en juif portugais dans l'imaginaire sépharade du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Mémoires juives d'Espagne et du Portugal*, edited by Esther Benbassa (Paris, Publisud, 1996): 53–67, here 59.

**22** Natalia Muchnik, *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 382.

**23** Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía*, 372: "una fulminación inapelable de toda veleidad racionalista."

**24** Révah, *Spinoza*, 89: "Es, pues, la doctrina el unico remedio para que el entendimiento humano combalezca del ignominioso achaque de la ignorancia. Para que este remedio halle lugar en su execucion es necesario que el entendimiento se persuada a que no sabe aquello que ignora ... Mas si el entendimiento se persuade que sabe cuanto ignora, que no necesita de otras noticias, que ninguno es capaz de enseñarle, es forçoso que persevere en el abismo de su ignorancia: la sobervia embaraza su corazon que consistia en la doctrina, y ... queda desesperada la sanidad y el entendimiento enfermo de lo que no sabe."

**25** Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* (Leipzig: Leiner, 1868), Vol. X, appendix, x: "Unter der großen Menge gebildeter und produktiver Juden in Spinoza's Zeitalter zeichnet sich Orobio de Castro aus durch seine Besonnenheit, sein normales Wesen, seine, wenn auch nicht auf philosophischen Principien, jedoch auf einer klaren Erkenntniß beruhende Frömmigkeit, oder sagen wir lieber Anhänglichkeit an das Judenthum."

a full demonstration, but they have to be in line with reason and can be compromised by inner inconsistency.<sup>26</sup> Orobio's conception of reason might thus foreshadow Karl Popper's "critical rationalism," in which truth claims can never be ultimately proven, although many of them can definitively be rejected.<sup>27</sup> Seventeenth-century thinkers already experimented with similar compromises; for example, the Spanish poet Antonio Enríquez Gómez, who lived among the French crypto-Jews one decade before Orobio, defended the following paradox in one of his political treatises: "To know that one does not know is prudence, but to posit that nothing can be known is unbearable frailty."<sup>28</sup>

Orobio's statements about the border between knowledge and uncertainty would merit a renewed examination, all the more so as the author focused insistently on the subject in his first theological work, the *Invective Epistle* written in 1663 shortly after his arrival in Amsterdam, where he defended the Jewish tradition against the deism of Juan de Prado. Not only did the latter challenge the age-old consensus around the truth of the scriptures, but he also defended independent individual judgment as a social criterion of truth. By asking Orobio the fundamental question of "whether one should follow one's own judgment or that of another person,"<sup>29</sup> Prado implied that any reasoning in accordance with dominant persuasions must be discarded as interest-guided. Orobio reacted by considering Prado's rigid opposition between conformism and dissent "rather as an ingenious prank than as a serious question."<sup>30</sup> No rational judgment can be fully free of interest, as conformists and dissenters both intend to please their respective audiences, and critical spirits are particularly eager to attract applause by their wit.<sup>31</sup>

What Orobio advocates seems to be a mutual control of individual judgment and collective tradition. He explicitly states his conviction that all the basic principles of

---

**26** Práxedes Caballero, "La crítica de Orobio de Castro a Spinoza," in *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez (Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994): 229–237, here 231.

**27** On Popper's search for a third way between scepticism and dogmatism, see Hubert Cambier, "Is the Philosophy of Karl Popper Anti-Foundationalist?" In *Karl Popper, a Centenary Assessment*, vol. 2: *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Ian Charles Jarvie, Karl Milford, and David W. Miller (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 145–156, here 154.

**28** Antonio Enríquez Gómez, *Luis dado de Dios a Luis y Ana, Samuel dado de Dios a Elcana y Ana* (Paris: René Baudry, 1645), 8: "Saber que no se sabe; es prudencia, pero fundarse en que todo se ygnora; es flaqueça yntolerable."

**29** Orobio, *Epístola invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 92: "Qual dictamen o entender deve seguirse, a el proprio o el ageno?"

**30** Orobio, *Epístola invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 92: "me pareció mas travesura de ingenio que question solida."

**31** Révah, *Spinoza*, 91: "Es assi verdad que el asentir o dar credito a una proposicion no es acto libre, mas tambien es verdad que [...] el que afecta no asentir a las cosas recibidas, no obra desapasionado, tambien se propone su interes, que funda en la ostentacion de ingenio con que procura el aura popular y calificacion de mas discursivo. Esto fue siempre el fin de los entendimientos inclinados a paradoxas y de los que procuran innovar, desmintiendo lo mas bien opinado." See this passage in Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 169–170.

the Jewish faith are accessible to human understanding. For example, the idea of God is a rational idea for Orobio; he blames Prado for “considering as [mere] fiction the most perfect act of rational thought, namely the recognition of an infinite Creator-God.”<sup>32</sup> He thus attributed the sceptic’s role to his friend, who refused to see more than fictions behind universal rational concepts. Orobio, in contrast, expressed an optimistic view of reasonable knowledge whose reliable sources he extended even to “things whose truth only depends on their existence in this or that moment in time (and not in scientific concepts),” which is particularly the case with scripture.<sup>33</sup> Orobio’s defense of Mosaic revelation builds on the argument of the *consensus omnium*<sup>34</sup> and on the fact that biblical teachings do not contradict human rationality. Conformity with reason, he repeats, is necessary if something should be trustworthy and of absolute credit, and “it is required to speculate as reasonable beings instead of obeying like brutish animals.”<sup>35</sup> As religious teachings need to stand rational examination, he staunchly rejects the principle of “believing without reasoning” (*creer sin racionalidad*).<sup>36</sup> Twenty years later, in his treatise against Spinoza, he would even deny the conflict between speculation and obedience by maintaining “that religion does not affirm anything contrary to reason.”<sup>37</sup>

In Orobio’s philosophical language and terminology, we can follow the juxtaposition of dogma and doubt on a variety of levels of reflection that should not be confused with each other: there is the contradiction not only between Christian and Jewish biblical exegesis, but also between the scripturalist, the traditionalist, and the critical approaches to the Bible, between the Aristotelian, the experimental and the providentialist approach to nature, in sum, between various scientific and religious orders of truth that intersect at this crucial moment in the history of thought. His intellectual personality does not fit into the binary opposition of rationalism and fideism, or of dogma and doubt, but it shows, in Kaplan’s words, openness towards both sides.

One important reason for the coexistence of opposing epistemological strategies in Orobio’s work is the fact that his thought, which Kaplan’s intellectual biography

---

32 Révah, *Spinoza*, 118: “ficción llama al mas perfecto acto de la racionalidad, al conocimiento del Infinito Criador.”

33 Révah, *Spinoza*, 98: “la repugnancia al credito de las cosas cuya verdad depende solo de su existencia en una o otra diferencia de tiempo (y no de conceptos scientificos), ni arguye mayor ingenio.”

34 Révah, *Spinoza*, 96: “todas [sectas] conspiran en la verdad infalible de la Santa Escritura. Impio y hereje se reputa quien usare dudarla.”

35 Révah, *Spinoza*, 98, regarding the authority of Scripture: “No parece que se necessita de mas autoridad de parte del que propone para que sea creyble lo propuesto, como sea ajustado al entendimiento y nada repugnante a la razon humana. Esto es lo segundo que diximos ser necessario para que la cosa sea digna de fee y de absoluto credito, y lo que se deve especular para creer racionales y no asentir como brutos.”

36 Révah, *Spinoza*, 132.

37 Orobio, *Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis* (Amsterdam: n. p., 1684), title page: “quod religio nil rationi repugnans credendum proponit.”

allows us to follow in its chronological development, adapted to different adversaries and circumstances during the years in which Spinoza's philosophical system first became known and debated. Whereas the answers to Prado in 1663 defended tradition against a Jewish deist, the writings against Alonso de Zepeda of 1665 launched a focused rationalist attack against Lullism. Orobio seems to have started his straightforward refutations of Christian dogma only after the Franco-Dutch war of 1671 brought him in contact with Catholic missionaries.

There seems to be a stylistic and intellectual development inside Orobio's major work, the *Divine Warnings*, which consists of two dissimilar parts. The exact date of its composition remains uncertain,<sup>38</sup> but *a terminus quem ante* of 1677–1678 is given by the oldest dated manuscript, which is kept in Munich.<sup>39</sup> The conception of the first part follows an offensive strategy, as it posits that the Pentateuch and the Prophets contain verses that prophetically condemn the future dogmas of Christianity. The Bible itself is read as a work of anti-Christian polemics. The second part of the *Divine Warnings* continues this original plan for the first five chapters, but subsequently falls into three large treatises of different thematic content: chapters 6–19 are a refutation of the argument based on rabbinic quotes that Pablo de Santa María formulates in his *Scrutinium Scripturarum*, chapters 20–22 treat Daniel's prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, and chapters 23–25 comment on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. In sum, Orobio's argumentation in the second part becomes a defensive re-explanation of selected texts that Christians invoked as support for their doctrines.

The parts on the Seventy Weeks and on Isaiah 53 are also copied separately in manuscripts dated from 1674 and 1675, respectively. Yosef Kaplan and Miguel Benítez conclude that these separate treatises are extracts taken from the second part of the *Divine Warnings* almost immediately after its composition.<sup>40</sup> The last word on the chronology of the two versions has not, however, been said;<sup>41</sup> indeed, it may well be that Orobio filled up his second book with three originally independent treatises

---

<sup>38</sup> According to an unreliable indication in the manuscript at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal of Paris, the work was circulated (though certainly not printed) as early as 1674; see Eugenio de Ochoa, *Catálogo razonado de los manuscritos españoles existentes en la Biblioteca Real de París* (Paris: Imprenta Real, 1844), 654; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 251; Miguel Benítez, *La face cachée des Lumières: recherches sur les manuscrits philosophiques clandestins de l'âge classique* (Paris: Universitas, 1996), 149.

<sup>39</sup> Isaac Orobio de Castro, *La observancia de la Divina Ley de Mosseh*, edited by Moses Bensabat Amzalak (Coimbra: Imprenta da Universidade, 1925), XXI; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 250.

<sup>40</sup> Benítez, *La face cachée*, 151: “nous savons que du texte volumineux qu'étaient les *Prevenciones* ... quelques parties s'étaient presque immédiatement détachées et avaient acquis une vie propre,” 153, “Orobio [l']avait vraisemblablement rédigée lui-même sur la base des *Prevenciones*.”

<sup>41</sup> The only argument in favour of the priority of the *Prevenciones* is the fact that two of its chapter numbers appear on pages 68 and 80 of the Amsterdam manuscript of the *Explicación*, Ets Haim 48 D 6, as this was remarked by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 250. The high-quality digitisation that the Ets Haim Library has recently uploaded online seems to show that these numbers are pencil notes in a nineteenth- or twentieth-century handwriting.



whose lines of argument differed from the first part of the book.<sup>42</sup> His desire to present a fuller volume was in accordance with the logic of compilation and canonisation that clandestine Jewish literature displays during that time.

By the 1680s, Orobio had abandoned clandestine writing. Quite consciously, he redirected his attack against Spinozism, defending the common Judeo-Christian tenets of biblical faith. As he wrote in 1684, he had changed his mind about the dangers of Spinoza's system, confessing that he had underestimated him and his experience had proven him wrong.<sup>43</sup> Now he was resolved to recruit all the power of Aristotelian logic in order to oppose the "fantasies" on which Spinoza's geometric demonstrations were allegedly based.<sup>44</sup>

The identification of this common enemy would have called for an alliance between theists of all stripes. However, later in 1684, a group of Protestant thinkers exposed a new method of defending the Christian faith: instead of legitimising it on the basis of Old Testament prophecies, they highlighted its reasonableness. The rationalist theologian Jean Le Clerc, the philosopher John Locke, the Remonstrant preacher Philippus van Limborch and the physician Egbert Veen tried out their arguments on Orobio almost immediately.<sup>45</sup> Orobio held a famous conversation with Limborch in which he seems to have proposed a typically sceptical truce, affirming that "everyone ought to continue in his own religion, since it was much easier to attack another man's than to prove one's own."<sup>46</sup> In a similar way, Abraham Gómez Silveyra would later insist on the impossibility of proving any other religious truth than the one already contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Orobio's writings thus span over a quarter century and intervened in debates of very different characters. A historian of philosophy needs to be careful not to submit Orobio's intellectual standpoints to undue generalisations. Conscious of the historicity of Orobio's expression, the authors of the present volume have chosen not to direct their efforts to track down his "real" philosophical persuasion, but to reveal the historical, social, and literary context that gave a dogmatic or sceptic meaning to his arguments concerning the relation between scientific and religious knowledge. The articles collected here share the idea that the affirmative or the subversive effect of

---

<sup>42</sup> This hypothesis also emerges from the study by Harm den Boer *infra*, 88.

<sup>43</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 267; Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 307.

<sup>44</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 351–352.

<sup>45</sup> Hans-Joachim Schoeps, "Isaac Orobio de Castros Religionsdisput mit Philipp van Limborch," *Judaica* 2 (1946): 89–105; Peter T. van Rooden and Jan W. Wesselius, "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1687)," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–153.

<sup>46</sup> This information reported by the English translator of Uriel's autobiography in 1740 cannot be verified from other sources. Nonetheless it is interesting, and Yosef Kaplan concluded: "If that sentence is indeed an authentic utterance of Orobio, then it has to be acknowledged that at the end of his life his own conception of religious toleration was far bolder and much further-reaching than that of Limborch and his fellow Remonstrants." Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 285.

sceptic arguments can only be understood if we study their historical environment, their literary form, and their multiple audiences.

Looking back at his now classic monograph, Yosef Kaplan describes in detail how in the 1970s he, an Israeli historian of Argentinian background, integrated the itineraries of Iberian crypto-Jews into the framework of Jewish intellectual and social history. Reviewing the decades of research since he wrote his monograph, he formulates reflections on the time-bound change of our interpretations of Orobio's personality: while it once seemed natural to emphasise the valor with which the famed doctor upheld and revived the secret Jewish traditions of his family, it now seems no less important a task to elucidate his experience as a proud member of the academic elite of Spain and France, bearing in mind the fact that, under slightly different circumstances, he might have achieved a lasting integration into Catholic society without ever becoming a defender of Judaism.

Natalia Muchnik's study analyses Orobio's personal confrontation with anti-religious doubt, represented by his erstwhile study companion Juan de Prado (1612–1669). Prado was a close friend to both Orobio and Spinoza and marked them successively in their youth. In Spain, Orobio shared his crypto-Judaism with Prado. In Amsterdam twenty years later, Spinoza counted on him in order to cultivate a no less clandestinely transmitted form of deist free-thought against which Orobio formulated his own rationalisation of the Jewish religion.

Carsten Wilke studies the generic context of Orobio's anti-Christian writings and sees him as the foremost representative of a marginal literature that, spreading in the years 1580–1740 by handwritten copies, developed its own networks of circulation. This clandestine genre, with its canon of literary forms and conventions, is the key for the understanding of Orobio's way of theological expression. In his article on Orobio as a writer, Harm den Boer observes the exceedingly ambitious stylistic and rhetorical sophistication of the *Divine Warnings*, a work that, by its very style, seems to have catered to a search for cultural prestige among the Portuguese Jews whom it claimed to instruct.

In his paper on French translations of Orobio among eighteenth-century Enlightenment authors, Adam Sutcliffe studies the transformations of the texts, their message, and their author's literary image, which made it possible to use the texts written in defense of Judaism for an attack on basic Judeo-Christian beliefs. Two competing English translations of Orobio are the subject of David Ruderman's article, which introduces the reader to a nineteenth-century controversy concerning the limits and legitimacy of religious polemics in a European environment that saw a massive expansion of Christian missions towards the Jews, while pre-modern Jewish counter-discourse came to be proscribed as an intolerant and intolerable breach of well-mannered religiosity.

Focusing successively on Orobio's time, style, and reception, these six essays show that his Jewish writings have been given interpretations from the entire field between dogmatic traditionalism and subversive doubt. The complicated case of Isaac Orobio de Castro invites the historian of thought to inquire into the ways in

which the fidelity to Jewish scriptures and traditions could coexist with forms of critical rationality and even incorporate motifs from the sceptical undercurrent of Western philosophy.

## Works Cited

- Amsterdam, ms. Ets Haim, 48 D 6.
- Albiac, Gabriel. *La sinagoga vacía: Un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo*. Madrid: Hiperión, 1987.
- Albiac, Gabriel. "Meditar Yenín." In *En defensa de Israel*, edited by Marcos Aguinis, et al, 21–32. Zaragoza: Libros Certeza, 2004.
- Benítez, Miguel. *La face cachée des Lumières: recherches sur les manuscrits philosophiques clandestins de l'âge classique*. Paris: Universitas, 1996.
- Bulletin de l'Alliance Israélite Universelle*, January 1875.
- Caballero, Práxedes. "La crítica de Orobio de Castro a Spinoza." In *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez, 229–237. Cuenca: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994.
- Cambier, Hubert. "Is the Philosophy of Karl Popper Anti-Foundationalist?" In *Karl Popper, a Centenary Assessment*, vol. 2: *Metaphysics and Epistemology*, edited by Ian Charles Jarvie, Karl Milford, and David W. Miller, 145–156. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
- Enríquez Gómez, Antonio. *Luis dado de Dios a Luis y Ana, Samuel dado de Dios a Elcana y Ana*. Paris: René Baudry, 1645.
- Gebhardt, Carl. *Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1922.
- Gebhardt, Carl. "Juan de Prado." *Chronicon Spinozanum* 3 (1923): 269–291.
- Graetz, Heinrich. "Don Balthasar Isaak Orobio de Castro: Eine biographische Skizze." *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 16 (1867): 321–330
- Graetz, Heinrich. *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. X. Leipzig: Leiner, 1868.
- Israel, Jonathan I. "Orobio de Castro and the Early Enlightenment." In *Mémorial I.-S. Révah: Études sur le marranisme, l'hétérodoxie juive et Spinoza*, editid by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, 227–245. Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 2001.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Isaac Orobio de Castro." In *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts, Band 2: Frankreich und Niederlande*, edited by Jean-Pierre Schobinger, 889–891. Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1993.
- Kayserling, Meyer. *Geschichte der Juden in Portugal*. Leipzig: Oskar Leiner, 1867.
- Le Roi, Johannes F. A. de. *Die evangelische Christenheit und die Juden unter dem Gesichtspunkte der Mission geschichtlich betrachtet*, 3 vol. Karlsruhe: Reuther, 1884.
- Menéndez Pelayo, Marcelino. *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 3 vol. Madrid: Librería Católica de San José, 1880–1882.
- Muchnik, Natalia. *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005.
- Ochoa, Eugenio de. *Catálogo razonado de los manuscritos españoles existentes en la Biblioteca Real de París*. Paris: Imprenta Real, 1844.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis*. Amsterdam: n. p., 1684.

- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *La observancia de la Divina Ley de Mosseh*. Edited by Moses Bensabat Amzalak. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1925.
- Penelhum, Terence. *God and Skepticism: A Study in Skepticism and Fideism*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983.
- Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1979.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century." In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, 159–181. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Révah, I. S. *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*. Paris: Mouton & Cie, 1959.
- Rodríguez de Castro, Joseph. *Biblioteca española. Tomo primero, que contiene la noticia de los escritores rabinos españoles*, 2 vol. Madrid: Imprenta Real de la Gazeta, 1781.
- Rosenberg, Alfred. *Die Spur des Juden im Wandel der Zeiten*. Munich: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1920.
- Schoeps, Hans-Joachim. "Isaac Orobio de Castros Religionsdisput mit Philipp van Limborch." *Judaica* 2 (1946): 89–105.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. *Judaism and Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Van Rooden, Peter T. and Jan W. Wesselius, "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1687)." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–153.
- Voltaire. *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 34. Paris: P. Dupont, 1827.
- Wilke, Carsten L. "Conversion ou retour? La métamorphose du nouveau-chrétien en juif portugais dans l'imaginaire sépharade du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle." In *Mémoires juives d'Espagne et du Portugal*, edited by Esther Benbassa, 53–67. Paris: Publisud, 1996.
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu. *Spinoza and other Heretics*, 2 vol. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.



Yosef Kaplan

## “From Christianity to Judaism” Revisited: Some Critical Remarks More than Thirty Years after its Publication

My friend Professor Benjamin Kedar once told me that the great historian Shelomo Dov Goitein used to say that every one of the scholarly works that he wrote contained at least one cardinal error. This admission by a historian whose monumental research will continue to arouse admiration in coming generations expresses a feeling that is familiar to ordinary historians like myself, and I assume that it is as well to the participants of this conference. I confess that I have often had occasion to regret the flaws that I now find in my publications, not only trivial mistakes or conjectures that were refuted by sources that were unknown to me at the time of writing, but also, and mainly, errors deriving from flawed judgment, from groundless assumptions, or from ideological views that found their way into my scholarship without my being aware of it.

With your permission, I would like to present some “critical thoughts” about my book *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, which I have prepared for this conference and written from a distance of more than thirty years. This book was first published in Hebrew by the Magnes Press of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1983 and was largely based on my doctoral dissertation, which I completed in 1978.<sup>1</sup> An English translation was published by Oxford University Press in the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization series in 1989. It was translated by the English scholar and polymath, Professor Raphael Loewe.<sup>2</sup> The book was published in Portuguese in 2000 by the Imago publishing house in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the English edition, which I went over meticulously (and I frequently had to disagree with the learned and opinionated translator), the Brazilian publisher did not allow me to read the full translation in advance. The editor at the publishing house claimed that they had already published translations of books more important than mine, including books of the Bible, and they had never encountered objections from the authors (not even from those of the books of the Bible, I assume). I made corrections and additions to the English edition as well as to the manuscript of the

---

Yosef Kaplan, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

1 Yosef Kaplan, *Mi-natsrut le-yahadut: Hayaw u-foalo shel ha-anus Yitzhak Orobio de Castro* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1982).

2 Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe (Oxford: The Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1989).

3 Yosef Kaplan, *Do Cristianismo ao Judaísmo: A História de Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Henrique de Araújo Mesquita (Rio de Janeiro: Imago Editora, 2000).

French translation, which was completed in 1997, though, apparently, it will never be published despite the many hours I invested in examining it.

But what led me to deal with Isaac Orobio de Castro in the first place? Why in particular did I write my doctoral dissertation about him? In the curriculum of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the late 1960s, little attention was paid to the Sephardic Diaspora after the expulsion from Spain. The Early Modern period also had little place in the courses offered by the Department of Jewish History (as it began to be regarded as a distinct period in European historiography only in the 1950s; and in Jewish historiography this of course took a few more years).<sup>4</sup> The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were swallowed up in the long Middle Ages. In the Department of History, it was possible to study the period of the Reformation under the excellent historian, Yehoshua Arieli, but, for example, no courses were offered on the history of Spain and Portugal, and among the prominent scholars in the Department of History there was no expert in the history of Spain and Portugal. In the Department of Jewish History some courses and seminars were offered, dealing with various aspects of the Early Modern period (without reference to that concept), but they mainly focused on the Jews of Poland and Lithuania, or those of Central Europe.

The history of Spanish Jewry in the Middle Ages, by contrast, thrived at the Hebrew University from the outset, as the first historian to receive a position at the new university on Mount Scopus, both in European medieval history and in Jewish history, was Yitzhak (Fritz) Baer, the great historian of the Jews of Christian Spain.<sup>5</sup> Haim Beinart, Baer's student, continued in the tradition of his teacher, but he concentrated mainly on study of the *conversos*, the Inquisition, and the expulsion from Spain.<sup>6</sup> Baer, who wrote a monumental *History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, did not deal with Spanish Jewry after the expulsion and did not write about it, beyond a brief study on Isaac Abravanel's historiographical and political concepts and a few general remarks on "Marranos" in his controversial book, *Galut* [Exile], which was first published in German, in 1936.<sup>7</sup> This book, which is characterised by fierce ethnocentrism, was written under the influence of the tragic events in Germany at that time, when quite a few of Baer's professors joined the Nazi Party. I heard from my own

---

<sup>4</sup> See some interesting remarks about the beginnings of a notion of a distinctive "early modern" period of European history in John Huxtable Elliott, *History in the Making* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 58–60.

<sup>5</sup> On his impact on Jewish historiography, see David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 129–150.

<sup>6</sup> Yosef Kaplan, "Haim Beinart and the Historiography of the *Conversos* in Spain," in *Exile and Diaspora. Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart*, edited by Aharon Mirsky, Avraham Grossman and Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991): 11–16. His last book was a detailed study of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain; see Haim Beinart, *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (London and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Yitzhak Fritz Baer, *Galut* (Berlin: Schocken, 1936).

teachers that they took part in a seminar given by Baer on *Kol Sakhal* (The Voice of a Fool), though it is very doubtful whether he offered it more than once.<sup>8</sup>

When I started studying at the Hebrew University in the early 1960s, Baer had already retired and had decided several years earlier to concentrate on the Jews of the Second Temple and Mishnaic periods.<sup>9</sup> In 1965, I took a seminar with Haim Beinart, and he actually taught about the Sephardic Diaspora after the expulsion, mainly in the sixteenth century. In that seminar I wrote a paper on Isaac Cardoso and his book, *Las Excelencias de los Hebreos*, several years before the publication of Yerushalmi’s monumental study.<sup>10</sup> In that year I also discovered the wonderful Harry Friedenwald collection in the National Library, a collection of Jewish books about medicine, which included dozens of books written by Jewish physicians, not all of which were about medicine. The collection of course included books by *conversos* from Spain and Portugal. I still remember the excitement that seized me during the first hours I spent in the reading room of that collection, an experience that left a great impression on me. I can recall my surprise at finding the eulogy written by the physician Fernando Cardoso (that is, Isaac Cardoso—at the time he was still living as a Christian in Madrid), on the death of the famous playwright, Lope de Vega, who was a friend of his.<sup>11</sup> Lope de Vega is known for his venomous anti-Semitic opinions.<sup>12</sup> Yet I had found a text by a *marrano*, who was later to return to Judaism and finish his life in the ghetto of Verona, who was a close friend of Lope de Vega’s and even lamented his death. I sat with Dr. Yehoshua Leibowitz, that great and modest scholar, the cousin of the famous Yeshayahu Leibowitz, and translated the Spanish text into Hebrew. He explained patiently that, according to Cardoso’s account, who was present at Lope de Vega’s death, it could be surmised that he died of a heart attack. This was an exceptional experience for me, the triumphant feeling of a student at the start of his path, who had discovered secrets of the heart of the greatest of Spanish playwrights.

---

**8** Baer attributed this work to “an unknown author, who apparently belonged” to Uriel da Costa’s circle. On this fascinating book see Talya Fishman, *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: “Voice of a Fool,” an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

**9** Israel Jacob Yuval, “Yitzhak Baer and the Search for Authentic Judaism,” in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, edited by David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998): 77–87.

**10** Yshac Cardoso, *Las excelencias de los Hebreos* (Amsterdam: David de Castro Tartas, 1679).

**11** Fernando Cardoso, *Oración fúnebre en la muerte de Lope de Vega* (Madrid: por la viuda de Iuan González, 1635).

**12** See, among others, María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, “Lope de Vega y los judíos,” *Bulletin Hispanique* 75, no. 1 (1973): 73–112; Joseph H. Silverman, “Perduración del paradigma antisemita medieval en el teatro de Lope de Vega,” in *El teatro durant l’Edat Mitjana i el Renaixement*, edited by Jesús Francesc Massip (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1986): 63–70; Alexander Samson, “Antisemitism, Class and Lope de Vega’s ‘El niño inocente de la Guardia,’” *Hispanic Research Journal* 3.2 (2002): 107–122; Ingrid Simson, “Un ejemplo de antisemitismo en el teatro de Lope de Vega: ‘El Brasil restituído,’” in *El olivo y la espada. Estudios sobre el antisemitismo en España (siglos xvi–xx)*, edited by Pere Joan i Tous and Heike Nottebaum (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer / Romania Judaica 6, 2003): 229–242.



Every day that I spent in the Friedenwald Collection provided me with new discoveries. I found many books in Spanish and Portuguese there, as well as books in Latin and other languages. Among other things I came upon a fine copy of *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* by Philip van Limborch, and this was the first time I encountered the name of Isaac Orobio de Castro.<sup>13</sup> A short time afterward I wrote a paper on the dispute between Limborch and Orobio de Castro during a seminar given by Professor Shmuel Ettinger. At that very time I became acquainted with the book by I. S. Révah, written in 1959, about Spinoza and Juan de Prado, and soon afterward I read the articles by Révah on the crisis of faith in the Sephardic community in Amsterdam in Spinoza's time, and with great enthusiasm I followed the reports published by this diligent and tireless scholar every year in the annual of the Collège de France.<sup>14</sup> These publications contain vast amounts of information about the intellectual ferment in Amsterdam, about Uriel da Costa, and of course fascinating information about Baltasar Orobio during his time in Spain. I decided to focus on this man's life and literary works and to find the connection between the student who studied at the Madre de Dios College in Alcalá de Henares and the Jew who disputed with the Arminian theologian, Philip van Limborch. By means of this research I wanted to open up a window into the world of the "Marranos" of the seventeenth century and that of the Sephardic community in Amsterdam, about which I knew very little. It should be mentioned that Révah himself also knew very little about the Amsterdam community, and not until the last decade of his life did he become acquainted with a small part of the archive of the Sephardic community, which only became accessible to scholars at that time.<sup>15</sup>

After writing the seminar paper on Cardoso, I was asked to translate part of his apologetic book on the "virtues of the Jews" from Spanish into Hebrew for the Dorot (Generations) series published by the Bialik Institute publishing house in Jerusa-

---

**13** The book was printed in Gouda in 1687. On the argument between Limborch and Orobio de Castro, see Peter T. van Rooden and Jan W. Wesselius, "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–153.

**14** I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado* (Paris-La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1959); I. S. Révah, "Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: nouveaux documents sur l'incroyance dans la communauté judéo-portugaise d'Amsterdam à l'époque de l'excommunication de Spinoza," *Revue des études juives* 123 (1964): 359–431; I. S. Révah, "Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne [II]: Nouvel examen des origines, du déroulement et des conséquences de l'affaire Spinoza-Prado-Ribera," *Annuaire du Collège de France* 70 (1970): 562–578; *Annuaire du Collège de France* 71 (1971): 574–589; *Annuaire du Collège de France* 72 (1972): 641–663. A volume including Révah's studies on the "Marranos" and the intellectual ferment among the Sephardim in seventeenth-century Amsterdam, was edited by Henry Méchoulan, Pierre-François Moreau and Carsten Lorenz Wilke: I. S. Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza* (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

**15** See Richard Henry Popkin, "Intellectual Autobiography," in *The Sceptical Mode in Modern Philosophy. Essays in Honor of Richard H. Popkin*, edited by Richard A. Watson and James E. Force (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988), 103–149, here 121.

lem.<sup>16</sup> My translation was published with my historical introduction in 1971. At the end of that introduction I added a sentence stating that when I received the final page proofs of the book, I also received the excellent book by Yosef Haiym Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, which had appeared very recently.<sup>17</sup>

Yerushalmi’s book made a huge impression on me. I read it breathlessly. A short time afterward, in the spring of 1972, I held my first conversation with him. He was visiting Israel at the time, and I went to Haifa to meet him. At the start of our meeting, I had the feeling that Yerushalmi was examining me very closely. Our conversation lasted several hours, longer than had been planned, and it sowed the seeds of a friendship that lasted for nearly forty years, until his death.

Without any special effort, readers of my book will feel the clear and unequivocal influence of Yerushalmi’s book on my study of Orobio. Both books are occasionally mentioned as parallel works on the lives and thought of two Portuguese New Christians who were raised in Spain and educated at universities there at the time of that country’s political crisis and who later returned to Judaism and joined one of the Jewish communities in the Western Sephardic Diaspora.

At the Hebrew University I was privileged to study with excellent historians, but the two teachers whose influence on me was decisive were Jacob Katz and Shmuel Ettinger. From the former I acquired tools for the sociological analysis of traditional and pre-modern societies, and from Ettinger an acquaintance with the intellectual currents of Europe in the Early Modern period. He is also the one who introduced me to Richard Popkin’s *History of Scepticism*, a book that influenced me no less than that of Yerushalmi.<sup>18</sup> I met Popkin for the first time in Amsterdam in 1974, and my connection with him, which continued until his death, was extremely precious to me. Thanks to Popkin, I met a number of scholars in the United States and Europe who dealt with various aspects of the intellectual history of the Early Enlightenment. Along with him, and with Henry Méchoulan from Paris, we organised an international conference on Menasseh Ben Israel and his world.<sup>19</sup> I met with Popkin frequently until his final years and the conversations with him were always challenging.

I was familiar with the manuscripts in the Ets Haim Library before visiting Amsterdam, thanks to the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library in Jerusalem, one of the central institutions for Jewish Studies throughout the

---

<sup>16</sup> Yitzhak Cardoso, *Ma’lot ha-Ivrim: Perakim*, trans. Yosef Kaplan (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York and London: Columbia University Press 1971).

<sup>18</sup> Its first version was published under the title Richard Henry Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960).

<sup>19</sup> Yosef Kaplan, Henry Méchoulan and Richard Henry Popkin eds., *Menasseh ben Israel and his World* (Leiden, New York, København and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1989).

world. The entire collection of manuscripts in the Ets Haim Library was microfilmed, along with most of the Hebrew manuscripts that are dispersed all over the world.

In 1973–1974 for the first time I was able to devote an entire year to work in libraries and archives in Europe. I lived in Amsterdam most of the time and worked in the wonderful municipal archives, as well as in the Biblioteca Rosenthaliana, of course, but especially in the Ets Haim Library. Jorge Luis Borges wrote that he imagined paradise as a kind of library (*Yo, que me figuraba el Paraíso/ Bajo la especie de una biblioteca*).<sup>20</sup> What the Argentinian author imagined became an actual experience for me in the Ets Haim Library. During that year, I was almost the only scholar who worked in that enchanted library, and, since the members of the congregation asked me to fill in for the librarian who left in the middle of the winter, I could enter it every day of the week without the strict restrictions that were always imposed on visitors. I also went to London and Oxford that year. I examined manuscripts and, in the British Library, I perused Orobio's medical work on bloodletting.<sup>21</sup> This made me realise that he had been part of a scientific dispute with about a dozen other physicians. I went to the municipal archive in Antwerp, and I worked in the Royal Archives and Royal Library in Brussels. I also went to the Benedictine monastery of Monserrat, near Barcelona, and in its library I found a copy of Alonso de Zepeda's book on Raymundus Lull.<sup>22</sup> I spent two weeks in Paris and examined the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale and I stayed in Madrid for a month working in the Historical Archive and in the National Library, with a number of excursions to Cuenca, in order to read the relevant Inquisition files. For an Israeli graduate student for whom European libraries and archives were inaccessible, this was a fabulous year full of surprises and discoveries.

Yerushalmi's book served as a model and also set high standards for me, which I doubt that I met. But the influence of Yerushalmi's book also had negative consequences: I was caught up in Yerushalmi's model and did not succeed in freeing myself from it, as is necessary for critical research. One of the serious flaws in my book is that it is written entirely from the perspective of Jewish History, which, for historians like me who grew up in what is usually called the Jerusalem School, means: the History of the Jewish People. I wrote my book as if the story of the New Christians was *only* a chapter in the history of the Jewish people. I have no doubt that this story is *also* part of Jewish history, but it belongs to other histories as well. The passage *From Christianity to Judaism* or *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto*, was of

---

<sup>20</sup> Jorge Luis Borges, "Poema de los dones," in *El hacedor, Obras completas 1923–1972* (Buenos Aires: Emece editores, 1974), 809.

<sup>21</sup> Orobio de Castro, *Controvertitur utrum materialibus morbis in choantibus sanguinis missio revulsiva iuxta Hippocratis et Galeni dogmata per distantissimas venas effici debeat* (Seville: apud Ignatium de Lyra, 1653).

<sup>22</sup> Alonso de Zepeda, *Defensa de los términos y doctrina de S. Raymundo Lullio sobre el misterio de S.S.S. Trinidad, contra cierto rescribiente judío de la Sinagoga de Amsterdam* (Brussels: en casa de Baltasar Vivien, 1666).

course a well-traveled path; however, other options existed: they were no less available and, as it happens, equally well-traveled. Isaac Orobio’s Jewish identity was not embedded in him at birth, and he might not necessarily have clung to it of his own free will. It was acquired and constructed as a result of complex and interwoven historical and cultural interactions. Other New Christian intellectuals—physicians, jurists, and philosophers like Juan de Prado and Orobio de Castro—chose other options rather than returning to Judaism. While I was aware of the other options and did not completely ignore their existence, I did not consider them with the proper seriousness. Orobio de Castro’s path to Judaism was not marked out, nor was it, of course, inevitable.

I believe I managed to prove that he was already an active Judaiser in Spain, performing certain commandments that indicate strong, even exceptional commitment to Judaism, commitment above and beyond the ordinary, almost passive commitment shown by most of the *conversos* of his time, even those who belonged to a group of loyal Judaizers. His father, Manuel Álvares, was also an active Judaiser, and Isaac (Baltasar) was circumcised as an adolescent at his father’s initiative.<sup>23</sup> Orobio took part in Jewish prayers and ceremonies from his youth and he also served as the leader of a group of Portuguese New Christian Judaizers in various cities in Andalusia.<sup>24</sup> Judging by rather clear indications, which I pointed out in my book, he even wore ritual fringes, a custom that was extremely rare among Iberian New Christians.<sup>25</sup> According to his testimony before the Inquisition in Seville, he observed Jewish customs for no less than twenty-four years! Similarly, I took note of the subversive element that was expressed in some of his actions and is hinted at, for example, in the long poem that he wrote in 1637, at the age of twenty or twenty-one, about the epidemic of plague that broke out in Málaga in that year:

*La Causa inmensa, y causa no causada,  
Por delitos humanos ofendida,...  
Rigorosa permite, que influencia  
Castigue tanto error con pestilencia.*<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 79–92.

<sup>25</sup> See Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Sección Inquisición, leg. 2987<sup>1</sup>, fol. 2v: “testificación [...] de un Armenio que en traje de tal andaua vendiendo ropa por las calles (de Cádiz) y en una de ellas este Reo le metió en una casa puerta y apartándolo a solas le preguntó con todo secreto si era judío porque el traje que traya era muy semejante a los judíos y aviéndole dicho el Armenio que era Cathólico Christiano, este Reo le respondió: no rezeles ni temas que yo soy Hebreo y sigo el mismo camino y para que lo creas alzando la ropilla le mostro cosido a su jubón una señal redonda como de terziopelo o raso verde y que le dio tres reales... pidiéndole y encargándole que no dixese nada a nadie...”; cf. Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 84–85.

<sup>26</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 15–24; Yosef Kaplan, “El testimonio de Baltasar Alvarez de Orobio sobre la peste de Málaga en 1637,” *Helmantica* 29 (1978): 212–231.

In this poem, which is shot through with Catholic symbols, Orobio included several subversive lines containing a subtle but rather clear hint of his hidden Jewish faith, his belief in “the cause of causes” free of all Catholic symbolism, and, in contrast, the “errors” of Christianity, about which he would write at length years later in the anti-Christian polemical works that he composed in Amsterdam. Similarly, I pointed to certain books he kept separately from the other books on his shelves, that is, the books he consulted frequently. Among others, these included *Flos Sanctorum* [The Flower of the Saints] by Alonso de Villegas Selvago, a work that was very popular among the *conversos* at that time, because it describes the lives of the saints who were active before the advent of Jesus, which is to say, the heroes of biblical Judaism, from the patriarchs to the prophets.<sup>27</sup> Under the regime of Inquisition censorship, this book, along with others like it, became a source from which New Christians drew religious inspiration, as can be learned from quite a bit of testimony before Inquisition tribunals and from works written after their authors openly returned to Judaism.

I also paid attention in my book to the occasions when he went out of his way to emphasise his loyalty to Christianity. For example, in a medical debate on the appropriate part of the body to which bleeding should, when necessary, be applied, which occurred between 1652 and 1653, Orobio was the only one among the twelve participating physicians who concluded his words with a dedication to the Holy Trinity and the Virgin Mary.<sup>28</sup> I argued that these words and similar expressions in his writings were part of the Christian veil in which he enveloped himself so that his Christianity would not be in doubt.

But is that explanation sufficient? Is it convincing? Were all the paintings on decidedly Christian themes that decorated the walls of his home in Cádiz, pictures of the Virgin Mary, of Jesus and John the Baptist, of Mary Magdalene, of Saint Thomas and so on, meant only as camouflage? Was the painting of Jacob wrestling with the angel the only one that expressed authentic and true inner belief?<sup>29</sup> And did it necessarily have the meaning for him that we attribute to it? What can be learned from the fact that, when he lived in Sanlúcar de Barrameda, he married Isabel Pérez de la Peña, a woman who did not belong to the *nação* and who was the daughter of Old Christians not from *converso* stock?<sup>30</sup> Did not willingness to marry a woman who was not from the *converso* ethnic group indicate assimilation in Andalusian Christian society, or willingness to break through the social barriers that separated New Christians from Old Christians, and perhaps even the desire to merge into Christian society? And perhaps one ought to credit Baltasar Orobio’s confession before the Seville Inquisition in January 1656, when he claimed that for five years he had ceased to observe Jewish ceremonies, having been convinced by the writings of Pablo de Santa

---

<sup>27</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 76–77.

<sup>28</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 67–75.

<sup>29</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 67.

María, who restored him to Christian faith? Is there any connection between this turnabout, if it indeed occurred, and his marriage to Isabel?<sup>31</sup> Do the three questions he asked Rabbi Mosseh Refael d’Aguilar during his first days in Amsterdam about the meaning of el Burguense’s biblical exegesis not show that he was still in doubt about the Christological interpretations of the author of *Scrutinium Scripturarum* and was unable to free himself of the influence of the apostate from Burgos?<sup>32</sup> His unequivocal words to Juan de Prado appear to contradict such a possibility, but perhaps he did not write the full truth then? In his letter to Prado he showed extraordinary expertise in the biographies of converts from Judaism such as Pablo de Santa María and his descendants as well as Sixtus of Sienna.<sup>33</sup> What does this interest in their lives testify to? Is it not possible that these converts became for him, at a certain stage, perhaps after he married a Christian woman, a positive reference group? Even if matters are far from being unequivocal, there was still good reason to ask these questions. When I reread my text with the perspective of years, it appears to me that I refrained from asking all the relevant questions because I was caught up in a certain conception. I avoided problematising this subject and others, though this is the supreme duty of the historian, and today I deeply regret it.

Once again, I emphasise: Orobio’s path from Christianity to Judaism was neither necessary nor marked out in advance. Why, when he decided to leave Spain, did he choose to live in Bayonne and Toulouse in France, for two years?<sup>34</sup> If the desire to live a full Jewish life was what impelled him to leave Spain, why did he stay in France for such a long time, where he was forced to live as a Catholic at least in the public sphere? It is known that in Bayonne he attended church in the parish of Saint-Etienne d’Arribe Labourd and even served as godfather at the baptism of a baby, a member of the *nation portugaise*, who received the name of Baltasar.<sup>35</sup> Further,

---

<sup>31</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 85–87.

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 114–115.

<sup>33</sup> See Isaac Orobio de Castro, *Carta Apologética al Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado*, 137–138: “Mis doctos Hebreos Paulo Burgense y Sixto Senense no fueron brutos, sino muy hombres, pues se dejaron arrastrar de las cosas humanas y dejaron la Ley de Dios. El primero en un mismo día fue bautizado en la Cathedral de Burgos, ordenado en presbytero y constituido Obispo de Cartagena, que era entonces el principal y mas rico de España, luego Ayo del Principe, Governador del Reyno, Arzobispo de Burgos, Patriarcha de Aquileya. Juntamente con su bautismo le hizieron [un hijo] Arzobispo de Santiago, otro de Segovia, otro Capitan General en Aragón, y todos poderosos. Y esto todo a un pobre Haham que salió de la miseria a una opulencia casi real, pues el Rey Catholico Don Fernando fue nieto de su hija cassada con el Almirante de Castilla, cuya hija casó con el Infante de Aragon, de cuyo matrimonio salió el Rey Don Fernando. Sixto era un mozo hebreo, buen estudiante mas no docto, ni tuvo tiempo para esto; acudía mucho al convento de dominicanos, persuadióle un frayle, hízole christiano, dióle el habito. Estudió como christiano, mas apenas conservó noticias de la lengua hebrayca. El frayle, su maestro, fué Papa, engrandeciole lo que pudo, y él a sus parientes.”

<sup>34</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 96–103.

<sup>35</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 97.

there is no doubt that his stay in Toulouse, where he taught at the university, required regular attendance of Catholic religious ceremonies.

It is known that, among the *nation portugaise* in southwestern France at that time, there were quite a few individuals who observed Jewish ceremonies and attended Jewish prayers in private and that the Christians around them knew of this. They also maintained close connections with the community in Amsterdam.<sup>36</sup> But Orobio did not stay in Bayonne. Rather, he continued on to his post in Toulouse and to the connections he managed to cultivate with de Condé, and de Conti, according to what he wrote to Prado in 1664.<sup>37</sup> While he was in France, not only did he take part in public disputes (*y disputé en quantos actos públicos se hizieron en mi tiempo en Tolosa*), he was also proud of his success in intellectual circles (*me oyan con gusto y aun con aplauso*) and among his closest friends were archbishops, bishops, and consummately learned men (*también Arzobispos, Obispos y hombres consumados en las ciencias fueron mis íntimos amigos*).<sup>38</sup> What does this show about his sojourn in Toulouse and about his chosen life as a Christian, at least in the visible sphere, when he had the rather simple alternative of reaching Amsterdam as quickly as possible in order to become a Jew openly? The trip from southwestern France to Amsterdam at that time took a matter of days, a couple of weeks at most, and this was all that separated him from open and full affiliation with the Jewish people. What stopped him from making that trip?

One may surmise that he and his father, who had settled in France earlier, were delayed by various personal reasons. Economic considerations most likely played a decisive role for the father, Manuel Álvares, who had lived in France for many years before his son and the rest of his family arrived.<sup>39</sup> But from the standpoint of the Jewish religion and of rabbinic Law, teaching at the University of Toulouse could not justify postponing a resumed adherence to Judaism. Orobio de Castro knew this very well, even before arriving in Amsterdam. He did not have to be well versed in the writings of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* to understand the significance of the delay, from free choice and not out of duress, in "the lands of idolatry."<sup>40</sup>

Another subject that I ought to have reexamined is the tolerant and universalistic attitude toward the salvation of the soul, which lay behind both the questions Orobio addressed to Rabbi Mosseh Refael d'Aguilar and the dispute between Prado and Or-

---

<sup>36</sup> There is a very rich and exhaustive bibliography on this topic. See, among the most recent studies, Gérard Nahon and Michèle Escamilla, "Matines juives à Bayonne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle au filtre du Saint Office," in *Non solo verso Oriente: Studi sull'ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*, edited by Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Ricardo Di Segni and Marcello Massenzio (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2014): 295–343.

<sup>37</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 103–104.

<sup>38</sup> Orobio, *Carta Apologética*, in Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr. Juan de Prado*, 136; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 103, n.37.

<sup>39</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 96.

<sup>40</sup> Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhoh Yesodei ha-Tora*, V, 4.

obio. This entire topic deserves thorough revision in light of the interesting work of various scholars, especially the historian Stuart Schwartz, who demonstrated convincingly that the saying “Each person can be saved in his or her own religion” (*Cada uno se puede salvar en su ley*) was quite common among men and women of various social strata in the Iberian world as well as in the Spanish colonies in the Americas.<sup>41</sup> Prado and the *converso* sceptics were less radical than we thought, considering the cultural milieu in which they were active. On this matter I was far more moderate and cautious than others, who tried to find the source of individualism among the *conversos*, along with modern rational thought, deism, enlightenment, and much else. Let me cite Schwartz’s excellent book, *All Can Be Saved*:

the idea that such deism and skepticism might be a peculiarly Converso phenomenon, born of their experience of doubt, debate, dissimulation, and pressures upon their belief systems has been contested ... Even a scholar of the Sephardic community in Holland like Yosef Kaplan notes that such ideas were also circulating widely among the Christian population as well in the seventeenth century.<sup>42</sup>

It seems to me that, after the breast-beating I have shared with you, the time has come for me to respond, at least a bit, to the principled criticism that others have leveled against my writing, and which I reject. The most essential objection raised against me relates to the question of “return to the bosom of Judaism.” How could I have claimed, they object, that Orobio and other New Christians who became Jewish in the seventeenth century *returned* to Judaism? How could they return to an identity they had never had? How could they return to something which not even their parents or grandparents possessed? I allegedly applied the Talmudic maxim, “an Israelite, although he sinned, is still an Israelite” (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 44a) to a complex historical situation. However, it seems to me that, in this case, I was not the one who fell into a trap: my critics did as well. In the communities of the Western Sephardic Diaspora in the seventeenth century the Jews considered *conversos* who adhered to Judaism to be people returning to the bosom of either the Torah or Israel. I was not the one who invented this definition. Were they not regarded as “the seed of Israel who returned to the bosom of the Torah,” they would have been treated as proselytes. However, the *conversos* who became Jewish were never regarded as proselytes and the process of joining the Sephardic communities did not require conversion. Moreover, the communities also accepted the claims of those who said they were descended from *kohanim* (priests) or Levites. For male *conversos*, the process of joining the community included circumcision, after which the circumcised man received a Jewish name; this process did not include the ritual immersion that is required by the conversion ceremony. The adherent, after recovering

---

<sup>41</sup> Stuart B. Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved*, 60.



from the operation for a few weeks, would come to the synagogue, wrap himself in a prayer shawl for the first time in his life, put on phylacteries, and publicly recite the *Hagomel* blessing for recovering from danger. For women *conversos*, the act of joining the community was validated by the announcement of their Jewish names in the synagogue. Most surprisingly, they refrained from meticulously examining the mother's origins. In fact, I did encounter instances toward the end of the seventeenth century in which investigations were made regarding the origins of the adherent. However, the information supplied by some of the witnesses did not refer at all to the Jewish origins of the mother but to the adherent's membership in the *nação*. Apparently this testimony was accepted. For example, it seems that in the Sephardic community of Amsterdam, Isabel Pérez was never asked about her origins, though, as noted, she came from a family of Old Christians. Upon joining the Jewish people, she received the name Esther, which was very common among the women in these communities, because of the special status of Queen Esther among the "Marranos" (for Esther "did not tell of her nation or her birth"). Nor were the two sons and the daughter she bore to her husband, Isaac Orobio, regarded as converts: they, too, were accepted as returning to the bosom of Judaism and no obstacles were raised to their becoming Jewish.

In conclusion, permit me to share a personal experience from two years ago with you. My brother-in-law, who is an attorney in Amsterdam, told me that he had become acquainted with a judge named Richard Orobio de Castro. My brother-in-law told the judge about me, and he replied that he had read my book and would be pleased to meet me. On one of my trips to Amsterdam, in the winter of 2014, I called up the judge, who invited me to his home, at Herengracht 8. From the little that was known to me about the present day Portuguese Jewish community, it was clear to me that the judge had no connection with the Jewish life of the city. In my own mind I concluded that his ancestors had probably converted, as did many of the Portuguese Jews of Holland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, I was wrong. Not one of the judge's ancestors had converted to Christianity. However, in 1908, his grandfather, Herman Arthur Orobio de Castro, the son of Dr. Samuel Orobio de Castro and Esther Henriques de Castro, had married Jacoba Louise van Loenen Martinet, the daughter of the Calvinist theologian and predicant Johannes van Loenen Martinet. The judge's father was born of this intermarriage in 1909 and his name was Arthur Caesar Johannes Sebastian Christian Maximilian Orobio de Castro. He was a music teacher and pianist who also married a Calvinist woman in 1936, as did the judge himself in 1965. He received me with restrained courtesy. I drank tea with him in the living room of his large and splendid home, which was on one of the lovely canals of the city where the wealthy residents of Amsterdam used to live. Our conversation lasted for about an hour. The judge had prepared papers, files, articles he had clipped from the newspapers, and, of course, my book, which he said that he had read. "I wasn't terribly interested in the theological disputes, but I was very curious about the story of his life." I asked him whether he was in touch with Portuguese Jews. He answered that he had no connection with the Jewish community: *Wij zijn*

*geïntegreerd* (we have integrated) he said, without further explanation. Among the papers that he showed me, I also found a booklet written during the Nazi occupation by Arie de Froe, a Dutch physician and anthropologist, in which he sought to prove that Portuguese Jews were not Semites, and their origins were purely Iberian. I was familiar with that publication from my time as the librarian of the Ets Haim Library. The author’s purpose was to save the Portuguese Jews from the tragic fate that struck the Jews of Holland during the Holocaust.<sup>43</sup> Most likely this booklet was significant for the members of the Judge’s own family, but I refrained from asking questions that might embarrass me, perhaps, more than him. My host gave me a copy of the Orobio de Castro family tree, which was in his possession, going back to Isaac Orobio de Castro’s father and mother at the end of the sixteenth century.

There is, of course, no connection between the vicissitudes of this family in recent generations and the history of Isaac Orobio and the “Marranos” of the seventeenth century. However, the quiet assimilation, far from any drama and free of any theological explanations or religious intentions of any kind, made me ponder further the identity of New Christians in the Early Modern period. The vast majority of them integrated into Iberian society despite the Inquisition and the purity of blood regulations. In the end, the argument that Spinoza advanced in the third chapter of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, directed mainly against members of his former community, was wrong. Hatred was not what kept them Jewish.<sup>44</sup> Most of them managed to overcome it and assimilate. The case of the great painter, Diego de Velázquez illustrates this very well. He managed to counterfeit his genealogy completely, a fact that was not discovered during his lifetime. Historians only discovered his ruse at the end of the twentieth century, which, of course, was too late to prevent him and his family from evading the purity of blood regulations and assimilating into Spanish society.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, the vast majority of Iberian *conversos* did assimilate into Christian society quietly and undramatically, like the members of the Orobio de Castro family in Holland during the twentieth century. The stubborn and bitter dispute waged by Isaac Orobio and other former “Marranos” against Christianity and scepticism must be understood against the background of this reality: in large part this was an existential dispute, which took place within the *nação*.

---

**43** *Ontjoodst door de wetenschap: De wetenschappelijke en menselijke integriteit van Arie de Froe onder de bezetting*, edited by Hans Ulrich Jessurun d’Oliveira (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

**44** Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Leiden: Brill, 1989): “That they are preserved largely through the hatred of other nations is demonstrated by historical fact.”

**45** Kevin Ingram, “Diego Velázquez’s Secret History: The Family Background the Painter was at Pains to Hide in his Application for Entry into the Military Order of Santiago,” *Boletín del Museo del Prado* XVII, No. 35 (1999): 69–85.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (EP7/2007-2013)/ ERC grant agreement No. 295352.

## Works Cited

- Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Sección Inquisición, Leg. 2987<sup>1</sup>.
- Baer, Yitzhak Fritz. *Galut*. Berlin: Schocken, 1936.
- Beinart, Haim. *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *El hacedor, Obras completas 1923–1972*. Buenos Aires: Emece editores, 1974.
- Cardoso, Fernando. *Oración fúnebre en la muerte de Lope de Vega*. Madrid: por la viuda de Iuan Gonçalez, 1635.
- Cardoso, Yitzhak. *Ma'lot ha-Ivrim: Perakim*, trans. Yosef Kaplan. Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1971.
- Cardoso, Yshac. *Las excelencias de los Hebreos*. Amsterdam: David de Castro Tartas, 1679.
- Elliott, John Huxtable. *History in the Making*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.
- Fishman, Talya. *Shaking the Pillars of Exile: "Voice of a Fool," an Early Modern Jewish Critique of Rabbinic Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Ingram, Kevin. "Diego Velázquez's Secret History: The Family Background the Painter was at Pains to Hide in his Application for Entry into the Military Order of Santiago." *Boletín del Museo del Prado* XVII, 35 (1999): 69–85.
- Jessurun d'Oliveira, Hans Ulrich, ed. *Ontjoodst door de wetenschap: De wetenschappelijke en menselijke integriteit van Arie de Froe onder de bezetting*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *Do Cristianismo ao Judaísmo: A História de Isaac Oróbio de Castro*, trans. Henrique de Araújo Mesquita. Rio de Janeiro: Imago Editora, 2000.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe. Oxford: The Littman Library by Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Haim Beinart and the Historiography of the *Conversos* in Spain." In *Exile and Diaspora. Studies in the History of the Jewish People Presented to Professor Haim Beinart*, edited by Aharon Mirsky, Avraham Grossman, and Yosef Kaplan, 11–16. Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *Mi-natsrut le-yahadut: Hayaw u-foalo shel ha-anus Ytzhak Orobio de Castro*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1982.
- Kaplan, Yosef, Henry Méchoulan and Richard Henry Popkin, eds. *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*. Leiden, New York, København and Köln: E.J. Brill, 1989.
- Myers, David N. *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Malkiel, María Rosa Lida de. "Lope de Vega y los judíos." *Bulletin Hispanique* 75, no. 1 (1973): 73–112.
- Nahon, Gérard and Michèle Escamilla. "Matines juives à Bayonne au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle au filtre du Saint Office." In *Non solo verso Oriente: Studi sull'ebraismo in onore di Pier Cesare Ioly Zorattini*. I., edited by Maddalena Del Bianco Cotrozzi, Ricardo Di Segni, and Marcello Massenzio, 295–343. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2014.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. "Carta Apologética al Doctor Prado." In *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, edited by I. S. Révah, 130–142. Paris-La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1959.

- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Controvertitur utrum materialibus morbis in choantibus sanguinis missio revulsiva iuxta Hippocratis et Galeni dogmata per distantissimas venas effici debeat*. Seville: apud Ignatium de Lyra, 1653.
- Popkin, Richard Henry. “Intellectual Autobiography.” In *The Sceptical Mode in Modern Philosophy. Essays in Honor of Richard H. Popkin*, edited by Richard A. Watson and James E. Force, 103–149. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988.
- Popkin, Richard Henry. *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1960.
- Révah, I. S. “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: nouveaux documents sur l’incroyance dans la communauté judéo-portugaise d’Amsterdam à l’époque de l’excommunication de Spinoza.” *Revue des études juives* 123 (1964): 359–431.
- Révah, I. S. “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne [II]: Nouvel examen des origines, du déroulement et des conséquences de l’affaire Spinoza-Prado-Ribera.” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 70 (1970): 562–578; 71 (1971): 574–589; 72 (1972): 641–663.
- Révah, I. S. *Des Marranes à Spinoza*. Edited by Henry Méchoulan, Pierre-François Moreau, and Carsten Lorenz Wilke. Paris: Vrin, 1995.
- Révah, I. S. *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*. Paris-La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1959.
- Samson, Alexander. “Antisemitism, Class and Lope de Vega’s ‘El niño inocente de la Guardia.’” *Hispanic Research Journal* 3.2 (2002): 107–122.
- Schwartz, Stuart B. *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Silverman, Joseph H. “Perduración del paradigma antisemita medieval en el teatro de Lope de Vega.” In *El teatre durant l’Edat Mitjana i el Renaixement*, edited by Jesús Francesc Massip, 63–70. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1986.
- Simson, Ingrid. “Un ejemplo de antisemitismo en el teatro de Lope de Vega: ‘El Brasil restituido.’” In *El olivo y la espada. Estudios sobre el antisemitismo en España (siglos xvi–xx)*, edited by Pere Joan i Tous and Heike Nottebaum, 229–242. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer / Romania Judaica 6, 2003.
- Spinoza, Baruch. *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans. Samuel Shirley. Leiden: Brill, 1989.
- Van Rooden, Peter T. and Jan W. Wesselius. “The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: The ‘Civil Dispute’ between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro.” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–153.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Haim. *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto. Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971.
- Yuval, Israel Jacob. “Yitzhak Baer and the Search for Authentic Judaism.” In *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, edited by David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman, 77–87. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Zepeda, Alonso de. *Defensa de los términos y doctrina de S. Raymundo Lullio sobre el misterio de S.S.S. Trinidad, contra cierto rescribiente judío de la Sinagoga de Amsterdam*. Brussels: en casa de Baltasar Vivien, 1666.



Natalia Muchnik

## Orobio Contra Prado: A Trans-European Controversy

When the college “Mother of God of the Theologians” at the University of Alcalá de Henares elected Baltasar Orobio de Castro on April 20, 1636 as one of its members, the young medical student owed his admission perhaps to the intervention of another Andalusian *converso*, Juan de Prado, with whom he had been acquainted for three years in a friendship apparently based on the two men’s common crypto-Judaism.<sup>1</sup> From then until Prado’s death in 1669, they would repeatedly come together in different places in Europe. In their own way, they symbolised the two sides of the Iberian New Christians’ exile and their conversion to Judaism. Orobio embodied a successful process of Judaisation in which he would eventually become the spearhead of orthodoxy, while Prado illustrates, if not the failure, at least the torments and spiritual comings-and-goings that were interwoven in this process. Their singularity, however, is that they represented a conspicuous category among the New Christian emigrants: intellectuals who, as Orobio pointed out in his *Invective Epistle*, had attended Iberian universities and later joined normative Jewish communities.<sup>2</sup> Both Prado and Orobio did so at more than 40 years of age, after protracted peregrinations across Europe: while the former had left for Rome, the latter went to France. In 1663–1664, when Orobio had proceeded to Amsterdam and Prado to Antwerp, they engaged in an epistolary dispute that marks the clash between their respective tendencies towards Jewish belief and free-thinking doubt. This controversy shows that both *conversos* adopted normative Judaism reluctantly, and it also shows that, vice versa, many of their coreligionists born into Judaism had difficulties in understanding them. The peculiar interest of this controversy lies in the fact that Orobio was himself a former crypto-Jew and that he noticed Prado’s intellectual ferment at a time when both were still living in Spain. It is crucial to note, though historiography has tended to neglect this aspect, that their confrontation started well before both of them converted to Judaism. Prado’s doubts reflect a spiritual dynamic of Spanish origin, a form of scepticism and deism that appears among *converso* intellectuals, even among secret Judaisers, but also in Iberian societies as a whole. The difficulty is that most if not all positions of Prado’s thought can only be grasped negatively, be it through the in-

---

Natalia Muchnik, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris

1 This might be one of the “favours” which Orobio mentions in his *Carta apologética*, edited in I.S. Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado* (Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959), 130: “yo no he recibido algunos agravios del Doctor Prado, sino repetidas y continuadas experiencias de su buena voluntad y deseo de mis medras, sin olvidar los favores y assistencias en los primeros años de mi juventud.”

2 Orobio, *Epístola invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 89.

quisitorial archives, biased by definition, or through the writings of Orobio and other Jewish opponents.

## ***Andalusian Medical Circles and the Birth of a Friendship***

The interest of the confrontation between Orobio and Prado lies in particular, as has been said, in the long history of their relationship and in the similarities between their backgrounds and itineraries. Prado, born around 1612, was only five years older than Orobio; both originated in the region of Bragança and were brought to Andalusia during their childhood. Their families who were part of the trans-Iberian migration wave of *conversos* fleeing the very active Portuguese Inquisition, wanted to take advantage of the economic opportunities they could find in Spain at a time when both kingdoms were united under the same monarch. While Orobio's family settled in Málaga, the Prados chose Lopera, a town in the region of Jaén. Juan de Prado started his medical studies at the University of Alcalá in 1627, whereas Baltasar enrolled five years later at the University of Osuna. Orobio moved to Alcalá in 1635 and entered one year later the "College of the Mother of God," where Prado had been a member since 1633.<sup>3</sup> Prado did not finish his schooling there, but left Alcalá for the University of Toledo. This is what one can conclude from the fact that he presented a doctoral diploma from that university, obtained in 1638, when he enrolled in the College of Physicians of Amsterdam in 1655.<sup>4</sup> This document was probably a forgery, just like the doctoral certificates that Orobio presented in Seville in 1641 and in Toulouse in 1660.<sup>5</sup>

Did the two men become acquainted with each other during the year of 1635–1636 when they studied together in Alcalá? This is more than likely. Did they secretly share Jewish beliefs and ceremonies with each other? No explicit source indicates this. We do not know anything certain about young Prado's cultural practices. If we accept Orobio's testimony in his *Invective Epistle*, he observed the Jewish law since his childhood; and Prado himself, in a letter he sent in 1667 to the Holy Office, searched to excuse his Judaism with the misguided upbringing that he received.<sup>6</sup> However, inquisitorial evidence suggests that Prado converted both his relatives

---

3 I. S. Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, edited by Henry Méchoulan, Pierre-François Moreau and Carsten Lorenz Wilke (Paris: Vrin, 1995), 260–263; Natalia Muchnik, *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005), 85–93.

4 Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 262.

5 Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford, Littman Library; Oxford University Press, 1989), 101–102.

6 Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 257–258; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 332–333.

and his friend Orobio. “He said that nobody had encouraged or taught him to observe the Law of Moses, but he had learned it from his books and studies.”<sup>7</sup>

The friendship of the two medical doctors continued after their studies. One rediscovers them side-by-side in certain scholarly meetings, *tertulias*, which brought together, in Andalusia, several doctors, all of them being apparently of *converso* stock. This is at least what Orobio would declare in front of the inquisitors of Seville, who reported in 1656 to the High Council of the Holy Office:

Attached to the present letter, we submit to Your Highness the trial record and the testimony that Doctor Don Baltasar de Orobio, a physician, inmate in the secret prisons of this tribunal, has given against the Doctors Pereda, Simón de Silva Calvo, the latter resident of Murcia, Reynoso, Núñez, and Juan de Prado, the latter resident of Antequera, and the Licenciado Serrano, resident of Bailén, who are all physicians and have been voted to be arrested with confiscation of their property, as Your Highness may command to see. Because he has, when speaking of the aforementioned persons, only declared the places of residence of the Doctors Silva in Murcia and Juan de Prado in Antequera, as well as of the Licenciado Serrano in Bailén, Your Highness may order to execute the steps that the respective inquisitorial tribunals will agree upon.<sup>8</sup>

It is not surprising that the inquisitors took a keen interest in these doctors whom they suspected of holding leadership roles in the *converso* communities, taking advantage of their mobility and prestige in order to disseminate Judaizing practices. The fellow doctors denounced by Orobio can be identified from other sources: Diego Duarte Serrano, of Bailén in the province of Jaén, is Prado’s brother-in-law, since he was married to the sister of Isabel Gómez, wife and cousin of Prado since 1638. It seems, moreover, that Prado and Duarte were fellow students at Alcalá, where they are found side-by-side in the records of 1631 and 1633.<sup>9</sup> Dr. Núñez may have been Duarte Núñez de Acosta, a student of Salamanca and later a physician of the aristocracy, probably from a crypto-Jewish family, who participated in 1653 in a medical controversy at the University of Seville that brought together various doctors of the region, among them Orobio. But Dr. Núñez can alternatively be identified with Jorge Nuñez, a student in Alcalá belonging to Prado’s circle, who may perhaps be found around 1649 among the Jews of Livorno.<sup>10</sup> As for Jerónimo Gómez Pereda, he was a royal physician linked to the great Portuguese families of Madrid and

---

**7** Archivo Diocesano de Cuenca [ADC], Inquisición, leg. 492 (6569), fol. 77r: “deçia que a el no le avia impuesto nadie en la observança de la ley de Moyses, ni se la avia enseñado sino que el la avia aprendido por sus libros y letras.” Cf. Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 278; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 121.

**8** Archivo Histórico Nacional [henceforth AHN], Inquisición, leg. 2987<sup>1</sup>, published by I. S. Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents sur l’incroyance dans la communauté judéo-portugaise à Amsterdam à l’époque de l’excommunication de Spinoza,” *Revue des études juives* 123 (1964): 359–431, here 430–431.

**9** They sign jointly the certificate of the medicine and surgery classes, see AHN, Universidades, lib. 493F, fol. 5r–v (1632–1633); see Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 85–86.

**10** Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 88, note 39; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 91.



the diaspora. Educated at the University of Sigüenza, he became Prado's uncle by alliance, and he had also taken part in the same student circle of Alcalá, since Orobio declared that Pereda was the one who converted him to Judaism:

Doctor Juan de Prado, a Portuguese physician resident of Antequera, where he was living when the declarant [Orobio] was arrested, is an observer of the said Law of Moses, because during the time he has declared about, that is, sixteen years ago, when the declarant was studying at the University of Alcalá, where Doctor Prado's uncle, the Doctor Pereda, taught and instructed him in the observance of the said Law of Moses, the said Prado declared himself with the declarant as an observer of the Law of Moses, because he had known and understood that his said uncle Pereda had become and remained the declarant's teacher. They talked about the ceremonies that were obligatory to perform for the said observance and salvation of one's soul, though he does not remember having performed any of them together with him.<sup>11</sup>

One can discover in Orobio's declaration a hint to a crypto-Judaic circle that seems to have existed during the 1630s at Alcalá and, more specifically, among the medical students. Some of its members would later reconstitute their circle in Andalusia and, once more, in emigration outside Spain, particularly in the Jewish diaspora community of Amsterdam. It is very likely that the "Doctor Reynoso" denounced by Orobio is the same person as Miguel Reynoso, who settled in Amsterdam around 1646, whom one finds alongside Prado and Spinoza in 1659, and who signs in 1673, jointly with Orobio, a notarial act concerning a woman patient.<sup>12</sup> This Reynoso seems to be identical with Dr. Abraham Israel Reynoso, who entered the brotherhood *Honen Dalim* in 1645–1646, was elected to the *mahamad* in 1654 and registered in the Collegium Medicum of Amsterdam.<sup>13</sup>

How should we imagine these Andalusian medical *tertulias*? They probably resembled the academic disputations that Orobio used to take part in at the time, such as the one held in Seville, in 1653, about bloodletting. Discussions must have easily slipped from medicine to philosophy and even theology. As proof, one of the participants in the bloodletting controversy, Dr. Sebastián Soto, whom the Inquisition of Toledo had accused in 1634 of erroneous propositions (he had alleged that

---

**11** AHN, Inquisición, leg. 2987<sup>1</sup>: "El Doctor Joan de Prado medico portugues vecino de Antequera a donde residia quando este [Orobio] fue preso es observante de dicha ley de Moisen porque el tiempo que ha dicho de diez y seis años que este estava en la Universidad de Alcalá donde le enseño e ynstruio como tiene dicho en la observancia de la dicha ley de Moisen el dicho Doctor Pereda tio del dicho Prado este dicho Prado se declaro con este por observante de dicha ley de Moisen porque supo y entendio que el dicho su tio Pereda en la dicha observancia de la ley de Moisen avia sido y era Maestro deste [Orobio] no se acuerda hicieran ceremonias juntos pero comunicabanse en las que havian de hacer que heran las convenientes para la dicha observancia y la salvacion de su alma." French translation in Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 95.

**12** Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 204.

**13** Stadsarchief Amsterdam [henceforth SAA], PA 334, no. 1186, fol. 58v; no. 19, in the lists at the beginning of the volume; SAA, Collegium Medicum, Series nominum doctorum medicinae, no. 16: "Michael Reynosa jam dictus Abraham Reynoso Hebraeus"; see Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 173–174.

God did not intervene in secondary causes), evoked the *tertulias* held every Monday among doctors in order to discuss, in particular, matters of philosophy and theology.<sup>14</sup>

Not incidentally, Orobio first remarked during this period that Prado was harbouring doubts about the religious faith, and he seems already to be fighting his friend's objections, as he would again with greater firmness twenty years later, in Amsterdam.

## ***First Struggles and First Doubts***

After his university studies, Prado was busy spreading crypto-Judaism, as Orobio would later note in his *Invective Epistle*, “trying to win over for its observance others of the same nation who were lacking instruction and, by consequence, belief. To these, he repeatedly quoted the verse: ‘He has not done this to all nations, and He did not reveal his judgments to them’ [Ps 147:20].” At the time, Prado “found natural reasons of utmost acumen in order to convince certain stubborn hearers of the truth.”<sup>15</sup>

Around 1643, when Orobio taught at the University of Seville, he paid a visit to Prado. As he declared to the Holy Office, Baltasar noted with astonishment that his friend “appeared changed in some of his answers” to such an extent that he could only display his incomprehension at his propositions. When he pushed Prado to explain himself,

he told him, though with some hesitation in his reasoning, that all humans could obtain salvation, each and everyone in the law that they observed, whether they were Jews, Moors, or Christians, because their laws tended toward a political finality derived from the natural law, and this was the *causa causarum* that Aristotle had recognised.<sup>16</sup>

---

**14** Sagrario Muñoz Calvo, *Inquisición y ciencia en la España moderna* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977), 188–191.

**15** Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 109: “la abrazó y observó [la Divina Ley] desde la infancia hasta los años de la senectud entre peligros y zozobras de sus enemigos, procurando atraer a la misma observancia a otros de la propia nación que, por falta de doctrina, estaban incredulos, repitiendo diversas veces el verso: *No hizo assi a toda nacion, y sus juicios no manifestó a ellos ...* Entonces se ofrecian razones naturales con summa agudeza para persuadir la verdad a algun obstinado.”

**16** AHN, Inquisición, leg. 2374<sup>1</sup>, fol. 2r–v: “El Dr Joan de Prado medico dijo a este que tenia por cierto que se salvaba cada uno en la ley que profesava el cristiano en la suia, y en la de Moisen, y Mahoma los que las profesavan y seguian como en todas las demas porque como miraban todas a un fin que hera reconoçer a Dios eso bastava para salvarse.” This testimony is reported in a file composed around 1669 by the inquisitorial tribunal of the Canary Islands; see Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 279; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 342–343.

Are we facing here the first doubts and the beginnings of the deism that would come to the fore in Amsterdam fifteen years later? During the ratification of his confession, Baltasar pointed out that Dr. Diego Duarte Serrano, Prado's brother-in-law who, as we have seen, participated in the same *tertulias*, attended their conversation and approved of Prado's reasoning. However, Orobio now presents Prado's words quite differently:

Dr. Juan de Prado, the physician, said to the declarant that he was sure that everyone obtained salvation in the law they confessed: the Christian in his one, and those who confess and follow the laws of Moses and Mahomet obtain it through theirs, and likewise all others, because all [laws] were directed towards the finality of knowing God, which is sufficient for salvation.<sup>17</sup>

These two, seemingly irreconcilable versions have posed a problem to historiography.<sup>18</sup> They may lead to several hypotheses about Prado's thought: are the laws of religion merely political and pragmatic, or do all religions aim at the knowledge of God? Does religious faith only assure political obedience or can it help in finding speculative certainty? However, one may answer this question, it is manifest that already in the early 1640s, Prado nourished heterodox thoughts and betrayed the first signs of deism, an incredulity that Orobio later attributed to

the Godless persuasion of another man of the Hebrew nation, first Christian, then Jewish, then neither Jewish nor Christian, a very short-minded fellow, a meagre philosopher and even less of a physician, foolish in his discourse, intrepid in his speech, a lover of novelties, a cultivator of paradoxes, and worst of all, a man of abominable customs.<sup>19</sup>

Orobio does not name the crypto-Jewish yet free-thinking doctor who had perverted Prado. I.S. Révah identified this third man with a certain Juan Piñero, whose name appears in the margin of several copies of the *Invective Epistle* next to the quoted passage. This Sevillian, who died around 1662, is denounced in the inquisitorial trial of another Judaising doctor, Rodrigo Enríquez de Fonseca, who seems to have been his fellow student in Alcalá before a professor at the University of Valencia con-

---

**17** AHN, Inquisición, leg. 2374<sup>1</sup>, fol. 3r: “El Dr Joan de Prado medico dijo a este que tenia por cierto que se salvaba cada uno en la ley que profesava el cristiano en la suia, y en la de Moisen, y Mahoma los que las profesavan y seguian como en todas las demas porque como miraban todas a un fin que hera reconoçer a Dios eso bastava para salvarse.” Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 279; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 343.

**18** Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics, Vol.I. The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 62.

**19** Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 109: “Y si se inquiere el fundamento desta mudanza y nueva incredulidad, no es otro que rendir el antiguo y bien fundado dictamen a la persuacion de otro, Hebreo de nacion, primero Christiano, despues Judio, y despues ni Judio ni Christiano: hombre de cortissimo juizio, poco Philosopho y menos Medico, loco en su discurs[r]ir, intrepido en su hablar, amigo de novedades, solicitador de paradoxas y, lo peor, abominable en sus costumbres.” The manuscript Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 04, fol. 17r, reads “la ympia persuacion de otro Hebreo de nascion.”

verted him to a religion based on the Law of Nature.<sup>20</sup> Orobio mentions Piñero in another context, when he remembers that he had once borrowed from him the *Scrutinium Scripturarum* of Pablo de Santa Maria.<sup>21</sup>

One can safely conclude that deist ideas did indeed circulate among New Christian students at Spanish universities in the seventeenth century. The schools of Alcalá and Valencia, which were particularly notorious hotbeds of *novatores*, also became way stations in the biography of various Judaizing doctors, such as Diego Mateo Zapata, one of the foremost *novatores* himself. Historiography has repeatedly pointed out the link that connected sixteenth- and seventeenth-century crypto-Judaism to medicine and a specific form of incredulity that has been categorised as materialism, naturalism or even atheism, a trilogy of which Prado may seem to be the very embodiment. Historians of the Inquisition have observed that trials against *conversos* frequently append charges of incredulity to the ordinary accusations of crypto-Judaism.<sup>22</sup> The existence of rationalist or “averroist” tendencies among the Jews and, later, the *conversos* of Spain is manifest since the Middle Ages. According to Yitzhak Baer, Spanish rabbis complained of the numerous Jews who affirmed that the soul was mortal, who held the natural laws superior to the Torah, and who pursued secular rather than religious knowledge.<sup>23</sup> In the sixteenth century, authors such as João de Barros in his *Ropicapnefma* (1532) attack *conversos* who reject the dogmas of the immortality of the soul and of the rewards and punishments in the afterlife.<sup>24</sup> Many trials against crypto-Judaizers thus involve doubts about immortality and afterlife. To be sure, such accusations are also prolific in the inquisitorial trials opened against Old Christians for “propositions,” “scandalous words,” or stereotyped expressions such as “there is nothing in life but to be born and die” or “we are born and die like beasts.” However, similar manifestations of unbelief were associated with Judaizers, as were blasphemies, scepticism, and other forms of nonconformist thought.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> AHN, Inquisición, lib. 1134, fols. 204r. and 149r–v.

<sup>21</sup> Orobio, *Carta apologética*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 132; see Révah, *Des Marranes à Spinoza*, 269–272.

<sup>22</sup> Julio Caro Baroja, *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea* (Madrid: Istmo, 2000) [1961], vol. 1, 493; Caro Baroja, *De la superstición al ateísmo: Meditaciones antropológicas* (Madrid: Taurus, 1974), 255.

<sup>23</sup> Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966 [1945]), II 253–259, chapter “Averroism among the Jews.” On Baer’s thesis, see Yosef Kaplan, “Foi et scepticisme dans la diaspora des nouveaux-chrétiens des débuts de l’Europe moderne,” *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian* 48 (2004): 21–40, here 24–25.

<sup>24</sup> I. S. Révah, “Le colloque ‘Ropicapnefma’ de João de Barros. Genèse, structure et technique,” *Bulletin Hispanique* 64bis (1962), 572–592, and Révah, “Antiquité et christianisme, anciens et modernes, dans l’œuvre de João de Barros,” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, 157 (1967), 165–185; Kaplan, “Foi et scepticism,” 33.

<sup>25</sup> John Edwards, “Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500,” *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), 3–25; Juan Antonio Alejandre and María Jesus Torquemada, *Palabra de hereje: La Inquisición de Sevilla ante el delito de proposiciones* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998); J.

In this perspective, incredulity was disseminated in alliance with a sort of crypto-Judaism that one may certainly imagine as a secular rather than religious attitude, an attitude for which Prado was characterised as a premature “secular Jew.”<sup>26</sup> Quite a similar mindset appears, coloured with blasphemy, in the words of Fernando de Medina, born in 1656 in Peyrehorade in southwestern France and arrested in New Spain in 1691 on accusations of Judaising. He maintained, however: “There is no God, no deity, no Trinity: the gods are men of flesh and blood like all others.” “Soul is spirit, and when the body dies, ... the spirit dies too.” Eight years later, Fernando concluded, like Prado, that “men can obtain their salvation through any law and any sect.”<sup>27</sup>

However, these currents also must be located inside Spanish intellectual history. Various sources affirm the existence of so-called “atheist” thinkers who, inspired in part by models from Greek and Roman Antiquity, subscribed to the thesis of the mortality of the soul and did not believe in post-mortem rewards. Since the sixteenth century, the cases of such alleged heretics multiplied. Though these people evoked the same slogan of “to be born and to die is all,” they had no connection whatsoever with crypto-Judaism. Works such as the *Ten Laments on the Misery of the Atheists of our Time* by friar Jerónimo Gracián (1611) attempt to reveal the existence of these unbelievers, which the defenders of the faith falsely described as atheists.<sup>28</sup> In order to confute these deviant minds, Quevedo contributed texts of political or ascetic veins such as the *Politics of God and Government of Christ* and the *Providence of God, which Confutes its Deniers and Favours its Confessors*, books written around 1617 and 1641, respectively. In the *Politics of God*, Quevedo creates an association between reason of state and atheism, two idols inseparable from their two attributes, dissimulation and incredulity.<sup>29</sup> According to him, the “Godless” (*sin Dios*) are “those who do not believe in the immortality of the soul, those who say that there is neither God nor Providence, and those few who confess that there is a God but deny His providence.”<sup>30</sup>

---

Edwards and C. John Sommerville, “Religious Faith, Doubt and Atheism,” *Past and Present*, 128 (1990): 152–161, here 156.

**26** Yirmiyahu Yovel, *The Other Within: The Marranos, Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 333.

**27** Nathan Wachtel, *La foi du souvenir: Labyrinthes marranes* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), 240–244, 246.

**28** Geronimo Gracian de la Madre de Dios, *Diez lamentaciones del miserable estado de los Atheistas de nuestros tiempos* (Brussels: Roger Velpio and Huberto Antonio, 1611); cf. Caro Baroja, *De la superstición al ateísmo*, 258–260.

**29** Quevedo, *Política de Dios y gobierno de Cristo* (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1947), 123.

**30** Quevedo, *Providencia de Dios padecida de los que la niegan y gozada de los que la confiesan: Doctrina estudiada en los gusanos y persecuciones de Job* (Zaragoza: Pasqual Bueno, 1700), 3: “Estos hombres se llaman en Griego, sin Dios, con esta palabra Atheistas, que se han usurpado las lenguas vulgares. Los que no creen la Inmortalidad de la Alma, dicen, que ni ay Dios, ni Providencia; y son muy pocos los que la niegan, que confiesan hay Dios, mas estos negaron su Providencia.”

They deny the afterlife and perceive all religions as lies: Quevedo here possibly hints to certain expressions of the “Three Impostors” topos.<sup>31</sup>

On the Jewish side, Fernando (Isaac) Cardoso claims to have composed a “book on the Six Days [of creation] against the atheists for the defense of the soul.”<sup>32</sup> He reiterates his attacks in his *Philosophia Libera*, published in Italy but partly written in Spain: “The assertors of the mortality of the soul, whom I have myself known, were wicked men, devoted to vices, and bound to no law.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, many literary writings of the Spanish baroque, such as the allegorical Corpus Christi plays (*autos sacramentales*) by Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca, present characters designated as sceptics or atheists, without necessarily attributing the political motivations of the reason of state to them. Finally, in treatises on theology, one can observe the regular appearance of introductory chapters aimed at demonstrating the existence of God, a genre that was still rare in the sixteenth century.<sup>34</sup> The Jesuits, in particular, devote much space to this question.<sup>35</sup>

In sum, the doubts that Orobio perceived in Prado and that he denounced to the Holy Office in 1654–1656 fit into a well-known dynamic that took place both inside and outside crypto-Judaism. When making his declarations, he probably knew that Prado was by then already out of Spain. The latter had become in 1652 the personal physician of Domingo Pimentel, Archbishop of Seville, who had just obtained the dignity of Cardinal, and accompanied him on a journey to Rome. When Pimentel died in 1653, Prado and his family had to make a new start, this time joining the Sephardic community of Hamburg. Juan de Prado, who adopted the first name of Daniel after his circumcision, settled in Amsterdam in 1655. Orobio would join him there in 1662.

---

31 Quevedo, *Providencia de Dios*, 28.

32 Cardoso, *Discurso sobre el Monte Vesuvio* (Madrid: Francisco Martínez, 1632), fol. 5r–v: “como diximos cōtra el Atheista en nuestra obra de los Seis días en defensa del alma.”

33 Cardoso, *Philosophia Libera*, book VI “De immortalitate animae.” I follow the translation in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso, a Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 254.

34 Ramón Ceñal, “El argumento ontológico de la existencia de Dios en la escolástica de los siglos XVII y XVIII,” in *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri* (Madrid: Moneda y Crédito, 1970): 247–325.

35 See, for instance, Francisco Suarez, *Metaphysicarum disputationum* (Salamanca, Juan and Andres Renaut, 1597) and Pedro Hurtado de Mendoza, *Disputationes de universa philosophia* (Lyon: Antoine Pillehotte, 1614–1617).

## *The Devices of Prado's Thought*

“It is only to you that it so happened, to be a fake Christian and a true Jew where you could not be a Jew, and to be a fake Jew where [finally] you could be truly Jewish.”<sup>36</sup> In these terms, Orobio lambasts Prado in his *Apologetic Letter*. He had started his text with the statement that he desired “to accelerate his repentance, to where the knowledge of the truth that he had previously observed, and that his parents had kept, is about to bring him, according to the news I received.”<sup>37</sup> We know indeed that in July 1656, less than one year after Prado’s arrival in Amsterdam, he was excluded together with Spinoza from the Portuguese Jewish congregation by its authorities.

Prado had met the young Baruch Spinoza before the end of 1655. Certain scholars, such as Carl Gebhardt and I. S. Révah, have maintained that Spinoza, who had until then been an active member of the congregation, was among the students that Prado “seduced” with his ideas. This is manifestly what Orobio believed and expressed in his writings; and so did Miguel de Barrios in his famous verses: “Now thorns (*espinas*) are there where roses stood yesterday, and the asp that can be seen in its leaves, aims at the one who passes poisonous darts.”<sup>38</sup> These lines were published in Barrios’s *Coro de las Musas* in 1672, two years after Spinoza’s *Theological-Philosophical Treatise* was published; they are still absent from the first version of the poem, which had appeared in the volume *Flor de Apolo* in 1665. However, in the light of what we know on Spinoza’s early life, it seems likely that Prado was not really a mentor for him, but that their encounter was merely a catalyser for the doubts that he had previously harboured. The same may be said for Prado himself. Some scholars, most decidedly Gabriel Albiac and Yirmiyahu Yovel, claim an influence of the marranic experience on Spinoza while downplaying Prado’s individual role in it.<sup>39</sup> Still more numerous are those scholars who look for heterodox influences from outside the Sephardic community.<sup>40</sup> Richard Popkin, who ignored the prece-

---

36 Orobio, *Carta apologética*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 133: “que solo a Vmd. aconteció ser Christiano fingido y Judío verdadero en donde no podía ser Judío, y ser Judío fingido en donde podía serlo verdadero.” Translation quoted from Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 1, 63.

37 Orobio, *Epístola invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 93: “tengo esperanza que le traerà al conocimiento de la Verdad que observe”; corrected according to the ms. Ets Haim 48 C 04, fol. 4v: “tengo noticias le trae el conocimiento de la verdad que antes observe.”

38 Miguel de Barrios, “Epístola censorial,” in Révah, *Spinoza*, 80: “Agora espinas son las que ayer rosas, / y el aspid que en sus hojas se apercibe, / hinca al que passa puntas venenosas.” On the common puns linking the thorns (*espinas*) to the meadows (*prados*), see Práxedes Caballero, “La crítica de Orobio de Castro a Spinoza,” in *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez (Murcia: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994): 229–237, here 232.

39 Gabriel Albiac, *La sinagoga vacía: Un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo* (Madrid: Hiperión, 1987), and Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, Vol. 1, 80: “Prado and Spinoza arrived at their heretical ideas independently.”

40 Koenrad O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris: Vrin, 1983) (revised version of the original edition of 1896), Filippo Mignini, “Données et problèmes de la chronologie spinozienne entre 1656 et

dents of deism in Prado's Spanish past, supposed that for both men, a turning-point must have been the Amsterdam visit of Isaac La Peyrère, who published his *Praeadamitae* there in 1655.<sup>41</sup> In this book, he argues that there is no evidence of the world being created; moreover, since the historical records of the Chinese date back more than ten thousand years, it is likely that their origin is earlier than that of the Jewish people—an argument that we find again in Prado. References to “the pre-Adamite sect of Amsterdam” exist in the polemics that were published against La Peyrère after 1656. In the controversy that pitted Orobio against Philip van Limborch, the former speculated about a connection between “pre-Adamites,” “atheists,” and “theological politicians.”<sup>42</sup> Certain stances held by Prado, especially his doubt in the accuracy of biblical information, which must have to some extent been shared by the young Spinoza as well,<sup>43</sup> coincide (according to Popkin) with the religious scepticism<sup>44</sup> promoted by La Peyrère. Their stance involves an understanding of the sacred text as a document that needs to be understood from itself, following a specific type of knowledge and establishing an “archaeology that needs to construct a science of meaning.”<sup>45</sup> Other historians of philosophy have emphasised the impact of Franciscus van den Enden, Spinoza's Latin teacher, who is thought to have inspired the theoretical foundations of the Spinozist system.<sup>46</sup> Finally, certain scholars insist on the precocious philosophical originality of the young Spinoza (see the biographies of Lucas and Colerus), noting in particular that sources

---

1665,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 71 (1987): 9–21 and Richard H. Popkin, “Spinoza's Earliest Philosophical Years, (1655–61),” *Studia Spinozana*, 4 (1988): 37–55; Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 159 ff.

41 Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), and Popkin, “Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac La Peyrère,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8 (1974): 59–63; “The Development of Religious Scepticism and the Influence of Isaac La Peyrère's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism,” in *Classical Influences on European Culture, 1500–1700*, edited by Robert R. Bolbar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976): 271–280.

42 I. Orobio de Castro, “Tertium scriptum Judaei,” in Philippus van Limborch, *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judæo* (Gouda: Justus van der Hoeve, 1687): 148.

43 See among others Robert Mizrahi, *Spinoza* (Paris: Seghers, 1964) and Sylvain Zac, *Signification et valeur de l'interprétation de l'Écriture chez Spinoza* (Paris: PUF, 1965).

44 Popkin's analyses, which highlight the impact of the rediscovered writings of Sextus Empiricus, have attracted objections and amendments in recent research, as this is stated in particular by Yosef Kaplan, “Richard Popkin's Marrano Problem,” in *The Legacies of Richard Popkin*, edited by Jeremy D. Popkin (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008): 197–212; and Carsten L. Wilke, “‘That Devilish Invention called Faith’: Seventeenth-Century Free-Thought and its Use in Sephardi Apologetics,” in *Conversos, Marrani e Nuove Comunità ebraiche in età moderna*, edited by Myriam Silvera (Florence: Giuntina, 2015): 131–144, here 131–133.

45 Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau, “La lecture de la Bible dans le cercle de Spinoza,” in *Le Grand Siècle de la Bible*, edited by Jean-Robert Armogathe (Paris: Beauchesne-CNRS, 1989): 108–114.

46 Wim Klever, “Proto-Spinoza Franciscus van den Enden,” *Studia Spinozana* 6 (1990): 281–289.



refer to the Dutch master and his disciples as “atheist Cartesians” and that the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* was written around 1656–1657.<sup>47</sup>

The *herem* against Spinoza was pronounced in 1656, while Prado chose to submit to a public act of repentance. At a time when the two men were provisionally separated, Prado opened up to Daniel de Ribera, a priest who had become a proselyte to Judaism around 1653 and had opened a school in Amsterdam for the instruction of poor children. We can probably identify Ribera with the Catalan Don José Carreras y Coligo, who was a preacher in Portugal and a royal columnist in Brazil.<sup>48</sup> In 1656–1657, Prado seems to have been in close contact with Ribera (perhaps he even taught at the latter’s school) to such an extent that their spiritual attitude increasingly invited concerns of the congregation and led to its special supervision. Soon, the Jewish leadership conducted an investigation, which resulted in two files.<sup>49</sup> Four of Prado’s students reported that their teacher had ridiculed various precepts of rabbinic ritual law, that he had doubted the truth of the Mosaic accounts and dismissed the belief in otherworldly retribution. In the remarks attributed to Prado, one finds two major elements of his thought: on the one hand, there is a claim to rational certainty and the equation of religious tradition with a chimaera (*tudo era fantastico*); on the other hand, Prado reflects the historicist interpretation of the Scriptures, as well as sceptic relativism of religious truth claims, that can be found elsewhere among the free-thinkers of the time. By invoking natural reason and logic, Prado takes a stand outside the religious sphere, so that his ideas transcend even the heterodox currents that, in Maurice Kriegel’s words, searched for “an original state of religious life”

---

**47** Omero Proietti, “Lettres à Lucilius, une source du TIE de Spinoza,” in *Lire et traduire Spinoza: Travaux et documents*, edited by Pierre-François Moreau (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1989), 9–39 (who, just as Alexandre Matheron, emphasises the Stoic influence on Spinoza’s thought), and Wim Klever, “Spinoza ‘corruptor’ de Prado o la teoría de Gebhardt y Révah invertida,” in *Spinoza y España*: 217–228. These theses were criticised by Miquel Beltrán, *Un espejo extraviado: Spinoza y la filosofía hispano-judía* (Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1998), 12.

**48** Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: nouveaux documents,” 369; and Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouvel examen des origines, du déroulement et des conséquences de l’affaire Spinoza-Prado-Ribera,” *Annuaire du Collège de France* 71 (1970–1971); *Annuaire du Collège de France*: 562–568; *Annuaire du Collège de France* 72 (1971–1972): 574–587; *Annuaire du Collège de France* 73 (1972–1973): 641–653, here 71, 563. See also the dedicatory poems of Juan de Prado to Manuel de Pina in Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents,” 408–410; and the identification of Ribera with José Carreras in the inquiry by the Jewish congregation made in 1658 (SAA, PA 334, no. 882, fol. 3; Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents,” 406).

**49** SAA, PA 334, No 882, “Stukken betreffende de ban opgelegd aan Daniel de Prado en Daniel Ribera” (1658); published by Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents,” 391–408; see Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents,” 371–372, and Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 139–142.

and proposed a reformist position, as this was frequently adopted by Marranos disillusioned with normative Judaism.<sup>50</sup>

The congregational authorities brought the trials against Prado and Ribera to a swift conclusion. Ribera disappeared from Amsterdam and may have found refuge in London,<sup>51</sup> but Prado was struck with the *herem* in February 1658. The banishment formula accuses him of having reverted to his “malicious and false opinions” and of having inculcated them to “some young students.” It is proclaimed that no member of the congregation should henceforth communicate with him “by oral conversation or in writing, neither in this city or outside it, except the people of his family.”<sup>52</sup> Prado tried in vain to obtain a cancelation of the verdict, and he even solicited the *mahamad* (community board) of Hamburg.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, his son David de Prado transmitted to the *mahamad* in Amsterdam a Latin apology that his father had written with the intention to have it printed. Prado affirmed his orthodoxy, his attachment to Judaism, manifested by the fact that he had rejected certain prestigious university appointments that were offered to him on the condition that he changed his religion. He had taught his pupils “the norms of certainty” by explaining to them “that we know certain things by natural light, others by syllogistic reasoning, others by experience, and others finally by faith,” thus invoking different levels of knowledge that recall Spinoza’s “modes of perception.”<sup>54</sup> He recognised that he had affirmed certain heterodox opinions, but he had done so without obstinacy, and no one had ever accused him of transgressing the law in practice. He blamed his errors on his human frailty, proclaimed his good intentions, and asked that his repentance be accepted with the same forgiveness with which the Marranos were welcomed back to Judaism. He finally pleaded for his family members who, although innocent, suffered the effects of the sanction.<sup>55</sup> The *mahamad* decided that the *herem* would only be lifted if Prado resigned to resettle in a Jewish community overseas.<sup>56</sup>

---

50 Maurice Kriegel, “Du marranisme au ‘néo-judaïsme’: Migrations et reconfigurations identitaires dans l’Europe moderne (XV<sup>ème</sup>-XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècles),” in *Creencias y culturas*, edited by Carlos Carrete Parondo and Alisa Meyuhas Ginio (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca / Tel-Aviv University, 1998): 113–128, here 123.

51 Révah, “Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne, nouvel examen,” vol. 70, 563; Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 179, note 1; Lucien Wolf, *Judíos en las Islas Canarias (Calendario de los casos judíos extraídos de los archivos de la Inquisición canaria de la colección del Marques de Bute)*, (La Orotava, J.A.D.L., 1988 [1926]), 209, 210, 233, 249, and 251.

52 Révah, *Spinoza*, 58–59. The *herem* against Prado does not mention heretical writings, contrary to the one against Spinoza, which prohibits “leer papel algum feito ou escrito p[or] elle,” 58.

53 Quoted by Carl Gebhardt, “Juan de Prado,” in *Chronicon Spinozanum*, III (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1923): 269–291, here 278.

54 Benedict de Spinoza, *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding / The Ethics / Correspondence*, translated from the Latin with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 2012 [1955]), 8–11.

55 SAA, PA 334 no. 882, fols. 9–12, 14, 16–17.

56 SAA, PA 334, no. 19, fol. 428.

Prado, however, refused to emigrate. Staying in Amsterdam in spite of the *herem*, he found an ideal companion in Spinoza. The relations between the two banished men seem to have been close, according to the testimony that a Spanish Augustin friar, Tomas Solano y Robles, and the soldier Captain Miguel Pérez de Maltranilla gave to the Inquisition about their stay in Amsterdam during the winter of 1658–1659. They frequented gatherings in the house of Doctor Abraham Reynoso, a colleague whom Prado had already known in Andalusia, together with other members of the Amsterdam Jewish community, namely Samuel Pacheco, a former confectioner, and the barber Abraham Israel, who had both arrived from Spain some fifteen years earlier. Solano declares that Prado and Spinoza “happily confessed the error of atheism, because they thought that there was no God except in a philosophical sense ... that the soul died with the bodies and that they therefore had no need of faith,”<sup>57</sup> which seems to show that the two friends had already broken with Judeo-Christian theism. The testimonies given by Solano and Maltranilla, as well as the investigation of 1658, allow us to identify the staple elements of Prado’s thought. He rejected the doctrine of creation in the name of the eternity of the world; he emphasised the authority of reason and the validity of a Cartesian type of proof; at the same time, he distinguished between various coexistent modes of knowledge, finally affirming the primacy of natural law.

From the years that follow, we lack traces of Prado in Amsterdam. His departure for Antwerp also brought about his separation from Spinoza, who settled in Rijnsburg near Leiden. In the spring of 1661, it was rumoured that he lived as a Catholic in Antwerp after accepting baptism with great pomp. During the following year, he was said to have frequented “the church of the Lutherans and tried to be one of them, and then the church of the Calvinists and other sects, assuring each one of them that he wished to join its respective religion.”<sup>58</sup> At the end of 1663, rumours circulated in Amsterdam according to which Prado was about to repent and wished to return to Judaism. Orobio, then a newcomer in the city, volunteered to answer the “doubts” that retained his former co-disciple in the grip of heresy.

## ***Controversy by Correspondence with Orobio***

The only remaining elements of the correspondence between Prado and Orobio are three texts that were written by Orobio and from where we must infer about the contents of the “doubts” formulated by Prado. Although the *herem* excluded in principle any communication with Prado, the *mahamad* does not seem to have objected to these exchanges, hoping perhaps that Orobio’s invectives against Prado would succeed in extinguishing the influence that risked “infecting others who, outside the

---

<sup>57</sup> Révah, *Spinoza et le dr Juan de Prado*, 66–68.

<sup>58</sup> AHN, Inquisición, leg. 2374<sup>1</sup>. See Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 328–340.

Jewish community, had given credit to him and his foolish sophisms.”<sup>59</sup> This may explain why this controversy acquired such a wide publicity and why the *Invective Epistle* circulated in so many manuscript copies.

Orobio’s first letter bears in most of its copies the title *Invective Epistle against a Physician and Philosopher, who doubted or disbelieved the truth of the Sacred Scriptures, while allegedly acknowledging [the existence of] God and the law of Nature in order to cover up his malice*. We learn here that Prado had initially, probably in 1662, sent a letter to Orobio under a pseudonym; when this letter remained unanswered, he wrote again, complaining of Orobio’s hesitation to correspond with him. Orobio was not fooled by Prado’s alleged resolution to repent, but he took advantage of the opportunity to develop his refutation of Prado’s propositions into a general apology destined to confront the heterodox trends among the Jews of his age.

Historical research has revealed the fact that a heterodox undercurrent crisscrossed the *nação* (the transnational community of Portuguese Jews and *conversos*) and, in particular, the Amsterdam congregation. The existence of this group of free-thinkers, far beyond Prado’s individual case, provoked Orobio’s ire and, moreover, the vast polemical and apologetic production that characterised the Sephardic Diaspora. From the works that Leone Modena authored in Venice during the 1610s and 1620s, until those of Rabbi David Nieto in London a century later, Jewish authors constantly polemicised against the “sect” of “atheists,” “deists,” “students,” “Karaites,” or possibly “politicians,” and “libertines,” or, as they were called in Spain, “Machiavellians” and “Sadduceans.”<sup>60</sup> The presence of these dissenters was already apparent in the insistence with which Grotius, in his *Remonstratie* (1615) stated the urgent need to make sure that the Jews within the Amsterdam congregation would practice their faith according to its pure orthodoxy.<sup>61</sup> The dedicatory letter of the book *On the Resurrection of the Dead* (1636) by Menasseh ben Israel is no less revealing.<sup>62</sup> There was, according to these sources, a continuous succession of heterodox individuals, who, as Orobio writes with rancor in the prologue of his *Invective Epistle*, “try to in-

---

59 Orobio, *Epístola Invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 90.

60 To the “sectarians” who diffuse “heresies and errors,” Abraham Pereyra devotes one chapter (4.1) of his *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo* (Amsterdam: Alexandro Janse, 1671), 395–411. Orobio opposes the “politically minded” to the “pious” in his *Carta al hijo del doctor Prado* (in Révah, *Spinoza*, 150: “creen los píos, no los políticos”). On this matter, see among others Jonathan I. Israel, “Philosophy, Deism, and the Early Jewish Enlightenment (1655–1740),” in *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, edited by Yosef Kaplan (Leiden, Brill, 2008), 173–202, Yosef Kaplan, *Judíos nuevos en Amsterdam: Estudios sobre la historia social e intelectual del judaísmo sefardí en el siglo XVII* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1996); C. L. Wilke, “That Devilish Invention called Faith.”

61 Jacob Meijer, “Hugo Grotius’ Remonstratie,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (1955): 91–104, here 97–98 and Y. Kaplan, *Judíos Nuevos en Amsterdam*, 34, note 28.

62 Menasseh ben Israel, *De la resurreccion de los muertos* (Amsterdam: En casa, y à costa del autor, 1636), fol. 4v, 25r–27v: “Considerando pues la nesaria maldad de los Zaducoes en todo depravados, y como oy en este miserable siglo se van algunos persuadiendo a la mortalidad de las almas, para mas a rienda suelta, se dexaren llevar de sus lassivos apetitos, me determine à escrevir este libro.”

roduce their malice into the souls of the simple-minded,”<sup>63</sup> as this happened apparently with the students whom Prado and Ribera had tried to “pervert.” These free-thinkers were, he wrote, trouble-makers, capable of spreading a sort of latent or passive incredulity, an attitude that Abraham Pereyra, among others, attacks in his *Mirror of the Vanity of the World*: “I am painfully concerned when I consider the superficial religion that so many display under the cover of the law. Even though they do not commit any abominations, they bear the title of Jews simply out of reason of state.”<sup>64</sup> Pereyra then details five forms of deviance that pervert the congregation. There is the arrogance of those who live apart from the community, the malignity of those who challenge the authority of the rabbis, the vanity of those who mock the divine precepts, the ambition of those who despise the preachers, and the obstinacy of those who persevere in their corrupt ways.<sup>65</sup> Further, Pereyra lambasts the “double-faced” individuals who hide their true convictions in order to better corrupt their co-religionists.<sup>66</sup> De Barrios finds similar tones in his “Table of the Holy Fraternity of the Kahal Kadosh of Amsterdam” (1683): “There are many who, though shrouded in the garb of the true religion, only wear it in order to dissimulate their evil intentions. The swan has white feathers to cover his black flesh.”<sup>67</sup>

In sum, Orobio’s *Invective Epistle* launches a sweeping attack on all the heterodox positions, and we can certainly not attribute to Prado each and every standpoint that is refuted therein. Orobio indeed displays a broad spectrum of heresies one by one, each calling for a refutation of its own.<sup>68</sup> In the first chapter of the third discourse, he distinguishes, for example, three categories among the “followers of impiety, adversaries of virtue, lovers of their own whimsical understanding.” “The first category, and those of the worst quality, are the heinous atheists, who daringly negate the Holy Scripture, though they use to excuse this with acknowledging [the existence of] a First Cause.” Obviously, these “atheists” are in fact deists, whose perfidious belief Orobio denounces tirelessly. The second category are “Israelites who believe in God, accept the Holy Scripture, but detest the explanation that God Himself with supreme providence has provided to the Law,” that is, those who reject the Talmud, such as the Sadduceans and the Karaites. The last, seemingly inoffensive

<sup>63</sup> Orobio, *Epístola Invectiva*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 90.

<sup>64</sup> Pereyra, *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo*, 296; cf. Henry Méchoulan, “Los judíos de Amsterdam y Spinoza,” in *Spinoza y España*: 49–56.

<sup>65</sup> Pereyra, *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo*, 522, cf. Henry Méchoulan “Abraham Pereyra, juge des marranes et censeur de ses coreligionnaires à Amsterdam au temps de Spinoza,” *Revue des études juives* 138 (1979): 391–400, here 395.

<sup>66</sup> Pereyra, *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo*, 396.

<sup>67</sup> Miguel de Barrios, *Tabla de la sacrales hermandades del Kahal Kados amstelodamo: Abi Ietomim*, “Academia primera caritativa,” in De Barrios, *Triumpho del Gobierno Popular* (Amsterdam, 1683) [copy BL 127 e 18], fol. 44: “Muchos ay que, con vestirse, de Religion verdadera, solo toman el vestido, para encubrir sus cautelas. El cisne con blancas plumas, oculta su carne negra,” quoted also by H. Méchoulan, “Los judíos de Amsterdam y Spinoza,” 52–53.

<sup>68</sup> Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 126–127. See here for the following quotations.

category, are in fact the most dangerous in Orobio's eyes, precisely because they are the least recognisable, namely those who observe both the written and the oral law, "but they are piteously lacking in the observance of the holy commandments," the rabbinic fences, which they reject "not only as superfluous, but even as contradicting the written law, because they believe that it is an attack on the divine precept to take away or add anything from its decrees." But I would see the most interesting element of Orobio's enumeration in the succession between these three categories, which become stages of a unified mental itinerary:

The disbelief (*discredito*) in the admonitions and fences that our Sages have established for the sake of a more perfect observance of the Law leads them surreptitiously to the disbelief in tradition and even in Scripture, whence they finally fall into atheism, as this is confirmed by the continuous experience of many who made this hapless journey, which always starts with the contempt for our Sages and their prudent and holy exhortations, and which ends in the most horrendous apostasy.<sup>69</sup>

The process described by Orobio can, for sure, be detected in Uriel da Costa's biography,<sup>70</sup> but it is less clear for Prado, who manifested his first doubts in Andalusia when he was still ignorant of normative Judaism. We cannot speak here, as with respect to Uriel da Costa, of a "crisis within Judaism"<sup>71</sup> attributable to Karaite inspiration, because Prado had no real familiarity with normative Judaism before his exile. According to Orobio, Prado's development was influenced by New Christians turned New Jews, persons who, like him, had studied at Spanish universities and were full of self-assurance. In the famous prologue to his *Invective Epistle*,<sup>72</sup> he distinguishes between two types of New Jews: those who "devote all their desire to love God's Law by endeavouring to learn, as much as their understanding is capable of, what is necessary to observe religiously its holy precepts, statutes, and ceremonies," and who listen humbly to those who are born as Jews. "These came sick of ignorance, but as the latter was not aggravated by the pernicious illness of pride, they recovered easily." Others, however, who "had studied under idolatry some secular sciences," were no less ignorant about Judaism than the first group,

---

69 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 127: "El descredito a las prevenciones o vallados de nuestros Doctores para la mas perfecta observancia de la ley, tacitamente los conduce al desprecio de la tradicion, y despues de los escripto passando ultimamente en el Atheysmo, como lo verifican continuadas experiencias de nuebos [Révah: muchos] que hicieron este Ynfelize viage, principiando por el desprecio de nuestros Doctores, y sus prudentes y sanctas advertencias, hasta llegar a lo mas horrible de la apostasia."

70 Révah, *Spinoza*, 18; Jean-Pierre, Osier, *D'Uriel da Costa à Spinoza* (Paris: Berg International, 1983), 141–143.

71 Jean-Pierre Osier, "Un aspect du judaïsme individualiste d'Uriel da Costa," *Cahiers Spinoza* 3 (1979–1980), 101–115.

72 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 89–90. See here for the following quotations.

but full of fickleness, pride, arrogance, convinced that they are distinguished scholars in all kinds of matters ... by inventing sophistic reasonings without any basis, they search recognition for their genius, acumen, and science. What is worse, they obtain this reputation among certain persons who because of their low age or their evil character boast to be smart, and although they do not understand a word of what the foolish philosopher argues against God's Law, they nevertheless pretend to understand him.<sup>73</sup>

One recognises in this second group a clear allusion to the would-be scholars who, like Prado, remained walled in their alleged certainties and, still worse, spread them, mainly among young people—a reference to the students in the trial of 1658 that Orobio had surely heard about. This type of interpretation resembles in part the reasons given since antiquity for the origins of atheism: however unstudied or freethinking they may be, atheists like to distinguish themselves by their taste and their expertise in literature, art, or philosophy, an image that one rediscovers in the seventeenth-century concept of *libertinage érudit* (learned libertinism). Having studied in Spanish universities, Orobio certainly had an interest to insist on this fact in order to distinguish himself from this category of “philosophers.”

The text is divided into four “discourses” (*discursos*) and on a second level into twenty-nine chapters, each one corresponding to one of Prado’s “doubts” or to a counter-argument in Orobio’s apology. In his first discourse, Orobio proves that the Torah is of divine origin and that it does not contradict natural reason, his central line of argument being that the denial of the “written law,” the scriptural revelation, is tantamount to a denial of God’s existence. In the second discourse, he defends the “oral law,” without which Scripture cannot be adequately followed. In the third one, he supports the rabbinic fences that are necessary in order to protect the Torah against transgression in the course of human history. Finally, the last part “defends the purity and honesty of the Talmud against trumped-up and malicious slander.”<sup>74</sup>

The more the reader advances in the *Invective Epistle*, the fewer references there are to Prado and his objections. One may generally succeed in identifying Prado’s “doubts” in the text, but it is impossible to find out which one may have been inspired by Spinoza’s first work, the *Apology Justifying his Abdication from the Synagogue*, as well as by his acquaintance with the young philosopher, and to point to the ideas that are due to Prado in particular. In the first discourse, Orobio refers to Prado’s basic postulate in the following way: “the deists hold that their belief in God’s unity and eternity has so much certainty for them that it is not a conjecture or an

---

73 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 90: “mas llenos de variedad, de sobervia, de altivez, persuadidos que son doctísimos en todas materias [...] con hacer argumentos sofisticos sin fundamento alguno, se acreditan de ingeniosos, de agudos, de scientes; Lo peor es, que consiguen esta opinion entre algunos que, o por sus pocos años, o por su mal natural, presumen de discretos, y aunque no entienden cosa de lo que dice el nescio philosopho contra la Ley de Dios, con todo hacen como que lo entienden.”

74 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 128: “Defiendese la pureza y sinceridad del Talmud contra las inventadas y maliciosas calumnias.”

opinion, because in this case they would admit doubt and not believe in it with infallible certainty.”<sup>75</sup> Prado seems to recognise that God has created the universe but not the “book” that announces this truth. Prado’s creator-God is, like that of the French deists, an insensible God who, after having created the universe, abandons it to the natural laws, which are the only way in which he exerts his providence: in consequence, there cannot be singular interventions or miracles.<sup>76</sup> According to Orobio, however, whoever does not acknowledge that particular events are governed by divine providence does not actually believe in the existence of God.

One of the most central questions in the *Invective Epistle* deals with the divine election of the Jews.<sup>77</sup> Why did the Creator choose Israel? Why did the enormous miracles fail to convince the other nations of Israel’s chosenness? Prado seems to have argued that Israel was not the only nation that had prophets and a divine revelation, a thesis that I. S. Révah compares with chapter 3 of Spinoza’s *Theological Political Treatise*, “On the vocation of the Hebrews, and whether the prophetic gift was peculiar to them,”<sup>78</sup> which may reflect ideas from his *Apology*. However, the question of Israel’s chosenness appears frequently in the apologetic literature of the Portuguese Jews.<sup>79</sup> Some historians have highlighted the possible influence of certain Hispanic thinkers expressing disillusion (*desengaño*), who claimed that the political decline of Spain was due to its messianic and mystical delusions, including the discrimination against the New Christians and the negative prejudice against the middle class professions that were usually associated with them.<sup>80</sup>

The eighth chapter of Orobio’s first discourse replies to the objections against the divine origin of the Torah, which is suspected to be the result of a more recent mystification. Here, Orobio defends the antiquity of the text, which even the Christians have taken as the basis of their religion, and whose divine proof consists in the contingent events that are prophesied therein.<sup>81</sup> In the eleventh chapter of the first discourse, Orobio continues by arguing that the belief in the existence of God, even in

---

75 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 119: “afirman los Deistas que tan cierto creen la Unidad y Eternidad de Dios que no la conjeturan o opinan, porque opinarla fuera dudar, y no creer con infalible certeza.”

76 Révah, *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, 43–44.

77 Orobio, *Epístola*, first discourse, chapters 7 and 9, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 105–110, 112–113.

78 Benedict de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, edited by Jonathan Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 43.

79 See in particular the first chapter in Isaac Cardoso, *Las Excelencias de los Hebreos* (Amsterdam: David de Castro Tartas, 1679), fols. 1–22.

80 Such reformist discourse can be found, in particular, in a pamphlet of Martín González de Cellorigo, *Memorial de la política necesaria y útil restauración a la república de España*. See I. S. Révah, “Le plaidoyer en faveur des ‘Nouveaux-Chrétiens’ portugais du licencié Martín González de Cellorigo (1619),” *Revue des études juives* 122 (1963): 279–398; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 174–175, and Henry Méchoulan, “L’altérité juive dans la pensée espagnole (1550–1650),” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8 (1974): 31–58 and 171–202, here 189.

81 Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 111–113.



the way the deists confess it, is inseparably linked to the belief in the divinity of the scriptures.<sup>82</sup>

In the second discourse, which extols the rabbinic tradition, we can find elements that bring to mind the inquiry held in 1658 against Prado. Why has God not included the content of the oral law and the tradition within the written revelation? And if the written and the oral law have the same value, why did the first one need to be fixed in writing? Finally, why did God not formulate his law and precepts clearly enough to make further explanations superfluous?<sup>83</sup>

The third discourse reports Prado's attacks against the derivative commandments or "fences" promulgated by the ancient sages: the latter, he claimed, make the observance of the biblical precepts more difficult because they paradoxically give the Jewish believer more occasions to commit sins.<sup>84</sup> The fourth discourse exposes the methods used by Prado and others of his ilk, who isolate a passage or a commandment from its context in order to reject and ridicule the texts as being contradictory and obscure.

Doctor Prado, stung to the quick, was upset that Orobio accused him of denying the immortality of the soul, and in his response, he insisted upon his belief in a natural religion. Orobio sought to debunk this claim in a rejoinder, the *Apologetic Letter to Doctor Prado by Doctor Isaac Orobio de Castro*, which manifests the ambivalent feelings with which he engaged the controversy with Prado: he was torn between personal affection for the man and the repulsion against the positions that the latter had chosen to defend and, worse, to promote publicly. It seems that Prado was surprised by the connection that Orobio demanded between reason and faith, and that he urged the latter to clarify his thoughts.

Prado's deism does not admit the divine revelation that believers find in the Scriptures, while Orobio claims the universal consent of all monotheistic religions for the divinity of the Pentateuch. For Prado, the very content of certain biblical books, their legendary character, makes it impossible to believe in them; he declares that he would only abide by the law of Nature common to all men. But Orobio denies to him this possibility: "If you did not know that you are of Abraham's descendance, you would be allowed to acquire salvation in the law of Nature. However, as you

---

<sup>82</sup> Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 119–120.

<sup>83</sup> Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 123–126.

<sup>84</sup> Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 126: "La piedad juzga el impio sencillez indigna de la racionalidad, el esfuerzo se calumnió varias vezes por temeridad, la sagrada justicia por rigor execrable, la vergüenza por cortedad de animo, la obediencia por servil rendimiento, lo religioso por hypocresia y la cuidadosa atencion en el divino culto por escrupulosa puerilidad." Révah unnecessarily corrects "escrupulosa puerilidad" into "escrupulos o puerilidad."

know well that you are of Abraham's Israelite descendants, you can only obtain salvation by observing the law that God has commanded to this lineage."<sup>85</sup>

Orobio wrote a third letter to Prado, titled in one of the manuscripts *Letter Written by Doctor Isaac Orobio de Castro to a Person in Antwerp against Doctor Prado, who Lived There, Being Separated from the Nation by Virtue of a Herem [ban] that was Proclaimed in the Synagogue of Amsterdam*. This letter was probably composed in 1664 and addressed to Prado's son David.<sup>86</sup> Orobio was prudent enough to show that the Jewish community did not approve of his pursuing the controversy. Someone speaking on behalf of Prado had asked him three questions and Orobio had consented to answer them without corresponding directly with his excommunicated friend. These three questions express the gist of Prado's critique of tradition: "How can it be that some persons find a certain thing reasonable and agree with a certain proposition, while others dislike it and disagree, although all souls are of the same nature and substance?"<sup>87</sup> Here, the relativity of opinions questions the criteria of truth. The second question "concerns moral philosophy and expresses doubt about the following: if there are two or more legislators and each one emits and promulgates a different law by claiming divine origin for it, which is the one that the understanding should follow: the one that it disapproves, but that others recommend as the right one, or the one that it approves though others say that it is bad?"<sup>88</sup> This second question conjures up the issues of free will and individual conscience. The last question refers to the innocence of pagans and other non-Jews who transgress the divine law because they do not know the truth.

For the same reason that the innocent child does not sin, even though it commits an act that would be a sin in an adult person, because it performs the act without an evil intention, people who by ignorance go astray from the true path and fall into error should not be considered as sinners either, because they believe that they are acting rightly.<sup>89</sup>

---

**85** Orobio, *Epístola*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 140: "Si no supiera que era posteridad de Abraham, pudiera Vmd salvarse en la Ley Natural: mas, sabiendo que es posteridad Israelitica de Abraham, está obligado para salvarse a guardar la Ley que Dios encomendó a esta posteridad."

**86** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 143–153; another copy, dated from 1712, is preserved in Ets Haim ms. 48 A 21, fols. 239–251, see the quoted title here at fol. 239.

**87** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 144: "porque a unos les parece bien una cosa y assienten a una proposicion, y a otros mal y dissienten della, siendo las almas de una misma substancia y naturaleza?"

**88** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 146: "La segunda pregunta toca a la Philosophia Moral y duda: si ay dos Legisladores o mas, y cada uno intima y promulga ley contraria con titulo de divina, qual ha de seguir el entendimiento, la que le parece mal porque le aconsejan otros que es buena, o la que le parece bien aunque otros le digan que es mala?"

**89** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 151: "Que por esso el niño innocente no peca, aunque haga acto que fuera pecado en el adulto: porque no conoce la malicia de aquel acto. Luego, los hombres que yerran el verdadero camino, no conociendo que yerran, tampoco deven ser tenidos por pecadores, pues ellos piensan que aciertan."

We should remember that this problem was much discussed at the time, especially in the Iberian countries with respect to Native Americans.<sup>90</sup> The objective of all these questions was quite clear for Orobio: “His intention is to prove that no person is obliged to follow a certain religion more than another, that it is indifferent by which way one seeks to please God, and by consequence there is no divine law, but only human resources that each one considers as divine.”<sup>91</sup> Orobio now repeats his preceding arguments, with a special emphasis on the problem of otherworldly rewards and punishments.

This letter marks probably the final point of the controversy between the two friends, who would henceforth pursue contrary paths. The end of the *Letter to Doctor Prado's Son* shows that Orobio has given up all hope of convincing Prado: “As this subject transcends reason so much, I cannot pursue it further than to where the lowliness of my argument may reach.”<sup>92</sup> This was the last effort that any member of the Jewish congregation of Amsterdam undertook to bring the lost son back to orthodox ways. While Orobio continued his ascension towards the highest ranks of congregational leadership, Prado definitively moved away from Judaism. In June 1667, he asked Don Francisco Lugo del Castillo, a member of elite society in the Canary Islands and perpetual local governor (*regidor*) of Tenerife, to help him obtain from the Inquisition the permission to settle in the Canaries. Prado wrote two texts with the intention of obtaining an Inquisitorial reconciliation without risking imprisonment or confiscation of property. When these writings arrived at the Holy Office two years later, they aroused many emotions throughout the Peninsula.<sup>93</sup> It was then, or soon after, that Prado died of a fall from his horse, a tragic end on which the Amsterdam poet Miguel de Barrios commented with irony in 1672: “The divine Justice punished Doctor Juan de Prado, master of false dogmas, who had not more religion than what was convenient for his body, and no more soul, in his opinion, than a horse.”<sup>94</sup>

---

**90** Among other studies, see the (controversial) analyses by Stuart Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

**91** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 147: “Su intencion es provar que no está el hombre obligado a una religion mas que a otra, que es indiferente el camino para agradar a Dios y que, consiguientemente, no ay Ley Divina, sino medios humanos que cada uno tiene por divinos.”

**92** Orobio, *Carta al hijo del Doctor Prado*, in Révah, *Spinoza*, 153: “En materia tan sobre la razon, no puedo discurrir mas que hasta donde alcança la poquedad de mi discurso.”

**93** Luis Alberto Anaya Hernández, “El Doctor D. Juan de Prado y la Inquisición canaria,” *Historia Social*, 32 (1998): 133–144; Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 331–336.

**94** Barrios, *Coro de las Musas*, fol. 355: “Castiga la Divina Justicia al Doctor Juan de Prado, maestro de falsos dogmas, que no tenia mas religion que la que convenia a su cuerpo, ni mas alma en su opinion que de cavallo.”

Of the three polemical texts written by Orobio against his free-thinking friend,<sup>95</sup> the *Invective Epistle* would be transmitted for generations among the Jews of Amsterdam: at least fifteen copies can still be located today. The *Apologetic Letter*, which survives in a single copy, owes its scarce circulation probably to its more personal and confidential tone. Three copies survive of the *Letter to Prado's Son*, two in the Ets Haim Seminary and a very late one, dated from 1731, in the National Library of Paris. The latter manuscript is the only textual witness that offers all three anti-Pradian essays; with respect to the *Letter to Prado's Son*, its wording also seems to be closer to the original and contain less scribal errors than the manuscripts kept at the Ets Haim library. Most interestingly, the Paris manuscript contains a number of anti-Christian remarks that are missing from the two Amsterdam texts. For example, one sentence mentions the idea that eternal damnation awaits the Christians, because “they acknowledge the truth of the Law of Moses, yet they observe the contrary of what is taught in it, and they believe in dogmas contrary to natural reason.”<sup>96</sup> A possessor of the manuscript has apparently expurgated these polemical remarks against Christianity; it is even possible to imagine that it was the *mahamad* (the community leadership) who examined the text meticulously and who censored these and other passages that risked scandalising possible non-Jewish readers. In any case, the transmission of Orobio's three works against Prado, which covers the period from 1663 to 1731, shows an effort to impose a separation between two overlapping literatures, distinguishing on the one hand the apologetic discourse against irreligion and on the other hand the polemical literature against Christianity that was subject to a particular precaution.

*Translated from the French by Carsten Wilke*

## Works Cited

- Archivo Diocesano de Cuenca [ADC], Inquisición, leg. 492 (6569).  
 Archivo Histórico Nacional [henceforth AHN], Inquisición, leg. 2374<sup>1</sup>.  
 AHN, Inquisición, leg. 2987<sup>1</sup>.  
 AHN, Inquisición, lib. 1134.  
 AHN, Universidades, lib. 493F.  
 Stadsarchief Amsterdam [henceforth SAA], Collegium Medicum, Series nominum doctorum  
 medicinae, no. 16.  
 SAA, PA 334, no. 19.  
 SAA, PA 334, no. 882.  
 SAA, PA 334, no. 1186.

<sup>95</sup> See the list in *From Christianity to Judaism*, 431–433. The following remarks on the textual transmission of the three essays are based on Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 154–156, and Muchnik, *Une vie marrane*, 462–464.

<sup>96</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 448.

- Albiac, Gabriel. *La sinagoga vacía: Un estudio de las fuentes marranas del espinosismo*. Madrid: Hiperión, 1987.
- Alejandre, Juan Antonio and María Jesus Torquemada. *Palabra de hereje: La Inquisición de Sevilla ante el delito de proposiciones*. Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1998.
- Anaya Hernández, Luis Alberto. "El Doctor D. Juan de Prado y la Inquisición canaria." *Historia Social* 32 (1998): 133–144.
- Baer, Yitzhak. *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1966.
- Barrios, Miguel de. *Triumpho del Gobierno Popular*. Amsterdam: n.p., 1683. [copy British Library, 127 e 18]
- Beltrán, Miquel *Un espejo extraviado: Spinoza y la filosofía hispano-judía*. Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1998.
- Ben Israel, Menasseh. *De la resurreccion de los muertos*. Amsterdam: En casa, y à costa del autor, 1636.
- Caballero, Práxedes. "La crítica de Orobio de Castro a Spinoza." In *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez, 229–237. Murcia: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994.
- Calvo, Sagrario Muñoz. *Inquisición y ciencia en la España moderna*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1977.
- Cardoso, Fernando. *Discurso sobre el Monte Vesuvio, insigne por sus ruinas, famoso por la muerte de Plinio, del Prodigioso incendio del año pasado de 1631. i de sus causas naturales, i el origen verdadero de los terremotos, vientos, i tempestades*. Madrid: Francisco Martínez, 1632.
- Cardoso, Isaac. *Las Excelencias de los Hebreos*. Amsterdam: David de Castro Tartas, 1679.
- Caro Baroja, Julio. *De la superstición al ateísmo: Meditaciones antropológicas*. Madrid: Taurus, 1974.
- Caro Baroja, Julio. *Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea*. Madrid: Istmo, 2000.
- Ceñal, Ramón. "El argumento ontológico de la existencia de Dios en la escolástica de los siglos XVII y XVIII." In *Homenaje a Xavier Zubiri*, vol. 1, 247–325. Madrid: Moneda y Crédito, 1970.
- Edwards, John. "Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria circa 1450–1500." *Past and Present* 120 (1988): 3–25.
- Edwards, John and C. John Sommerville. "Religious Faith, Doubt and Atheism." *Past and Present* 128 (1990): 152–161.
- Gebhardt, Carl. "Juan de Prado." *Chronicon Spinozanum* 3 (1923): 269–291.
- Gracian de la Madre de Dios, Geronimo. *Diez lamentaciones del miserable estado de los Atheístas de nuestros tiempos*. Brussels: Roger Velpio and Huberto Antonio, 1611.
- Hurtado de Mendoza, Pedro. *Disputationes de universa philosophia*. Lyon: Antoine Pillehotte, 1617.
- Israel, Jonathan. "Philosophy, Deism, and the Early Jewish Enlightenment (1655–1740)." In *The Dutch Intersection: The Jews and the Netherlands in Modern History*, edited by Yosef Kaplan, 173–202. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Israel, Jonathan. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*. Oxford: Littman Library; Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Foi et scepticisme dans la diaspora des nouveaux-chrétiens des débuts de l'Europe moderne." *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian* 48 (2004): 21–40.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *Judios nuevos en Amsterdam: Estudios sobre la historia social e intelectual del judaísmo sefardí en el siglo XVII*. Barcelona: Gedisa, 1996.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Richard Popkin's Marrano Problem." In *The Legacies of Richard Popkin*, edited by Jeremy D. Popkin, 197–212. Dordrecht: Springer, 2008.

- Klever, Wim. "Proto-Spinoza Franciscus van den Enden." *Studia Spinozana* 6 (1990): 281–289.
- Klever, Wim. "Spinoza 'corrupt' de Prado o la Teoría de Gebhardt y Révah invertida." In *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez, 217–228. Murcia: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994.
- Kriegel, Maurice. "Du marranisme au 'néo-judaïsme': Migrations et reconfigurations identitaires dans l'Europe moderne (XV<sup>ème</sup>–XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècles)." In *Creencias y culturas*, edited by Carlos Carrete Parrondo and Alisa Meyuhus Ginio, 113–128. Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca—Tel-Aviv University, 1998.
- Lagrée, Jacqueline and Pierre-François Moreau. "La lecture de la Bible dans le cercle de Spinoza." In *Le Grand Siècle de la Bible*, edited by Jean-Robert Armogathe, 108–114. Paris: Beauchesne-CNRS, 1989.
- Limborch, Philippus van. *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judæo*. Gouda: Justus van der Hoeve, 1687.
- Méchoulan, Henry. "Abraham Pereyra, juge des marranes et censeur de ses coreligionnaires à Amsterdam au temps de Spinoza." *Revue des études juives* 138 (1979): 391–400.
- Méchoulan, Henry. "L'altérité juive dans la pensée espagnole (1550–1650)." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8 (1974): 31–58, 171–202.
- Méchoulan, Henry. "Los judíos de Amsterdam y Spinoza." In *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez, 49–56. Murcia: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994.
- Meijer, Jacob. "Hugo Grotius' Remonstratie." *Jewish Social Studies* 17 (1955): 91–104.
- Meinsma, Koenrad O. *Spinoza et son cercle*. Paris: Vrin, 1983.
- Mignini, Filippo. "Données et problèmes de la chronologie spinozienne entre 1656 et 1665." *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 71 (1987): 9–21
- Mizrahi, Robert. *Spinoza*. Paris: Seghers, 1964.
- Muchnik, Natalia. *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Honoré Champion, 2005.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. "Carta al hijo del doctor Prado." In *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, edited by I. S. Révah, 143–153. Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. "Carta apologética." In *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, edited by I. S. Révah, 130–142. Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. "Epístola invectiva." In *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, edited by I. S. Révah, 84–129. Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959.
- Osier, Jean-Pierre. *D'Uriel da Costa à Spinoza*. Paris: Berg International, 1983.
- Osier, Jean-Pierre. "Un aspect du judaïsme individualiste d'Uriel da Costa." *Cahiers Spinoza* 3 (1979–80): 101–115.
- Pereyra, Abraham. *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo*. Amsterdam: Alexandro Janse, 1671.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac La Peyrère." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 8 (1974): 59–63.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Spinoza's Earliest Philosophical Years (1655–1661)." *Studia Spinozana* 4 (1988): 37–55.
- Popkin, Richard H. "The Development of Religious Scepticism and the Influence of Isaac La Peyrère's Pre-Adamism and Bible Criticism." In *Classical Influences on European Culture, 1500–1700*, edited by Robert R. Bolbar, 271–280. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- Proietti, Omero. "Lettres à Lucilius, une source du TIE de Spinoza." In *Lire et traduire Spinoza: Travaux et documents*, edited by Pierre-François Moreau, 9–39. Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1989.

- Quevedo, Francisco de. *Política de Dios y gobierno de Cristo*. Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, 1947.
- Quevedo, Francisco de. *Providencia de Dios padecida de los que la niegan y gozada de los que la confiessan: Doctrina estudiada en los gusanos y persecuciones de Job*. Zaragoza: Pasqual Bueno, 1700.
- Révah, I. S. "Antiquité et christianisme, anciens et modernes, dans l'œuvre de João de Barros." *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 157 (1967): 165–18.
- Révah, I. S. "Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents sur l'incroyance dans la communauté judéo-portugaise à Amsterdam à l'époque de l'excommunication de Spinoza." *Revue des études juives* 123 (1964): 359–431.
- Révah, I. S. "Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouvel examen des origines, du déroulement et des conséquences de l'affaire Spinoza-Prado-Ribera." *Annuaire du Collège de France* 71 (1970): 562–568; 72 (1971): 574–587; 73 (1972): 641–653.
- Révah, I. S. *Des Marranes à Spinoza*. Edited by Henry Méchoulan, Pierre-François Moreau. and Carsten Lorenz Wilke. Paris: Vrin, 1995.
- Révah, I. S. "Le colloque 'Ropicapnefma' de João de Barros. Genèse, structure et technique." *Bulletin Hispanique* LXIV (1962): 572–592.
- Révah, I. S. "Le plaidoyer en faveur des 'Nouveaux-Chrétiens' portugais du licencié Martín González de Cellorigo (1619)." *Revue des Études Juives* 122 (1963): 279–398.
- Révah, I. S. *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*, Paris: Mouton & Cie., 1959.
- Roth, Cecil. *A History of the Jews in England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.
- Schwartz, Stuart. *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding / The Ethics / Correspondence*, translated from the Latin with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes. New York: Dover Publications, 2012 (1955).
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Theological-Political Treatise*. Edited by Jonathan Israel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Suarez, Francisco. *Metaphysicarum disputationum*. Salamanca: Juan and Andres Renaut, 1597.
- Wachtel, Nathan. *La foi du souvenir. Labyrinthes marranes*. Paris: Seuil, 2001.
- Wilke, Carsten L. "'That Devilish Invention called Faith': Seventeenth-Century Free-Thought and its Use in Sephardi Apologetics." In *Conversos, Marrani e Nuove Comunità ebraiche in età moderna*, edited by Myriam Silvera, 131–144. Florence: Giuntina, 2015.
- Wolf, Lucien. *Judíos en las Islas Canarias (Calendario de los casos judíos extraídos de los archivos de la Inquisición canaria de la colección del Marques de Bute)*. La Orotava: J.A.D.L., 1988.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso, a Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu. *Spinoza and Other Heretics, vol.1: The Marrano of Reason*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu. *The Other Within: The Marranos, Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Zac, Sylvain. *Signification et valeur de l'interprétation de l'Écriture chez Spinoza*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.

Carsten Wilke

## Clandestine Classics: Isaac Orobio and the Polemical Genre among the Dutch Sephardim

Studies on the intellectual history of the Portuguese Jews in seventeenth-century Amsterdam sometimes compare the gentleness and open-mindedness of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657) with the militantly polemical spirit that distinguished Doctor Isaac Orobio (c. 1617–1687) in order to juxtapose welcoming and reactionary Jewish attitudes towards modernity. Ralph Melnick unfolded a progressive narrative in which the harsh attacks upon Christianity that can be found at the beginning of the century in the *Tratado* of Dr. Elijah Montalto (1567–1616) and later in the works of his disciple Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera (1596–1660) “were slowly being replaced by a new approach” built on tolerance and mutual understanding, one exemplified by Ben Israel’s *Conciliador* in 1632.<sup>1</sup>

The Whiggish narrative of gradual “Jewish-Christian rapprochement” is edifying but chronologically unconvincing: both Mortera, who wrote most of his polemical works after Ben Israel, and Orobio, who only arrived in Amsterdam five years after the latter’s death, expressed themselves once again in the trigger-happy polemical style that Amsterdam Jews had allegedly forsaken. The progress narrative account is even less convincing due to the fact that the peak of Montalto’s literary success coincided with Orobio’s at the turn of the eighteenth century, when their clandestine *opera omnia* were manually copied by the dozens among the Amsterdam Jews.

Shall we rather say, then, that the intellectual history of Jewish Amsterdam is permanently torn between the poles of Manassean brotherhood and Orobian xenophobia? This is what Jesué Pinharanda Gomes tried to suggest in a chapter of his *History of Portuguese Philosophy*, which was published in 2001. He classified Orobio in the school of “Zionist integralism” (*integralismo sionista*) and painted Amsterdam Jewish thought in black-and-white colours: “Menasseh and Orobio adhere to contrasting theories: an obstinate anti-Christian ideology on the side of Orobio, and a manifest sense of openness on the side of Menasseh, embracing the unity of Jewish heritage with all its differences, a heritage of which even the Church is considered to be a part.”<sup>2</sup>

---

Carsten Wilke, Central European University Budapest

1 Ralph Melnick, *From Polemics to Apologetics: Jewish-Christian Rapprochement in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981), 45.

2 J. Pinharanda Gomes, “Messianologia e integralismo sionista: Menassé ben Israel e Oróbio de Castro,” in *História do pensamento filosófico português*, vol. II, edited by Pedro Calafate (*Renascimento e Contra-Reforma*, Lisbon: Caminho, 2001): 262–271, here 270: “as teorias de Menassé e de Oróbio apresentam um carácter diferencial: um obstinado anticristianismo do lado de Oróbio, um sensível sentido



This paper will question this binary scheme of exclusivism and tolerance by pointing to a simple fact that both Melnick and Pinharanda Gomes seem to have overlooked: the authors they tried to classify according to a schematic ideological juxtaposition wrote in different literary genres. Ben Israel published books that were destined to win an audience among various religious communities for a subtle theological compromise, whereas Montalto and Orobio authored clandestine manuscripts that were directed to Jews alone to immunise them against missionaries and make them feel proud of their faith. In sum, whoever pits the tolerant Ben Israel against the dogmatic Orobio compares apples with oranges. If the former's extant work belongs to the irenic genre and the latter's to the polemical one, then this choice of a generic convention is not necessarily due to some inherent psychological predilection of their authors' personalities but may, rather, reflect the expectations of their respective audiences, if not a selection of texts made by posterity.

We have indeed some interesting clues indicating that the writings that are transmitted under the names of both authors represent only a one-sided fragment of their oeuvre. In my edition of the *Marrakesh Dialogues*, an anonymous anti-Christian work originally written in 1583, I discovered that Ben Israel himself seems to have been responsible for one of the manuscript editions that was meant to give this Renaissance dialogue a linguistic and rhetorical facelift.<sup>3</sup> It was thus apparently Menasseh ben Israel who spiced the already extremely provocative text with further broadsides, calling Christianity "madness" and its believers "ignoramuses."<sup>4</sup> Orobio, as Yosef Kaplan has shown, participated in a frivolous poetic academy in Amsterdam, where he must have entertained himself and others in a literary register quite different from the theological polemics for which he would become famous.<sup>5</sup>

Let us now try to approach Orobio's place in Jewish thought from the perspective of genre theory, which started in 1980 with Jacques Derrida's article "The Law of Genre"<sup>6</sup> and led to the understanding of literary genres as open and historically moving structures that determine individual expressions while being determined by them. My reconstruction of these generic laws will considerably complicate the dogmatic phraseology that Jews of different personalities and persuasions knew to use in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.

---

de abertura do lado de Menassé quanto à unidade da herança judaica nas diferenças. Neste plano, a Igreja não pode deixar de considerar-se uma herança de Israel."

<sup>3</sup> Carsten L. Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues: A Gospel Critique and Jewish Apology from the Spanish Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 174–175.

<sup>4</sup> Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 383.

<sup>5</sup> Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, translated from the Hebrew by Raphael Loewe (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989), 299.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (Autumn, 1980): 55–81.

## Conventions of Illegality

The genre of clandestine Hispano-Portuguese polemics against Christianity illustrated by Orobio should not have existed at all, according to the principles that ruled the legal conditions of Portuguese Jews in Protestant seaports. The reception of these uncommon immigrants aroused deep fears that “blasphemy” and overt expressions of disbelief were being brought into the Christian commonwealth. When the Hamburg Senate solicited opinions from three Lutheran faculties on the reception of Jews in 1611, the consulted theologians called the magistrate to prohibit the public exercise of the Jewish religion in order to avoid complicity in their blasphemous utterances against Christ.<sup>7</sup> The contracts between the Senate and the Jews in 1612 and 1617 followed this recommendation and included the prohibition against offending the dominant religion “in words or deeds.”<sup>8</sup>

In Amsterdam, the eminent jurist Hugo Grotius drafted in 1615 a similar charter that threatened with heavy fines any possessor of books containing “words of blasphemy and defamation.”<sup>9</sup> But the Amsterdam municipality solved the problem in a different way. It did not ratify a formal charter that would have called for the public prosecution of secret Jewish blasphemers. In 1616, it made a confidential agreement with the *mahamad*, i.e. the executive board of the local Sephardic community, holding said board responsible for restraining their fellow Jews from three transgressions that risked subverting existing power hierarchies: first, receiving proselytes; second, speaking or writing (*spreken ofte schrijven*) against the Christian faith;<sup>10</sup> and third, having sexual relations with Christian women.

While Jewish proselytism remained exceptional,<sup>11</sup> the two other transgressions, polemics and sex, were manifestly too pleasant to be avoided. Against the prohibition of their own communal authorities, Portuguese Jews of the seventeenth century produced an astonishing amount of texts that exalted their faith over that of the majority; Isaac Orobio was the champion of this literary effort. Under these circumstan-

---

7 Udo Arnoldi, *Pro Iudaeis: Die Gutachten der hallischen Theologen im 18. Jahrhundert zu Fragen der Judentoleranz* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1993), 47–52.

8 Jutta Braden, *Hamburger Judenpolitik im Zeitalter lutherischer Orthodoxie 1590–1710* (Hamburg: Christians, 2001), 111, 150; Aron di Leone Leoni and H. P. Salomon, “La Nation portugaise de Hambourg en 1617 d’après un document retrouvé,” in *Mémorial I.-S. Révah: Études sur le marranisme, l’hétérodoxie juive et Spinoza*, edited by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon (Paris et Louvain: Peeters, 2001): 263–293, see 265.

9 Jaap Meijer, “Hugo Grotius’ Remonstrantie,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17.2 (1955): 91–104, here 100.

10 Arend H. Huussen Jr., “The Legal Position of Sephardi Jews in Holland, circa 1600,” in *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 3, edited by Jozeph Michman (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993): 19–41; H. P. Salomon, *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo (1569–1632)* (Paris: Gulbenkian, 1982), 136.

11 Still, 108 converts to Judaism are documented in Dutch burial records of the seventeenth century, according to Alexander van der Haven, “Judeo-Christianity and Conversion to Judaism in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic,” lecture at the 17<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 8, 2017.

ces, anti-Christian writing was not an expression of self-indulgent orthodoxy but a daring venture that exposed its author to incalculable risk. In 1677, after the Calvinist synod of Dordrecht decided to promote “friendly conversations” with learned Jews, the Amsterdam Jewish community board tried to keep its members from any participation in such discussions, fearing they would stir up hate against the Jewish community in the Netherlands and might jeopardise its very existence.<sup>12</sup> How suspicious the Jewish community authorities were in this respect is shown by Orobio when in 1665, he authored a manuscript against the esoteric thought of the medieval Franciscan friar Raymundus Lull. Since the Jewish community board would not give him the permission to have this text printed in Amsterdam, he sent it to Antwerp, where the Jesuits appreciated it—even the Society of Jesus had greater sympathy for Jewish polemics than the *mahamad!*<sup>13</sup>

This cautious self-censorship contributed to the distinct development of a specific genre in early modern book history. Hispano-Portuguese texts attacking Christian dogma needed to be copied by hand; they had to be bound in separate volumes, hidden in private homes, circulated confidentially as a separate body of literary production, and consumed under peculiar circumstances. We know from inscriptions on the coverleaves how these books were produced and circulated. Possessors would lend them to other community members and let the borrower make a copy for themselves, so that the tasks of scribe and reader merged in one person. When reading the note by which a redactor introduced his copy of a collection of Montalto’s works: “in case you find any errors in my writing, dear reader and friend, I hope that you will judiciously correct them when you copy this book,”<sup>14</sup> one is reminded of today’s Internet communities whose members are simultaneously producers and consumers of their texts. At one point in his *Divine Warnings*, Orobio cuts short a prolific argument due to his compassion for his readers, who had to be scribes at the same time: “this would need a big volume, and since it cannot be printed, it would be extremely laborious to make copies of it by the pen.”<sup>15</sup> A clandestine writer of 1725, Abraham Gómez Silveyra (1656–1741), alluded jokingly to the scribal chores his audience had to take upon themselves: “Look, I would desire that these my manuscript books were imprinted in the heart of the readers, so that whoever wants to possess them would not have to take the pains of copying them.”<sup>16</sup> On the last page of an-

12 Quoted by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 273: “pois são tão perniciosas e danosas a nossa conservação fazendonos odiar por ellas das gentes adonde abitamos.”

13 Meijer, “Remonstratie,” 100; Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 186–187.

14 Ets Haim ms. 48 B 3, preface: “Si achareis alguns erros no meu escrever, espero, am<sup>o</sup> lector, os emmendaras con teu bon discurso em copiar este livro.”

15 Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, part II, ch. 4, see Ets Haim ms. 48 D 6, fol. 125r, quoted by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 245: “... lo contrario ped[ir]ía un grande volumen, que no pudiendo ser impreso, sería muy diffisil reducirlo a copias por la pluma.”

16 Ets Haim ms. 48 A 22, fol. 1r: “Mira como estos mis libros Manuscritos, los deseo en el corazón de los lectores impresos, para que no se moleste en trasladar quien los quisiere tener.”

other volume of Montalto's works, there is a note that shows how the text circulated in the Dutch Antilles: "The owner of this book herewith makes the vow that he will never lend it to any kind of person who will not first give him a sufficient pawn for the book. Curaçao, on 1 April, 1753. This book belongs to Ishac Mendes de Solla and was written by Mr. Joseph Vas da Costa."<sup>17</sup> Mendes de Solla was wealthy enough to have his copy produced by a hired scribe. Interestingly, his bogeyman was not the Christian zealot who would denounce the blasphemous book, but rather the Jewish borrower who would forget to return it to him.

Donors, scribes, owners, and borrowers formed a dense medieval-style network of manuscript production and consumption. Anthony Collins, in his *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* of 1724, knew to report that Jewish anti-Christian treatises "go about Europe in manuscript," but he added that this borrowing and copying community was almost impenetrable for Christians. Concerning Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera's *Providencia*, he writes:

[T]his work of his is esteem'd by the Jews to be the shrewdest book they have against Christianity. They are forbid, under pain of excommunication, to lend it to any Christian, for fear of drawing a storm upon themselves for producing such strong objections against the Christian Religion. Wherefore no copies are to be procur'd of it but by the greatest accidents.<sup>18</sup>

The manuscripts circulated almost exclusively in a Jewish readership, but the high prices that Christians were ready to pay for them made them lucrative merchandise, and it seems that Amsterdam Jews did sometimes copy certain texts for the Gentile market.<sup>19</sup> This clandestine library thus exerted an enduring fascination on various groups: on early modern Jewish readers, on contemporary Protestants who feared blasphemy, on free-thinkers of the radical enlightenment, on nineteenth-century bibliophiles, and, finally, on historians like me, who started some thirty years ago to track down these texts in various libraries.

## History and Inventory of the Genre

In 1988, Miguel Benítez published an inventory of 130 clandestine French manuscript works against Christianity that circulated, some of them in a host of copies, during

---

<sup>17</sup> Ets Haim ms. 48 D 27, end: "O dono deste livro distomou com juramento de não emprestallo a ninhum genero de pessoa sem que primeiro [crossed-out passage] darlhe um penhor suficiente por seu livro. Curaçao a 1. Abril anno 1753. Este livro he de Ishac Mendes de Solla. Escripito por o Sr. Josseph Vas da Costa."

<sup>18</sup> Anthony Collins, *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London: n. p., 1724), 83–84.

<sup>19</sup> Richard H. Popkin, "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* and the *Bibliotheca Sarraziana*," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 22 (1987): 154–162.

the early Enlightenment period.<sup>20</sup> The same task is still to be accomplished for the Sephardic *clandestiniana* in European languages. According to provisional results of my own research, there are today approximately 200 handwritten volumes totaling about seventy-five different texts by three dozen authors. More than three-quarters of the total are written in the Spanish language, most of the others in Portuguese, besides some exceptional pieces in Latin, Italian and Dutch. Geographically, nearly all of the texts were composed and copied in the Netherlands, with only a few items from Italy, France, Hamburg, or the Dutch possessions overseas. Today, the largest collection is that of Ets Haim in Amsterdam, with 64 volumes,<sup>21</sup> and the second largest is at the State and University Library in Hamburg, with 17 volumes.<sup>22</sup> There are five libraries that possess between ten and fifteen volumes each, namely the Royal Library of The Hague (14), the British Library in London and the Bodleian Library in Oxford (13 each), the University Library of Amsterdam (12), and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York (10). Smaller collections, many of them private, exist all over the world.

Chronologically, the first extant anti-Christian text written by a Portuguese Jew is the anonymous *Marrakesh Dialogues* of 1583<sup>23</sup> and the last is Abraham Gómez Silveyra's *Silveyradas*, the seventh and last volume of which was composed in 1738.<sup>24</sup> We possess, however, little direct testimony from the first decades of the genre. The oldest dated manuscript known to me, now in possession of the Library Company of Philadelphia, is from 1652.<sup>25</sup> Dated colophons became more frequent when Iehuda Machabeu, a professional scribe, produced a series of copies in 1662. The most recent dated volume is from 1759.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the extant copies were produced during the years 1680–1715, that is, the years of the “crisis of European consciousness,” in the terms of Paul Hazard,<sup>27</sup> or the

---

**20** Miguel Benítez, “Matériaux pour un inventaire des manuscrits philosophiques clandestins des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles,” *Rivista di storia della Filosofia* 43 (1988), 501–531. See also Benítez, *La face cachée des Lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits clandestins de l'âge classique* (Paris: Universitas, 1996).

**21** Leo Fuks and Rena Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, vol. II: *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ets Haim/Livraria Montezinos, Sephardic Community of Amsterdam* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 91–132; Raphael Weiser and Yosef Kaplan, *Treasures from the Library Ets Haim—Livraria Montezinos of the “Portuguese Israëlitisch Seminarium Ets Haim,” Amsterdam*, Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 1980, 76–81.

**22** Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalog der hebräischen Handschriften in der Staatsbibliothek Hamburg* (Hamburg: Otto Meisner, 1878), 164–171; Ernst Roth and Hans Striedl, *Hebräische Handschriften in Deutschland*, vol. III (Wiesbaden: n.p., 1984), 326–331.

**23** On the dating see Wilke, *Marrakesh Dialogues*, 29–32, 91–97.

**24** Ets Haim ms. 48 B 18, fol. 282r, the last folio of the volume, quotes the “Gazeta del Haya Lunes 30 de Junio 1738.”

**25** Wilke, *Marrakesh Dialogues*, 155–157.

**26** Ets Haim ms. 49 A 10.

**27** Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne 1680–1715* (Paris: Boivin, 1934).

“radical enlightenment,” in the terms of Margaret Jacob and Jonathan Israel.<sup>28</sup> As we have already seen, Jewish writing against Christianity was interconnected in various ways with the critical interests of the time. The two clandestine literatures, one produced by Gentiles in French or Latin, the other by Jews in Iberian languages, present not only a parallel chronology, but also parallel features. Jewish anti-Christian writing, however, differs from its non-Jewish counterpart insofar as it remains concerned with authorship and literary glory, whereas Gentile free-thinkers consumed their disbelieving discourse in a host of anonymous or pseudonymous pamphlets without developing the same trend towards canonicity.

If we review the Jewish authors who had the most lasting success (counting the extant manuscript volumes of their works), four of them clearly stand out. The most popular writer was our Isaac Orobio, of whom there are seventy-seven extant volumes (sixty of which are in Spanish or Portuguese<sup>29</sup> and seventeen of which are in French translations). Almost equal to him in literary success was Saul Levi Mortera, whose polemical works are conserved in sixty-one volumes.<sup>30</sup> The third place is due to Abraham Gómez Silveyra, whose writings are attested now in twenty-five folio volumes. With Elijah Montalto, author of eighteen extant volumes,<sup>31</sup> these writers form a canonical quartet, all based in Amsterdam (except Montalto, who never visited the city but was buried there).

Various other works enjoyed a slightly more limited circulation; in these cases, however, the personality of the author was not as clearly present in the minds of the readers. An example of this category is the *Marrakesh Dialogues*, which were transmitted in ten copies, all of them anonymous.<sup>32</sup> The author decided not to entrust his name to the manuscript<sup>33</sup> and only by research into the text’s historical origins did I hypothetically identify him as one Estêvão Dias from Tavira.<sup>34</sup> A treatise transmitted in eight manuscripts under various titles had the opposite fate: signed by Isaac Naar (1631– after 1686) in its earlier copies, later copyists anonymised this text.<sup>35</sup> A curious work titled *Fortress of Judaism (Fortalezza dell’ebraismo)*, written

---

28 Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981); Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

29 See the catalogue by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 431–440.

30 See the catalogue by H.P. Salomon, *Saul Levi Mortera en zijn “Traktaat betreffende de Waarheid van de Wet van Mozes,” eigenhandig geschreven in de Portugese taal te Amsterdam 1659–1660*. Inleiding, transcriptie en aantekeningen (Braga: Barbosa & Xavier, 1988), xvi–xx.

31 Peter T. van Rooden, “A Dutch Translation of Elias Montalto’s *Tratado sobre o principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*. Text, Introduction and Commentary,” *Lias* 16 (1989): 189–238.

32 Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 153–165.

33 Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 204.

34 Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 46–58.

35 Carsten L. Wilke, “Midrashim from Bordeaux: A Theological Controversy inside the Portuguese Jewish Diaspora at the Time of Spinoza’s Excommunication,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 6.2 (2012): 207–247, here 214–215.

in a strongly Hispanicised Italian by Abraham Guer de Cordoba, is known in seven manuscripts in the original language and three in a Hebrew translation. Here again, only recent research has shed light on the possible biography of the author, who may have been identical with Lorenzo Escudero, a proselyte of *morisco* ancestry who had been an actor on the Spanish stage.<sup>36</sup> Rabbi Isaac Athias' translation of a Hebrew work, *Strengthening of the Faith*, by Isaac Troki, a Lithuanian Karaite scholar about whom the translator himself knew very little,<sup>37</sup> and a dialogue set in Livorno, *Danielillo, or Answers to the Christians*, whose author remains unknown to this day, exist in four copies.<sup>38</sup>

A third group of texts are preserved only in single copies and apparently failed to reach a larger audience. Some of them were authored by well-known scholars such as Rabbi Mosseh Refael d'Aguilar, whose polemical writings are, however, only extant in his personal papers.<sup>39</sup> Finally, we know the titles of about ten works of which no copy survives. This loss is regrettable for the voluminous *Propugnaculum Judaismi* that the jurist Judah Lumbroso *alias* António Dias Pinto wrote in Latin against Hugo Grotius' *Truth of the Christian Religion*,<sup>40</sup> and even more so for the *Religious Theologian Opposing the Political Theologian* (*Theologo religioso contra o Theologo politico*) that Jacob de Andrade Velosinho composed in Portuguese against Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*.<sup>41</sup>

Although the reception of anti-Christian literature among the Sephardim covered a large range of literary products, readers' attention concentrated on the four most reputed authors—Montalto, Mortera, Orobio and Gómez Silveyra, in chronological order—whose peculiar history and style made them the object of a celebration of genius not much different from the cult of vernacular literary classics during the baroque age. Daniel de Barrios stated that Montalto “wrote so much in defense of the Most Holy Law that one could print not unimportant volumes from it; but whoever possesses them in manuscript appreciates them more than precious stones.”<sup>42</sup> In 1670, an anonymous editor assembled a manuscript edition of Montalto's collected

36 A. Stanley Dreyfus, *Tseriaḥ Bet-El: Marco Luzzatto's Hebrew Translation of the Spanish Work Fortaleza del judaismo y confusión del estraño*, unpublished thesis, Hebrew Union College 1949; Yosef Kaplan, “Kelitatom shel gerim ba-kehillah ha-portugezit be-Amsterdam ba-me'ah ha-17: Parashat Lorentso Eskudero,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 7, no. 4 (1981): 89–99.

37 See the translator's preface in British Library, Harley 4634.

38 Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 166–168.

39 Yosef Kaplan, “Mekomo shel ha-Rav Mosheh Refael d'Agilar bemasekhet kesharaw im pelitei Seferad u-Portugal ba-me'ah ha-17,” *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 6 (1976), vol. 2, 95–106.

40 Meyer Kayserling, “Une histoire de la littérature juive de Daniel Levi de Barrios,” *Revue des études juives* 18 (1889): 276–289.

41 Diogo Barbosa Machado, *Bibliotheca lusitana historica, critica, e cronologica* (Lisbon: Officina de Antonio, vol. 2, Isidoro da Fonseca, 1741), 468–469.

42 Kayserling, “Une histoire de la littérature juive de Daniel Levi de Barrios.”

writings from three different clandestine texts in their original Portuguese.<sup>43</sup> One copy of this edition, now owned by the Hamburg State Library, imitates the layout of a printed edition.<sup>44</sup> A few years later, in 1679, Joseph and Semuel Israel Pereira brought together the three major anti-Christian works of Isaac Orobio into a manuscript edition that became fundamental<sup>45</sup> and that is still documented in fourteen copies. Both of these “collected works” editions contain preliminary poems praising the author, as was customary in printed books at the time.

From 1704, Abraham Machorro produced a more comprehensive edition of Orobio’s writings; a later edition by Daniel Lopes Quiros, made in 1712, undertakes an effort to bring together all the known texts by the author. Both editions are preserved in various manuscript copies, some of them containing decorative drawings and ornaments, not to mention the sumptuous leather binding and gilding. Two volumes even boast fanciful portraits of Orobio in watercolour paintings that imitate engravings.<sup>46</sup> Around 1725, Abraham Gómez Silveyra organised a seven-volume edition of his works under the title *Silveyradas*, trying to become a classic of the clandestine genre by his own efforts. He was successful insofar as he inspired readers to produce impressively calligraphed copies of the entire multi-volume cycle. One deliciously decorated specimen at Yeshiva University has recently been entirely digitised.<sup>47</sup> The material layout of the books itself bespeaks an attitude of admiration and veneration towards the authors who sometimes, as in Orobio’s case, underwent a canonisation process during their lifetime.

## Internal Purposes

As anti-Christian polemics seem to have been a relatively popular genre among the Sephardim of the late seventeenth century, we should ask for the cultural motivation, the social context, and the intellectual energy that fuelled it. We cannot just satisfy ourselves with the reference to some dogmatic fury that had allegedly seized Jews in general or Orobio in particular. What, then, motivated dozens of authors and readers to busy themselves with writing, manually copying and reading long, clandestine texts that discussed exegetic detail in militant language?

---

<sup>43</sup> Ets Haim ms. 49 A 1, title: *Obras do Doctor Eliau Montalto em Amsterdam no Anno 1670. Copiado na corte de Haya no Anno 1740.*

<sup>44</sup> Hamburg, Staatsbibliothek, Levy 20, Spanish title: *Trattado sobre el cap<sup>o</sup> 53 de Ezayas echo por el Dr Montalto en Amsterdam el el ano 1670.*

<sup>45</sup> British Library, Harley 3430. The Pereira edition starts with the *Prevençiones*, follows the *Respuesta a un predicante francés*, and ends with the *Epístola invectiva*.

<sup>46</sup> Hamburg, Staatsbibliothek, heb. 85a, written by Jacob Guedella in 1713, is bound with a preliminary portrait with a cut-out name frame and the artist’s signature “Jacobus Groenwolt, 1727.” See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 386.

<sup>47</sup> Yeshiva University, ms. 1374; <http://digital.library.yu.edu/yeshiva-university-libraries-manuscripts>



Yosef Kaplan gave three answers to these questions.<sup>48</sup> The founders of the Portuguese communities had suffered under the Inquisition and therefore developed an obsessive hostility towards their former religion. They had lived in an atmosphere of secrecy for generations and were in need of defining clear doctrinal boundaries. Finally, once they had reached the free intellectual climate of the Netherlands, religious pluralism created doctrinal challenges inside and outside the Jewish community that asked for a defence of one's own religious persuasions. Herman Salomon, in contrast, supposed that Mortera also had an agenda of outreach; he directed himself directly to Christian dissidents who had rejected the dogma of the Trinity and whom he hoped to induce to an observance of the Noahite Laws according to rabbinic Judaism.<sup>49</sup> Considering the simultaneous presence of internal and external addressees in these clandestine works, let us now inquire whether producers and consumers were part of an actual cross-religious intellectual dialogue or whether their controversial activity was merely a pretext for an inward-looking stabilisation of their own religious culture.

The prefaces of the clandestine works strongly support the latter alternative. They never address a Christian adversary directly but show that the author's imaginary audience is among Jews, or at least among New Christian seekers for truth. Estêvão Dias, the author of the *Marrakesh Dialogues*, writes in his preface: "This is a pleasant reading for all those who strive for learning, knowledge of the truth and the salvation of their souls. May Our Lord show them the truth!"<sup>50</sup> Isaac Athias titles his translation of the Hebrew *Ḥizzuk Emunah*: "Fortification of the faith . . . the pillar that fortifies the afflicted hearts of the house of Israel in its exile, showing them the eternal salvation for which they hope, as well as the darkness in which their adversaries live."<sup>51</sup> What these texts intended to achieve was not a successful confrontation with Christianity. Rather, these texts sought to bolster the reader's self-esteem through setting in motion a mental process that was called by their authors the "fortification of the faith," *ḥizzuk emunah* in Troki's Hebrew. Mortera declares at the end of his list of 179 objections against the New Testament:

I have undertaken all this work as a warning for those of my nation who were forced to abandon their ancestral law, which is confessed as divine in the entire world, and who confess the Gospel under the cruel scepter of the Inquisition, so that they may better know how to distinguish between the truth and light they have abandoned and the things they were made to confess by force.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 362.

<sup>49</sup> Salomon, *Mortera*, lxxxiv–lxxxv.

<sup>50</sup> Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 203.

<sup>51</sup> Ets Haim ms. 48 D 5, title page; reproduction in Weiser and Kaplan, *Treasures*, 77.

<sup>52</sup> Ets Haim ms. 48 C 20, fol. 43v: "todo este trabajo emprendí para advertimiento de aquellos que de mi nación fueron forzados a dejar la ley de sus padres confesada por divina por todo el mundo y profesar la del Evangelio debajo la cruel vara de la Inquisición, para que sepan mejor distinguür entre la verdad y luz que dejaron a lo que le hicieron recibir forzadamente."

The author of the *Fortress of Judaism* writes quite similarly: “I have only written this in order to give consolation to our brethren, the dispersed *anussim* [forced apostates], who in many occasions must hear the learned and sophisticated reasons of our adversaries, so that they may open their eyes, which the learned men of Edom try to obfuscate with their illusions.”<sup>53</sup> Orobio no less explicitly justifies the aim he pursues in one of his texts that was apparently written for readers in Antwerp or France:

These chapters concerning Isaiah 53 have been written at the request of a number of individuals living outside Jewry, whom others strive to alienate from the fulfilment of the holy Law ... there are amongst them some who because of their own weakness flounder in confusion, and others, because of their ignorance, are deceived. Many there are who are moved by much good will and zeal for the holy Law who wish to get to know the true interpretation, for the sake of their own spiritual peace of mind and in order to have at their hand a rejoinder to their opponents.<sup>54</sup>

Melnick believed the polemicists’ inflexible insistence on their religious truth to be a mark of “conservative” inadaptation to Amsterdam’s peaceful pluralistic society.<sup>55</sup> It seems to me that the exact opposite is true. In an urban society where Portuguese Jews, or “port Jews” in general, did not have a language, costume, and folklore of their own, community difference was affirmed through doctrinal persuasions and symbolic self-fashioning, just as this was generally the case in the early modern trends towards confessionalisation. In the Netherlands, the polemics between Protestants and Catholics and between Gomarists and Arminians were inevitably handled as perpetual zero-sum conflicts in which sharply polemical mutual condemnations could coexist with peaceful quotidian relations and even cooperation in practical matters.<sup>56</sup> In 1645, Mortera similarly uttered his conviction that no confession of Jewish faith could remain irenic and whoever affirms Judaism must deny Christianity, but a Jew should only make his theological standpoint public in situations of legitimate defence and political opportunity.

If you think about what it means that someone confesses his Jewishness and that he observes the divine law in accordance with the precepts that are included in it, then you will also understand that he will consider everything that is not his way as being opposed to the truth that he confesses ... He is free of blame if he finds himself in the necessity to defend himself by revealing the flaws of his adversary; and though we will not proclaim this, since we do not want to offend

---

<sup>53</sup> Parma, ms. Palat. 2336, fol. 183v: “solamente l’ho fatto per consolar a’ nostri fratelli gli Anussim sparsi, che sono in più occasione per ascoltare studiate e sofistiche ragioni, contrarie delli contrarij e aprirli gli occhi, che gli savii d’Edom procuranno cerrar con suoi ilussioni.” Cf. Obadia 1:8 KJV: “Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?”

<sup>54</sup> Ets Haim ms. 48 D 16, prologue, quoted by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 251.

<sup>55</sup> Melnick, *From Polemics to Apologetics*, 23.

<sup>56</sup> Freya Sierhuis, *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy: Religion, Politics and the Stage in the Dutch Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 20.

those from whom we receive support and protection, our Sages were not obliged to observe similar arrangements, and it would be ignorant to accuse them of the crime of saying such things.<sup>57</sup>

Whatever political protection the Dutch Republic offered to its various religious communities, Mortera likened the debates between them to a murderous sea battle of all against all with powder-laden warships threatening each other.<sup>58</sup> Paradoxically, the clandestine anti-Christian polemics were in fact a sign of cultural integration into a Dutch society that followed the unwritten rules of nonviolent confessional competition.

## Constructed Adversaries

There is a curious tension between the internal homiletic finality of polemical writings and the external cause that is always said to have provoked them. Most of our polemicists sincerely acknowledge their lack of Jewish training and authority and do not want to challenge the preeminence of rabbinical authorities in intellectual matters. In their texts they find a need to point to particularly vicious external attacks in order to justify why they engage in theological speculation. In the prologue to his *Prevençiones*, Orobio admits that it is not his “profession” to explain the Bible, but some Carmelite monks had presented to him a learned argument to which the presence of a high-ranking nobleman had obliged him to respond; some friends, presumably Jewish, then encouraged him to put down his answer in writing, a huge treatise being the result.<sup>59</sup> Besides having awkward feelings about their interference into a department of rabbinical competence, our authors seem to be committed to an ideal of religious truce that could only be broken if it was transgressed by Christian adversaries. In a printed translation of Josephus’ *Contra Appion* that he dedicated to Isaac Orobio in 1687, Joseph Semah Arias states this lofty ideal: “we observe our religion without slandering the others, unless the latter provoke us by offending ours.

---

57 Ets Haim ms. 49 B 3, fol. 136v–137r: “Tanto que se conçiderare que cossa es profesar el ser judío y que sigue la ley diuina conforme los perceptos contenidos en ella, luego se entenderq que todo lo que no fuere esto se deue jusgar por contrario de la verdad que prophessa [...] queda desobligado de algun cargo el que tiene neçesidad de defenderse con descubrir el defeto ageno, y aunque nosotros no diremos esto por no ofender a aquellos de quien reçibimos el beneçio y amparo, todavia nuestros sabios, como no obligados assemegante correspondençia, es ignorançia acuzarlos de crimen en dizir aquello.”

58 Salomon, *Mortera*, 3.

59 Orobio, *Prevençiones divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, edizione critica, con introduzione, note di commento e riassunti parafrasi in italiano a cura di Myriam Silvera, vol. 1 (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2013), 14: “En ninguno de las partes en que he dividido [i. e. divisado?] los Sagrados Escritos presumo dar mi parecer o exposición alguna, porque no tengo principios de que deducirla, y es assunto mui ageno de mi profesi3n, solo es mi entento por satisfacer al ruego de algunos amigos referir la repuesta que di a una persona de grande autoridad.”

If you are foolish and stupid [...] I will write against you, [...] and if you are virtuous [...], then I will write in your favour and in favour of all those who wish to approach the subject without interest, passion, or envy.”<sup>60</sup>

For generic reasons, any Portuguese-Jewish polemical text would present itself as an urgent defensive manoeuvre against a concrete Christian missionary attack. This fiction is upheld in most treatises, and Orobio, in particular, stresses the fact that all of his religious writings emerged in a polemical context against an opponent, and that this opponent had always been the provoking party: this was first the case of the Jewish deist Juan de Prado, who had sent position papers from Antwerp, then the Catholic mystic Alonso de Zepeda, then an unnamed Huguenot pastor, then the mentioned group of Carmelite monks, then the crypto-Spinozist Jan Bredenburg, and finally the Remonstrant theologian Philippus van Limborch. As we have seen, the relationship between the author and the offender often included a prestigious third party, the presence of which made it impossible to ignore the provocation. The author of the *Marrakesh Dialogues* thus evokes a triangular argument between an Augustine monk, the Portuguese ambassador, and himself; Montalto wrote against a Dominican friar in Venice who was protected by an unnamed gentleman. The same constellation still legitimises Orobio's *Prevençiones*; it is even maintained in the French adaptation *Israël vengé*.<sup>61</sup> Abraham Gómez Silveyra wrote all his many volumes against one 1699 book in which the Huguenot preacher Isaac Jacquelot challenged Jewish rabbis publicly. Gómez Silveyra, however, noted in 1725 that Jacquelot had died in Berlin several years earlier without ever knowing about the huge Jewish refutation against his book. Gómez Silveyra had never bothered to contact the pastor whom he had chosen as his primary adversary.<sup>62</sup>

One is reminded of Petrarch, who directed sonnets to his beloved Laura without caring about whether she read them or not, and even continued this practice long after her death. Sephardic polemics required the fantasy of the invasive monk or pastor just as Renaissance love poetry needed the literary fiction of a young lady in the flesh to whom the poet allegedly directed his literary effusions. It is thus understandable that authors sometimes chose to fight with Christian adversaries who were neither living nor present on the book market. In 1645 Mortera defended the Talmud against the long-forgotten Sixtus of Sienna, an apostate who in his *Bibliotheca sancta* of 1566 had censured forty-nine rabbinic propositions. Again, Mortera's work is os-

---

**60** *Respuesta de Josepho contra Apion Alexandrino*, trad. Joseph Semah Arias (Amsterdam: David Tartas, 1687), preface: “observamos nuestra Religion sin calumniar las estrañas, sino quando nos provocan ultrajando la nuestra. Si eres necio y estúpido [...] escribo contra tí, [...]; y si eres virtuoso [...], escribo para tí, y para los que desinteresadamente miran las cosas sin pasion, ò invidia.”

**61** Orobio, *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez*, edited by Baron d'Holbach. (London: n.p., 1770) 190.

**62** Ets Haim ms. 48 B 17, fol. 131v: “Agora lei en la Gazeta hauia muerto my hombre Yshac Jacquelot, y lo senti mucho, que le queria escribir, y lo deseava comunicar.”

tensibly designed to thwart the attack of a Christian adversary, but in reality it seeks to relieve the doubts of fellow Jews.<sup>63</sup> In the second part of his *Prevenciones*, Orobio refutes the *Scrutinium Scripturarum* of Santa María, a text written in 1434 that was out of print for almost a century. All these polemics of the Amsterdam Jews depended on the literary fiction of a Christian attack that needed to be thrown back, regardless of its actual threat.

Moreover, the Christian missionary was not always portrayed as he might actually exist in Dutch social reality but in a way that allowed the literary triumph over him to be most impressively staged. In the *Danielillo* dialogue, a young Italian Jewish boy wins out over several monks; in another text, Abraham Gómez Silveyra, a self-fashioned aggressive polemicist, confronts the learned pastor Jacquelot with only a Bible and his humour:

*Con selos Esre Midot  
Quantos veo sacerdotes  
Discipulos de Nembrot  
convenzeré a Jacquelot  
y a quantos hay Jacquelotes.*

With just *shelosh-esreh midot* [the thirteen rabbinic modes of biblical interpretation] I can convince whatever pastors I meet of Nimrod's disciples, even Jacquelot and whatever Jacquelots are out there.<sup>64</sup>

In spite of the theatrical aggressiveness of these texts, they are in reality more interested in a Jewish introspective than in actual controversy. What they deal with obliquely are the doubts that were common among their readership, especially among Jews who were exposed to Christian propaganda and secular culture. The fundamental task of Orobio and his fellow writers was not to make Judaism as such triumph over Christianity but to reconcile tradition with the critical thought that unsettled the Portuguese Jewish community inside its Dutch environment.

## Polemical Subgenres

The need to evoke a concrete scenario featuring interreligious controversy may help us to understand the personalised character of the Jewish polemical genre and the peculiar function of Orobio and the other three literary glories inside it. Regarding these canonised Jewish polemicists, it should be noticed that all of them assumed the role of exemplary “New Jews” and cultural intermediaries. Each one in a different way was able to connect the Iberian background of their readers with the literary traditions inside as well as outside Judaism.

---

<sup>63</sup> Salomon, *Mortera*, lxxii–lxxv.

<sup>64</sup> Ets Haim ms. 48 B 17, fol. 236r.

Let me classify these authors in three types: rabbis, doctors, and poets. Saul Levi Mortera was a community rabbi of the Amsterdam congregation *Beth Yahacob* and a bilingual writer fluent in Hebrew and Portuguese. An Ashkenazi educated in a Sephardic religious school of Venice, he left an oeuvre of Hebrew sermons<sup>65</sup> and Portuguese anti-Christian texts that were translated into Spanish after his death.

Among the doctors, the clear role model was Montalto, a famed physician in Lisbon, Paris, and Florence, who chose the life of a ghetto Jew in Venice before being recalled with great honour by the French crown in spite of his apostasy.<sup>66</sup> Bilingual in Latin and Portuguese, he used the first language for his medical work and the latter for religious polemics, which were later translated into Spanish. Orobio, a physician who grew up in Spain, repeatedly confesses his ignorance of Hebrew and his lack of training in rabbinic exegesis; he read Latin and had a command of literary Spanish, in which he wrote all of his texts, though he was presumably fluent in Portuguese as well. An even more hybrid intellectual personality was Isaac Naar, an academic physician who had also studied the Talmud in Rabbi Mortera's academy. As the first community rabbi with a university doctorate, he symbolises the cultural synthesis that polemical writing seems to have necessitated. Born in Hamburg, Naar expressed himself in Portuguese and also could read Latin and Hebrew.

Turning to the poets, the cultural background of Abraham Gómez Silveyra is still more complex. He grew up in Spain and wrote in a literary Spanish that was trained by the example of *siglo de oro* poetry. He then received a Hebrew education at an Amsterdam orphanage, though not to an extent that would have allowed him to use it actively.<sup>67</sup> Later, Gómez Silveyra lived for a long time in Antwerp and became fluent in French, so that he had gained a triple competence in Hispanic, rabbinic, and Enlightenment culture.

All six of these polemicists were thus brokers between Jewish, Christian, classical, and modern learning on the one hand and their coreligionists' specific Iberian background on the other hand. The lay authors among them readily acknowledged their lack of rabbinic qualification but compensated for it by their prestigious training inside the early modern academic environment. In sum, the Jewish polemicists applied a high degree of intellectual specialisation when they communicated internal and even clandestine concerns not in their vernacular Portuguese but in the al-

---

65 Marc Saperstein, *Exile in Amsterdam: Saul Levi Morteira's Sermons to a Congregation of "New Jews"* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2005).

66 See Orobio's praise of Montalto in I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et le dr Juan de Prado* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton & Cie., 1959), 140.

67 Henry Méchoulan, "A propos de la liberté de conscience: remarques sur un manuscrit d'Abraham Gomes Silveyra," in *Nature, croyance, raison: Mélanges offerts à Sylvain Zac* (Fontenay-aux-Roses: École Normale Supérieure, 1992): 25–41; Shalom Rosenberg, and Alexander Even-Chen, "Coplas filológicas de Abraham Gómez Silveyra," *Revue des études juives* 153 (1994): 327–351; Kenneth Brown and Harm den Boer, *El Barroco sefardí: La poesía de Abraham Gómez Silveira, estudio y edición* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2000).

legedly more international Spanish language, and their followers created personality cults around them due to their particular literary grandeur.

Our clandestine classics thus became social and literary types representing specific cultural and intercultural profiles with their characteristic literary forms. Isaac Athias and Saul Levi Mortera, the rabbis who contributed to the polemical literature, use the medieval mode of polemical expression: they compiled inventories of exegetic arguments in the order of the biblical text. The doctors Montalto and Orobio wrote theological treatises with a coherent reasoning, dividing their works into chapters and utilising sophisticated rhetoric. For example, Orobio defends Judaism in his *Invective Epistle* in a rigidly systematic progression, proceeding in four steps from God to Scriptural revelation, the oral law and finally the recent legal customs and rabbinical decisions.<sup>68</sup>

Forms from vernacular literary tradition are frequently employed among the lay authors of polemics. The *Marrakesh Dialogues*, whose author was apparently a merchant, writes in the Renaissance fashion of the dialogue, a form that was imitated by several authors in the first half of the seventeenth century.<sup>69</sup> Other laymen left prose narratives of their conversion stories, and gifted poets such as Antonio Enríquez Gómez and Abraham Gómez Silveyra expressed their anti-Christian argument in refined verse of the Spanish fashion. These laymen also use an abundant dose of humour, which is absent from the writings of the institutionalised scholars. Rabbis, doctors, and poets were three intellectual types of the Amsterdam community whose specific forms of polemicising were adapted to their cultural profile.

Theological content, social setting, and literary form are thus closely linked in the polemical genre. This observation might help forward the discussion of the question of literary innovation and originality that the historian has to ask when dealing with anti-Christian writings, a markedly anachronistic chapter of manuscript circulation in the early modern history of the book. I have been exchanging views with Professor Daniel Lasker on the point, who in an article published in 2005 observed that the early modern Jewish argument with Christianity remained basically tied to medieval conventions.<sup>70</sup> I agree with Lasker that the varied exegetic, philosophical, and ethical reasonings of the anti-Christian texts have their precedents in the Middle Ages. However, in the writings of Orobio and his contemporaries, we find typically medieval exegetic thoughts put to work in European languages and new literary

---

<sup>68</sup> Natalia Muchnik, *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l'Europe du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2005, 449.

<sup>69</sup> Yosef Kaplan, "R. Shaul Levi Mortera weḥibburo 'Ṭe'anot wehassagot neged ha-dat ha-notsrit," *Mehqarim at toledot yahadut Holand 1* (1975), 9–31.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel J. Lasker, "Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics in the Early Modern Period: Change or Continuity?" in *Tradition, Heterodoxy, and Religious Culture: Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Chanita Goodblatt and Howard Kreisel (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006): 469–488; Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, 4–5; Lasker, review essay in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 67.2 (2016), 431.

frameworks for a purpose that transcends the actual needs of propagandistic self-defence. The kind of answer we might give to the originality question hinges largely on the more or less rigid distinction that we make between content, form, and purpose.

Medieval Jewish polemics against Christianity served a practical aim, they suggested answers to Jews who confronted Christian proselytising. There was no lack of such situations in the early modern period either,<sup>71</sup> but they do not seem to be the primary motivation for our polemicists, who were more interested in engaging in virtual debates with half-fictional adversaries. In some cases, such as Isaac Naar's debate with the Bordeaux canon Jérôme Lopes in the mid-seventeenth century, or Orobio's controversy with his former friend Juan de Prado, the debate is triggered by an adversary from inside the New Christian group who may be either a Catholic believer or a free-thinker. But, as a rule, the texts that affirm Judaism against monks or pastors are no less directed at internal doubts than those that attack free-thought in the Nation's own ranks.

## Situational Scepticism

I wish to conclude with the observation that in the seventeenth century, the distinction between confessional exclusivism on the one hand and a tolerant communicative rationality on the other hand was to a large extent situational. Religious propositions are not orthodox or subversive per se; their meaning needs to be understood in the social function they receive in a changing cultural context. There is first the choice of the audience and the generic framework that determines the more irenic or controversial nature of religious thought; second, there is the individual use of this genre made by an author in accordance with his specific training and the intellectual leadership role that he could fulfil within a Jewish community marked by intercultural transfers and boundary-crossings. Third, we can suspect that even during the quarter century of Orobio's literary production, the direction of his argument changed constantly, successively singling out free-thinkers, Church dogmatists, Spinozists, and rationalist Protestants as the most threatening targets of his writing. Orobio and the entire Sephardic genre against Christianity reacted to historical change in a far more nuanced way than the narrative leading from polemics to tolerance might suggest. Finally, the meaning of Jewish anti-Christian criticism changes again completely with its adoption by non-Jews. When Orobio's commentary on Isaiah 53 became, in French translation, the free-think-

---

71 Rena Fuks-Mansfeld, "Une rencontre en exil: Huguenots et juifs dans la République néerlandaise, 1685–1715," in *Conflits politiques, controverses religieuses: Essais d'histoire européenne aux XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, edited by Ouzi Elyada and Jacques Le Brun (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2002), 59–76; Christiane Berkvens-Stevelinck, "En relatif dialogue: Juifs et remontrants à Amsterdam au dix-septième siècle," in *L'antisémitisme éclairé: Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'époque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, edited by Ilana Y. Zinguer and Sam W. Bloom (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 31–41.



ers' treatise *La divinité de Jésus-Christ détruite*, his rewritten Jewish argument had acquired a far more subversive force.

The rise and impact of Judeo-Portuguese polemical literature is particularly intriguing in a long-term perspective. Texts that had been composed in the seventeenth century with the intention of proving the exclusive certainty of one's own religion, dissipating all doubts, and exploding rival conceptions of truth, would be used in the eighteenth century in order to promote a pluralism and rivalry of doctrinal systems that needed to be handled with the instruments of sceptical *epoché*, which refers to the trifold consideration that the contradicting claims between worldviews cannot be fought out to the end, that sustained disagreement is productive, and that peace through mutual toleration and recognition is preferable to a struggle for doctrinal purity.<sup>72</sup> The social and cultural impact of a determined theological argument did not change only in the shift from the middle ages toward the early modern period: Jewish thought also vividly reacted to the steps that would lead from the cultural world of the Renaissance to that of the Enlightenment, from scepticism to dogmatism and back.

## Works Cited

- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 A 22.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 B 3.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 B 17.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 B 18.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 20.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 5.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 6.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 16.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 27.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 49 A 1  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 49 A 10.  
 Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 49 B 3  
 Hamburg, Staatsbibliothek, heb. 85a.  
 Hamburg, Staatsbibliothek, Levy 20.  
 London, British Library, Harley 3430.  
 New York, Yeshiva University, ms. 1374.  
 Parma, ms. Palatina 2336.  
 Arnoldi, Udo. *Pro Iudaeis: Die Gutachten der hallischen Theologen im 18. Jahrhundert zu Fragen der Judentoleranz*. Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1993.  
 Benítez, Miguel. "Matériaux pour un inventaire des manuscrits philosophiques clandestins des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Rivista di storia della Filosofia* 43 (1988): 501–531.  
 Benítez, Miguel. *La face cachée des Lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits clandestins de l'âge classique*. Paris: Universitas, 1996.

---

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

- Berkvens-Stevelinck, Christiane. "En relatif dialogue: Juifs et remontrants à Amsterdam au dix-septième siècle." In *L'antisémitisme éclairé: Inclusion et exclusion depuis l'époque des Lumières jusqu'à l'affaire Dreyfus*, edited by Ilana Y. Zinguer and Sam W. Bloom, 31–41. Leiden: Brill, 2003.
- Braden, Jutta. *Hamburger Judenpolitik im Zeitalter lutherischer Orthodoxie 1590–1710*. Hamburg: Christians, 2001.
- Brown, Kenneth, and Harm den Boer. *El Barroco sefardí: La poesía de Abraham Gómez Silveira, estudio y edición*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2000.
- Collins, Anthony. *Discourse on the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*. London: n. p., 1724.
- Derrida, Jacques. "The Law of Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 7.1 (Autumn, 1980): 55–81.
- Dreyfus, A. Stanley. *Tseriaḥ Bet-El: Marco Luzzatto's Hebrew Translation of the Spanish Work Fortaleza del judaísmo y confusión del estraño*, unpublished thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1949.
- Fuks, Leo, and Rena Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, vol. II: *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ets Haim/Livraria Montezinos, Sephardic Community of Amsterdam*. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- Fuks-Mansfeld, Rena. "Une rencontre en exil: Huguenots et juifs dans la République néerlandaise, 1685–1715." In *Conflits politiques, controverses religieuses: Essais d'histoire européenne aux XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, edited by Ouzi Elyada and Jacques Le Brun, 59–76. Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 2002.
- Gomes, Jesué Pinharanda. "Messianologia e integralismo sionista: Menassé ben Israel e Oróbio de Castro." In *História do pensamento filosófico português*, Vol. II: *Renascimento e Contra-Reforma*, edited by Pedro Calafate, 262–271. Lisbon: Caminho, 2001.
- Hazard, Paul. *La Crise de la conscience européenne 1680–1715*. Paris: Boivin, 1934.
- Huussen, Arend H., Jr. "The Legal Position of Sephardi Jews in Holland, circa 1600." In *Dutch Jewish History*, vol. 3, edited by Jozeph Michman, 19–41. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Jacob, Margaret C. *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981.
- Josephus, *Respuesta de Josepho contra Apion Alexandrino*, trad. Joseph Semah Arias. Amsterdam: David Tartas, 1687.
- Kaplan, Benjamin J. *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "R. Shaul Levi Mortera weḥibburo 'Ṭe'anot wehassagot neged ha-dat ha-notsrit," *Meḥqarim at toledot yahadut Holand* 1 (1975): 9–31.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Mekomo shel ha-Rav Mosheh Refael d'Agilar bemasekhet kesharaw im pelitei Sefarad u-Portugal ba-me'ah ha-17," *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 6, no. 2 (1976): 95–106.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Kelitatom shel gerim ba-kehillah ha-portugezit be-Amsterdam ba-me'ah ha-17: Parashat Lorentso Eskudero." *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 7, no. 4 (1981): 89–99.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, translated from the Hebrew by Raphael Loewe. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1989.
- Lasker, Daniel J. "Jewish Anti-Christian Polemics in the Early Modern Period: Change or Continuity?" In *Tradition, Heterodoxy, and Religious Culture; Judaism and Christianity in the Early Modern Period*, edited by Chanita Goodblatt and Howard Kreisel, 469–488. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006.
- Lasker, Daniel J. Review essay. *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 67, no. 2 (2016): 431.
- Leoni, Aron di Leone, and H. P. Salomon, "La Nation portugaise de Hambourg en 1617 d'après un document retrouvé." In *Mémorial I.-S. Révah: Études sur le marranisme, l'hétérodoxie juive et*

- Spinoza*, edited by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, 263–293. Paris et Louvain: Peeters, 2001.
- Machado, Diogo Barbosa. *Bibliotheca lusitana historica, critica, e cronologica*, 2 vol. Lisbon: Officina de Antonio Isidoro da Fonseca, 1741.
- Méchoulan, Henry. “A propos de la liberté de conscience: remarques sur un manuscrit d’Abraham Gomes Silveyra.” In *Nature, croyance, raison: Mélanges offerts à Sylvain Zac*, 25–41. Fontenay-aux-Roses: École Normale Supérieure, 1992.
- Meijer, Jaap. “Hugo Grotius’ Remonstratie.” *Jewish Social Studies* 17.2 (1955): 91–104.
- Melnick, Ralph. *From Polemics to Apologetics: Jewish-Christian Rapprochement in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981.
- Muchnik, Natalia. *Une vie marrane: Les pérégrinations de Juan de Prado dans l’Europe du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris, Honoré Champion, 2005.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez*. Edited by Baron d’Holbach. London: n.p., 1770.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, edizione critica, con introduzione, note di commento e riassunti parafrasi in italiano a cura di Myriam Silvera, vol. 1. Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2013.
- Popkin, Richard H. “Jacques Basnage’s Histoire des Juifs and the Bibliotheca Sarraziana,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 22 (1987): 154–162.
- Révah, I. S. *Spinoza et le dr Juan de Prado*. Paris and The Hague: Mouton & Cie., 1959.
- Rosenberg, Shalom, and Alexander Even-Chen, “Coplas filosóficas de Abraham Gómez Silveyra.” *Revue des études juives* 153 (1994): 327–351.
- Roth, Ernst, and Hans Striedl, *Hebräische Handschriften in Deutschland*, vol. III. Wiesbaden: n.p., 1984.
- Salomon, Herman P. *Portrait of a New Christian: Fernão Álvares Melo (1569–1632)*. Paris: Gulbenkian, 1982.
- Salomon, Herman P. *Saul Levi Mortera en zijn “Traktaat betreffende de Waarheid van de Wet van Mozes,” eigenhandig geschreven in de Portugese taal te Amsterdam 1659–1660*. Inleiding, transcriptie en aantekeningen. Braga: Barbosa & Xavier, 1988.
- Saperstein, Marc. *Exile in Amsterdam: Saul Levi Morteira’s Sermons to a Congregation of “New Jews.”* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2005.
- Sierhuis, Freya. *The Literature of the Arminian Controversy: Religion, Politics and the Stage in the Dutch Republic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Steinschneider, Moritz. *Catalog der hebräischen Handschriften in der Staatsbibliothek Hamburg*. Hamburg: Otto Meisner, 1878.
- Van der Haven, Alexander. “Judeo-Christianity and Conversion to Judaism in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic.” Lecture at the 17<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies. Jerusalem, 8 August, 2017.
- Van Rooden, Peter T. “A Dutch Translation of Elias Montalto’s *Tratado sobre o princípio do Capítulo 53 de Jesaiás*. Text, Introduction and Commentary.” *Lias* 16 (1989): 189–238.
- Weiser, Raphael, and Yosef Kaplan, *Treasures from the Library Ets Haim—Livraría Montezinos of the “Portuguese Israëlitisch Seminarium Ets Haim,” Amsterdam*. Jerusalem: Jewish National and University Library, 1980.
- Wilke, Carsten L. “Midrashim from Bordeaux: A Theological Controversy inside the Portuguese Jewish Diaspora at the Time of Spinoza’s Excommunication.” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 6.2 (2012): 207–247.
- Wilke, Carsten L. *The Marrakesh Dialogues: A Gospel Critique and Jewish Apology from the Spanish Renaissance*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Harm den Boer

# Isaac Orobio de Castro as a Writer: The Importance of Literary Style in the “Divine Warnings against the Vain Idolatry of the Gentiles”

Daniel Levi de Barrios (1635–1701), the scorned and celebrated poet laureate of Amsterdam’s Sephardic community, had a complex, ambivalent relation toward his fellow Andalusian countryman Isaac Orobio de Castro. On the one hand, he greatly admired the latter’s rapid rise in the Jewish community as well as his reputation as a doctor and champion of Judaism. Barrios welcomed Orobio upon his arrival, so to speak, and no doubt found comfort in the micro-society formed by fellow Andalusians remembering their sunny and fertile homeland in the streets of Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> Orobio and Barrios seemed to share many experiences: both were Marranos in Andalusia who renounced the prestige enjoyed in society in order to embrace Judaism and defend it in their literary work. However, Orobio’s prodigious career soon revealed an enormous contrast with Barrios’ misfortune. Barrios was an exile who lived in poverty and failed to attract the audience from fellow Jews that he believed he deserved, as the prophet Daniel. Yet Barrios’ poetical compositions never ceased enjoying popularity, as nobody could write skillful eulogies with the ease of the bard from Montilla. And thus, Isaac Orobio de Castro’s works are also adorned with poetic praise by Daniel Levi de Barrios.<sup>2</sup>

In the reception of Orobio’s works, Barrios is one of the few (if not the only) among his contemporaries to highlight their *literary* merits. Orobio de Castro is undisputedly the most popular and widely read of the Sephardic apologists. His works, all circulating in manuscript form, survive in more than sixty copies, a number approached only by Rabbi Saul Levi Mortera’s writings. In comparison to Mor-

---

Harm den Boer, University of Basel

1 Orobio arrived towards the end of 1662 in Amsterdam; Barrios had joined the Amsterdam Jewish congregation some months earlier, as he married Abigail de Pina there on 30 August of that year. See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 106, 233.

2 These praises are all included in Isaac Orobio de Castro, *Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, vol. 1, edited by Myriam Silvera (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013), 3–10. Barrios furthermore includes Orobio in his *Relación de los poetas y escritores de la nación judaica* (c. 1682): “Ishac Orobio, médico eminente / con sus libros da envidia a lo sapiente, / Y en lo que escribe contra el atheísta / Espinosa, más clara haze la vista,” Harm den Boer, *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam* (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad, 1996), 296, 361. The relation between Orobio and Barrios is commented in detail by Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 222–234.

tera, however, Orobio was far better known in the Christian world, both as a personality and through the translation of his polemics, which acquired an active afterlife among the *philosophes*. I will not comment any further on this aspect which has enjoyed abundant scholarly attention in recent years.<sup>3</sup> However, what seems important to me is that Orobio enjoys much of his reputation based upon his personality and, above all, the force of his arguments, both due to their dialectical strength and their unparalleled sharpness towards Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The recent publication of the critical edition of Orobio's *Divine Warnings against the Vain Idolatry of the Gentiles* (*Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*) by Myriam Silvera provides the reader with an excellent opportunity to follow the doctor's dialectics in detail, accompanied by opportune and necessary scholarly comments. Having this Spanish text available in a convenient edition also offers the chance to study the *Divine Warnings* as a *literary* composition, a task that is sorely needed, as I will argue.

In order to grasp the significance of Jewish apologetics in the Early Modern world, we have become increasingly aware of the importance of two fundamental innovations produced in the genre by Iberian *conversos*: the use of vernacular language and literary form. Carsten Wilke has admirably described the contribution of Iberian Jews of *converso* origin to the genre, otherwise known as "Jewish polemics" or "controversy." Wilke shows that the choice of Spanish or Portuguese in such texts reflects a shift in their audience. The new apologetics were oriented towards a lay or unspecialised reader who is—at least rhetorically—in the position to freely choose or affirm his Jewish religion on basis of arguments rather than tradition. Through the choice made for the vernacular or mother tongue of the former *conversos*, the adoption of literary form or literary genre acquired a whole new dimension in Jewish apologetics. A vast array of possibilities was now open to serve the cause of Judaism, reaffirming the religion against the past experience and the enduring pressure of Christianity: humanist dialogue, scholastic treatise, catechism, humorous or lyric poetry, drama, etc. Each choice was full of intertextual plays and implications

---

<sup>3</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 451–457; Richard H. Popkin, "The Role of Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments in the Rise of Skepticism," in *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education and Philosophy in Memory of Charles B. Schmidt*, edited by J.H. and S. Hutton (London: Duckworth, 1990) : 159–180; Miguel Benítez, *La face cachée des Lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits philosophiques clandestins de l'âge classique* (Paris: Universitas, 1996); Adam Sutcliffe, "Judaism in the Anti-Religious Thought of the Clandestine French Early Enlightenment," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64.1 (2003), 97–117; Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Gianni Paganini, "Orobio e i suoi lettori dall'ebraismo all'illuminismo," in Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, V–XV.

<sup>4</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 245: "It would be difficult in the remaining writings of Isaac Orobio to find such outspoken language levelled at Jesus and his disciples as is to be found, in plentiful measure, in the present treatise."

that often challenged the Iberian models their authors had chosen to adopt.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the printed literature of Iberian *conversos* and New Jews has increasingly been reappraised for its defiant recontextualisation of hegemonic Iberian social and religious concepts—correcting the idea that the Iberian literature produced in Sephardic exile was an interesting cultural phenomenon that was, in a literary sense, essentially derivative in nature<sup>6</sup>—the vast field of Jewish polemics in Spanish and Portuguese extant in manuscripts has been barely cultivated.<sup>7</sup>

The literary form chosen by Orobio in his *Divine Warnings* is the *tratado* or treatise, a global designation for works in prose that could be comprised of literary fiction as well as works of a scientific or didactical nature.<sup>8</sup> Orobio followed this tradition, which he probably inherited from his academic career, of composing a “writing or discourse that comprehends or explains the species belonging to some particular matter.”<sup>9</sup> The rather undefined nature of the genre, oscillating between oral discourse and written exposition and, rhetorically, between the “deliberative” and “judicial” causes, is also reflected in Orobio’s text, where reasoning alters with praise or condemnation, and non-personal assertions alter with enunciations in the first person plural, contraposed to the third person plural (e.g. “we”—the Jews—versus “they”—the Gentiles or Christians). The factors that have motivated the present exploration of Orobio’s *Divine Warnings*, are a) the length of the text, b) its semantic and stylistic complexity and, by implication, c) the question of which reader the author had in mind.

The length, above all the verbosity, is a distinctive feature of the *Divine Warnings*, which becomes all the more evident in its recent critical edition where each of its chapters is accompanied by a summary (in Italian) of its contents. This practice par-

---

5 Carsten L. Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues: A Gospel Critique and Jewish Apology from the Spanish Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), see the Introduction, 4–8 and particularly Chapter 5, “Invention of a literary genre,” 113–150.

6 Works such as those by Abraham Pereyra or Miguel (Daniel Levi) de Barrios were taken as examples of an essentially mimetic discourse, that is introducing or ‘copying’ the literature of the Iberian *siglo de oro* in a Jewish context. However such a discourse is not always, in form and content, a “mimesis of antagonism,” but often adopts a provoking, polemic dimension. Thus, the ‘hegemonic’ discourse of Iberian literature is consciously evoked to counter it, in a political or religious sense. Isaac Cardoso’s *Excelencias de los hebreos* (1679) not only imitates the Iberian genre of *excelencias* literature, but offers its readers the challenging perspective of putting the despised people of Israel above Iberian Gothic supremacy (see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 357–358, 381–386).

7 A telling example of the ‘counter-discourse’ to be found in Sephardic polemical literature is provided by the poetry and prose texts of Abraham Gómez Silveyra (1656–1741); see Kenneth Brown and Harm den Boer, *El Barroco sefardí: La poesía de Abraham Gómez Silveira, estudio y edición* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2000).

8 Orobio refers to his *Divine Warnings* as a *tratado* (*Prevenções divinas*, edited by M. Silvera, 190)

9 “Se llama también el escrito o discurso que comprehende o explica las especies tocantes a alguna materia particular. Lat. *Tractatus*,” *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1739).

allels the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reception of the text, transmitted in considerably shortened versions.<sup>10</sup> A good example is the French *Israël vengé*, published in 1770 on the basis of several of Orobio's texts: the two chapters that were extracted from the second part of the *Divine Warnings* for separate circulation are about half the length of the original. Several scholars have examined the significant changes Orobio's work has undergone in its translation as well as the use of his abridged work by French philosophers; it is not necessary for me to examine this transfer again.<sup>11</sup> (Neither is it my intention to study the elimination of offending content or terms in other versions, such as in the English translation by Grace Aguilar).<sup>12</sup> In my opinion, these translations as well as the recent example of Silvera's Italian summaries show that the *Divine Warnings*' original text was considered too verbose, and perhaps also too intricate for new intended readers of Orobio's work.

If, as I will argue further on, the *Divine Warnings* displays a general principle of *amplificatio* which implies repetitions, redundancies and parallel constructions, the text is also governed by complex semantics and style. Many such complexities, to be explored further on, have also been eliminated from the *Divine Warnings*' translations.

The difficulty of the original text of the *Divine Warnings*, particularly in its first part, raises an important question: if Orobio's text was perceived as too large or too complex to be passed on in its entirety in translation, what does that mean for the reader the author had in mind? There seems to be a consensus that Orobio wrote his *magnum opus* for his fellow Sephardim, the former *conversos*. Even if we do not challenge this opinion,<sup>13</sup> we should at least be aware of the difference in tone and style as compared to Orobio's other writings. An interesting comparison can be made with the *Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah (Explicación del capítulo 53 de Isaías)*, as I will argue further on. In the prologue of the latter, Orobio writes that "these discourses were written on behalf of some persons who live outside of Judaism"; that "this is not written for the learned, therefore its insufficiency is excused." The author had prepared a text for fellow *conversos* that was ready to

---

**10** See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 451–464: "Translation of Orobio's Works in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries."

**11** See the discussion of the sceptical reception of Orobio's work in Paganini, "Orobio e i suoi lettori," VI–VII, XII–XV.

**12** See Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 463: "All passages which might have offended the minds of the Anglican community were rigorously excised." For a study of Aguilar's translation, see David Ruderman's article in the present volume.

**13** Myriam Silvera explicitly deals with the question of the intended reader, basically repeating the common idea that the text's purpose coincided with the overall purpose of Sephardic polemical literature, namely "recuperare all'ebraismo i conversos 'dudosos,'" although not addressed at a popular public, but rather those who had a high level of instruction. See Silvera, "I destinatari delle *Prevenções*," in Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, XXV–XXX, here XXX.

be used when discussing with opponents, notably learned Christians.<sup>14</sup> I will argue that the style of this *Explanation* is, accordingly, different from that of the *Divine Warnings*.

Even if Orobio addressed only a *converso* reader in both the *Explanation* and the *Divine Warnings*, his use of different styles suggests he varied his approach and distinguished between different kinds of readers. The question then becomes relevant how readership reflects on a textual level; hence my plea for a literary, rhetorical or discursive analysis of the *Divine Warnings* or, for that matter, for all of the Jewish apologetics presented in Spanish and Portuguese. These texts, in whatever literary genre they adopt, prose, poetry or drama, have a hitherto unexploited variety and interplay of implied or staged characters: Jewish, New and Old Christians, Calvinists, Catholics and Muslims. On the discursive level, the persona of the author often explicitly directs himself to an individual or collective addressee (“you” or “we”) against a third group (“they”) that is, implicitly, also being addressed.<sup>15</sup> The *conversos*, or New Christians, had a particular history of displacements, motivated by persecution but also by the demands of their trade activities, which led them to live in and outside of Christianity and Judaism. In their polemical writings, any textual interplay with narrative layers, characters and addressees becomes charged with connotations and possibilities. For example, in two of Antonio Enríquez Gómez’s works, *Romance al divín mártir Judá Creyente* and *Inquisición de Lúcifer y visita de todos los diablos*, the champions of Judaism or the victims of the Inquisition are not New Christians, that is, they are not of Jewish descent, but they belong to the Old Christians.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the author stages a persona who in the mind and discourse of the oppressor was free from any “stained” origin.<sup>17</sup> Was this a strategy the author chose in order to hold up a mirror to an absent reader—the Catholic Church, the Inquisition—and settle scores, albeit through fiction? Or did he chose the proselytised and victimised Old Christian in order to present Judaism as a choice and liberate his fellow

---

14 Orobio, *Explicación del capítulo 53 de Isaías*, Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 16, f. 1r–v: “Estos discursos sobre el capítulo 53 de Ysaías se escriuieron a instancia de algunas personas que hauitan fuera de judaísmo”; “Suponiendo que esto no se escriue para los doctos se disculpa bastantemente su ynsuficiencia”; “Y aunque los versos que se alegan son tan comunes y savidos entre nosotros que ninguno los ignora, con todo, así juntos y ponderados, están más prompts para valerse dellos en la ocurrencia de semejante conversación con algunos de los contrarios, particularmente hallando aquí lo que responden los doctores cristianos y como se an de contradecir esas respuestas.”

15 The hitherto neglected importance of the discursive / narrative interplay between religious opponents has been studied by Ryan Szpiech, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013; and by Wilke, *The Marrakesh Dialogues*, however, this applies to the form of dialogue, not to the confutation couched in the form of scholastic treatise.

16 See, respectively, Kenneth Brown, *De la cárcel inquisitorial a la Sinagoga de Amsterdam: Edición y estudio del “Romance a Lope de Vera,” de Antonio Enríquez Gómez*, Toledo: Consejería de Cultura de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007, 167, and Antonio Enríquez Gómez, *La Inquisición de Lucifer y visita de todos los diablos*, edited by M.P.A.M. Kerkhof and C.H. Rose, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992, 5.

17 Or in the Spanish, significant, terminology: “limpio,” “no manchado.”



*converso* readers from the ever-present burden of descent and blood?<sup>18</sup> I will not go so far as to suggest that Orobio's works have similar discursive complexities, but establishing its readership, distinguishing the (a) textually explicit (addressed); the (b) referred-to and absent addressees or (c) factual readers is also highly relevant for a treatise such as the *Divine Warnings*. In such an important genre as Jewish apologetics among Sephardim, limited to manuscript circulation but widely distributed nevertheless, an analysis solely dedicated to "contents" or "arguments" is not enough: literary form and rhetoric also play a major part. Even when we consider them non-fiction or doctrinal, the question of language, communication and discourse of "Sephardic Polemics" is essential to a proper understanding of the function and the importance of this genre. The following literary approach to the *Divine Warnings* is, in this sense, no more than a first contribution. I seek to open the way for further in-depth studies.

Before analysing the *Divine Warnings* itself, let us return to Daniel Levi de Barrios and examine how he perceived the author and his work. In one of his prefatory poems, the Andalusian poet characterises Isaac mainly in military terms, triumphant in (verbal) battles with Christianity, Israel's adversary. Barrios also repeatedly praises Orobio's wisdom, knowledge and wit and celebrates the fame enjoyed by Orobio, even stating his own outspoken envy by presenting himself as a Daniel, fighting for the same cause but ignored. Finally, he mentions Orobio's *eloquence*. In the poet's typical display of wit, Barrios manages to condense Orobio's writings in a few verses:

*¿Quién a tu valiente ciencia  
dexará de dar tributo  
quando triumphá de Thomás  
y seca el arbor de Lulio?  
¡Oh, nunca el prado en sus flores  
áspides tuviera ocultos!  
Mas, ¿qué digo? Que tu ley  
da la triacha en sus frutos.  
Fuiste Hipócrates de Francia  
con eloquencia de Tulio,  
adonde fuiste el primero,  
y el más docto fue el segundo.*<sup>19</sup>

Who will deny tribute to your brave science when it triumphs over Thomas and dries up Lull's tree? It would have been better if the meadow had never hidden a snake between its flowers, but let me say that your Law offers the triacle [remedy] in its fruits. You were the Hippocrates of France with the eloquence of Tullius—you were the first there, and the most learned remained second to you.

<sup>18</sup> Carsten Wilke, "Conversion ou retour? La métamorphose du nouveau chrétien en juif portugais dans l'imaginaire sépharade du XVIIe siècle," In *Mémoires juives d'Espagne et du Portugal*, edited by Esther Benbassa (Paris: Publisud, 1996): 53–67.

<sup>19</sup> Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, 7.

Here Barrios ingeniously identifies two principal merits in the doctor's works: his theological knowledge, which undoubtedly implies dialectical skills, and his eloquence, which is likened to Cicero's (*Tulio*). What Barrios implies is that Orobio triumphed over Catholic Theology, evoked by Thomas Aquinas (*Thomás*), the foremost theologian in the tradition of scholasticism, and that he was successful in his controversy with Alonso de Zepeda, who had translated Lull's *Arbor scientiae*.<sup>20</sup> Through the "hidden snakes" in the meadow (*prado*), he alludes to Orobio's controversy with his former friend Juan de Prado,<sup>21</sup> considered a deist by the former. Barrios portrays Orobio as the doctor whose writings provided the remedy against the snake's venom, that is, deism or heresy. As a doctor of medicine he was the first in France, but his second quality, his eloquence, made him the most learned, that is: by his polemical texts he earned the highest esteem.

In my opinion Barrios, whose merits as a poet are subject to discussion, succeeded once again in defining a personality of his Sephardic community with few words but great precision.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the poet's allusions to Orobio's fame and his knowledge in defense of Judaism would have been recognised by both Iberian and non-Iberian readers, only those who read his Spanish originals could fully appreciate his eloquence. But what kind of eloquence was Barrios referring to? In my opinion, the mention of "Tulio" was not a general compliment to Orobio's rhetorical virtues but an identification of the style of the *Divine Warnings*. I argue that Orobio adopts a Ciceronian style in this text, contrary to the plain (and shorter) style he used in his *Reply (Respuesta)* to Zepeda, full of puns and wit; or his *Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah*, also written in a plain, shorter style. In the *Divine Warnings*, Orobio wrote in a prose characterised by a rich variety of devices of *amplificatio* in what I consider to have been a conscious effort to lend his text a prestige that he did not find necessary to seek for the remainder of his works. In other words, Orobio both in content and style, marked his *Divine Warnings* as the *magnum opus* that it was subsequently identified to be by his readers.

Ciceronian style was defended as a stylistic ideal in the Renaissance, before it came under the attack by Justus Lipsius and other adherents of the Attic style in the second half of the sixteenth century; it was still popular among certain authors in the seventeenth century literature of Spain, particularly in devotional texts. What Barrios implied by his claim about the *Divine Warnings*' Ciceronian style is a matter that certainly merits a more careful analysis than what is presented here. Let it suffice to say that the style of the *Divine Warnings*, a treatise, does not appear to follow the common dividing lines of the three *genera dicendi*. According to Latin rhetoric, plain style was used for instruction, middle style for evoking delight and high

---

<sup>20</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 179–189.

<sup>21</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 329–347.

<sup>22</sup> See Wilhelmina C. Pieterse, *Daniël Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israëlitische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn "Triumpho del gobierno popular"* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1968).

style for stirring emotions. But, thanks to the work of López Grigera, among others, we know that style experienced a notable expansion in the Early Modern Period. Under the influence of Byzantine rhetoric that utilised Greek models as many as seven styles could be chosen, varying from Clarity (*sapheneina*) to Gravitas (*deinotes*), and elements of each individual style could be combined.<sup>23</sup> Orobio's *Divine Warnings* clearly belong to doctrinal, argumentative prose, which would have required "low" or "plain" style. However, the author clearly wished to adorn, vary and emphasise his discourse adopting "middle style." At this stage of my research, I have not identified a concrete model Orobio considered as stylistic ideal.<sup>24</sup> To my mind, Orobio's *Divine Warnings* do not echo any of the great Spanish writers of Golden Age prose such as Francisco de Quevedo or Baltasar Gracián (both famous for their laconic, short style, combined with extremely ingenious or witty discourse); nor Fray Luis de Granada, frequently cited as an example of Ciceronian style. The continuous presence of Latinised words in Orobio's prose, his experience at the University of Alcalá de Henares and the fact that he also wrote in Latin, perhaps points to the influence of contemporary Spanish authors writing in Latin such as Alfonso García Matamoros (d. 1572), who was a professor of rhetoric at the University of Alcalá de Henares and reputed as a Ciceronian.

If identifying a precise stylistic model is difficult, it is far easier to sum up the main elements of Orobio's prose in the *Divine Warnings*, one of which must strike every reader who makes the effort of digesting the text in its original language: the length of its periods. The very first phrase of the work's prologue occupies no fewer than fourteen lines in Silvera's edition and counts an impressive total of 208 words! Such a phrase is, of course, a challenge to the reader, not only due to its word count but also due to its many subordinate clauses. Lengthy sentences and an understanding of periods different from those that are common nowadays are also present in other works belonging to seventeenth-century Iberian prose, but when the *Divine Warnings* are compared to other texts by Orobio, it becomes clear that the author made a conscious effort to amplify his prose in pursuit of both a dialectic ideal—that is, fullness of argument—and aesthetics.

---

**23** Luisa López Grigera, *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro: teoría y práctica*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1994, 173.

**24** Examples of Ciceronian style can be found in Iberian devotional literature, with Fray Luis de Granada as an outstanding example. See Rebecca Switzer, *The Ciceronian Style in Fr. Luis de Granada*, New York: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1927; Manuel López Muñoz, *Fray Luis de Granada y la Retórica*, Almería: Universidad de Almería, 2000. *Amplificatio* is also found in the works of Abraham Pereyra, *La certeza del camino* (1666) and *Espejo de la vanidad del mundo* (1672), largely as a result of the author's plagiarism of Iberian devotional literature, see Henry Méchoulan, *Hispanidad y judaísmo en tiempos de Espinoza: Estudio y edición anotada de La certeza del camino de Abraham Pereyra*, Salamanca: Universidad, 1987. However, these authors maintain a didactical style, whereas Orobio's periods are larger and more complex—think of the recurring double negations. Also, Orobio's text does not engage with the reader on an emotional level typical of devotional literature but rather on an intellectual one.

Let us have a closer look at the mentioned first sentence:

*Parecerá justamente improprio al ánimo más cándido y desapasionado que quien no es versado en las Sagradas Letras, mas es totalmente ignorante de sus divinas exposiciones presuma hazer comentarios y declaraciones al Sacro Texto, en quien por la maior parte perdió pie el humano juicio, anegado en aquel piélago profundo de lo misterioso que contiene, particularmente después que en nuestra dilatada captividad fuimos privados de aquellos insignes interpretes que de grado en grado, con el tiempo y continuada sucesión de nuestros deméritos, fueron perdiendo aquellas vislumbres que aún quedavan de la divinidad que asistió a nuestros Maiores, hasta degenerar nuestro conocimiento y sabiduría en aquella sola luz que la naturaleza concedió a la racionalidad; cuán débil sea esta para ascender a penetrar los divinos secretos que misteriosa oculta la prophesía, lo conoce y confiesa nuestra ignorancia, y la diversidad de pareceres que sobre cada verso escriven nuestros expositores, de que tubo su origen afirmarse que admite muchas faces o sentidos la sacra página, porque expuesta a los ojos de nuestro entendimiento, los raios y luces de su divinidad le ofuscan, y él como corto y débil entiende con tal impropiedad que en ninguna inteligencia se afirma, y solicita varios conocimientos, por si acaso puede encontrar con el verdadero.*<sup>25</sup>

For good reason it may seem inappropriate to a naive and unimpassioned mind that someone who not only is no expert in the Holy Scriptures, but who is even entirely ignorant of its divine interpretations, would be pretentious enough to formulate comments and explanations on the Holy Writ, a matter in which human judgment has in most cases lost its foothold, being drowned in the profound ocean of the mysterious message contained therein, especially since we [Jews] in our protracted captivity were deprived of those distinguished interpreters who gradually with time and the continuous succession of our unworthy acts have lost those faint glimmers lingering on from the Godhead that once supported our ancestors, until our knowledge and wisdom degenerated to the bare light that nature has conceded to our rational being; and what a weak tool this is in helping us climb towards the deep secrets that prophecy has mysteriously enshrouded, is well recognised and confessed by the ignorance and diversity of opinions that our commentators show in their writings on each and every scriptural verse, from where originated the statement that the Holy Pages allow many aspects or meanings, because, when the eyes of our understanding are exposed to them, the beams and lights of the Godhead blind it, and short-sighted and weak-minded as it is, it understands them in such an inadequate manner that it does not manifest intelligence whatsoever and evokes various types of knowledge in the hope of possibly hitting the true one.

Analysing these sentences on a syntactic and lexical level, a characteristic feature of the *Divine Warnings*' prose comes to light. Orobio makes a consistent effort to amplify words and notions through synonyms in groups of two, which is evident in the above passage: "naive and unimpassioned," "comments and explanations," "knowledge and wisdom," "recognised and confessed," "ignorance and diversity of opinions," "aspects or meanings," "beams and lights," "short-sighted and weak-minded." Orobio occasionally clusters three synonyms: "gradually with time and the continuous succession." Not only is this opening phrase of the *Divine Warnings* extraordinarily laden with such couplings and combinations, this practice is strikingly common

---

<sup>25</sup> Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, 12.

throughout the entire text, at least of the first part of the *Divine Warnings*.<sup>26</sup> Such a practice of *amplificatio* is present only to a much lesser degree in Orobio's other writings, such as his *Reply* to Zepeda or the *Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah*. The French translator of the 1770 edition of his text had no trouble at all in leaving such duplications out, considerably shortening his translation.

A very similar principle governs a profuse construction of parallel clauses, also appearing in double or triple combinations. Thus in his first chapter, titled "Proof that God has warned Israel in the Five Books of the Law against all the idolatries of the Gentiles, against the philosophers, and against the Trinity that the Christians would invent" (*Prueba que en los Cinco Livros de la Ley previno Dios a Israel contra todas las idolatrías de las Gentes, contra los filósofos y contra la trinidad que avían de inventar los Christianos*) observe the triple occurrence of the syntagm initiated by *contra*) the author begins with a series of negations, balanced by another series of affirmations (both marked in cursive):

*Lo primero se responde al propuesto argumento que de ninguna manera era necesario que Dios nuestro Señor expresase en el divino oráculo la christiana secta, nombrándola con el mismo nombre que le avían de imponer los hombres, ni llegar a individuar sus falsas doctrinas, ritos y fingidos misterios, como tampoco lo hizo en las fabulosas deidades de la antigua Gentilidad, ni habló de Saturno, Júpiter, Marte, Baco, Venus, y los demás, ni hizo mención de las supersticiones de su falso culto, aviendo sido no menos célebre esta idolatría, ni menos universal, y no poco nociva a Israel; mas assi esta passada, como la presente, las previno el Señor Dios a su amado pueblo en la Ley divina que es archivo y summa de toda la prophesía: ally vocalmente fueron enseñados de quanto bastó para no admitir y arros[=]jar de sí quantas idolatrías y supersticiones podía inventar la malicia o la ignorancia de los hombres en todos los tiempos.<sup>27</sup>*

To the alleged argument, one can first of all reply that it was *in no way* necessary that God our Lord would identify the Christian sect in the divine oracle by designing it with the same name that humans would attribute to it; and it was *no more* necessary that He would go into explicating its false doctrines, rites and invented mysteries, as He *did not do this* for the fabulous divinities of pagan antiquity, since he has *indeed not* spoken of Saturnus, Jupiter, Mars, Bacchus, Venus and the others, *nor has he* left any mention of the superstitious customs of their false worship, although that idolatry was *no less* famous, *no less* universal, and *no less* harmful to Israel, but it happened to that of the past *just the same as* to the one existing at present: the Lord God has announced them to his much-beloved people in the Divine Law, archive and sum of all prophecy, where He has outspokenly taught as much as was necessary in order to discard and reject whatever idolatries and superstitions human wickedness or ignorance of all times would be able to invent.

Within these opposed units, both containing extensive enumerations—another principle of *amplificatio*—one finds a series of double negations like "no less famous,"

<sup>26</sup> I refer to the first part of the *Divine Warnings*, the main subject of my analysis. The second part, hitherto not available in a modern edition contains significant variations, as I have observed in the chapters devoted to the Jewish reading of Isaiah 53, which Orobio had issued as a separate text.

<sup>27</sup> Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, 20–21.

“no less universal” and “no less harmful.” A text laden with the density of these devices demands a concentrated, educated, trained reader.

On the lexical level, Orobio introduced another challenge by consistently using a terminology derived from Latin and rare in common, spoken Spanish. Such a use of uncommon words, called *cultismos* in Spanish, was a characteristic feature of baroque *culterano* prose of writers as Luis de Góngora, who cultivated a deliberately obscure style by transposing Greek and Latin words in Spanish and creating neologisms in combination with contrived mythological allusions and by using a syntax that stretched and forced the limits of Spanish language. Orobio’s use of *cultismos*, by contrast, does not pursue such a sophisticated game of hide and seek with the reader; rather, it reflected the author’s deliberate intent to create a prestigious, exact, scholarly discourse. In such words as

*abominable, alegaciones, calificar, canonizar, cancelar,*<sup>28</sup> *conturbar, corroborar, dilatación, dis-tinto, disuadir, engendrador, étnico, execrable, figurado, honestar, humanado, idiota, implicarse, implicatorio, improporcionado, individualar, infando, infausto, intimar, irrefragable, materialidad, nefando, nocivo, ocurrir, ofuscar, opifize, participar, prevaricación, prevención, proposición, publicano, repugnar, seductor, semejado, simulacro, subvertido, sumergir, supuesto, violentando, and vocalmente,*

one finds terms that are either highly uncommon in contemporary seventeenth-century Castilian prose (*étnico*,<sup>29</sup> *implicatorio*,<sup>30</sup> *infando*,<sup>31</sup> *irrefragable*<sup>32</sup>); hard to recognise in the specific use conferred on them by Orobio (*ocurrir, implicarse*); or representative of a very technical, scholastic or theological repertory (*abominable, irrefragable, cancelar*).

With the three levels of difficulty just mentioned: (a) extreme length and amplification, (b) continuous duplications, multiplications and opposing sets, and (c) preference for an abstruse and/or highly technical lexicon, the modern reader of Orobio’s *Divine Warnings* wonders what contemporary reader the author precisely had in mind. One cannot uphold the all too general assumption that Orobio’s text, as all vernacular apologetics produced by the Sephardim, was meant for a former *converso*

---

**28** *Cancelar* or *cancelar* is not only used in the meaning of “to annul,” but also with the precise meaning of to remove authority (from a text or argument). Cf. *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726–1739), s.v. ‘cancelar’: “y quitar la autoridad a algún instrumento público, lo que se hace cortándole, o cortando el signo, para denotar que queda inútil y sin alguna autoridad o fuerza.”

**29** *Ét(h)nico*: “lo mismo que gentil” (*Diccionario de Autoridades*, s.v. “étnico”). The word is thus used as synonym for “gentile,” “non-Jewish,” belonging to the peoples.

**30** *Implicar* is frequently used by Orobio in the sense “oponerse o contradecirse un término u proposición con otra, destruyéndose”; that is to counter an argument with another (see *Diccionario de Autoridades*, s.v. “Implicar,” as the secondary meaning. “Implicatorio” would then mean “contradictory” or “contrary.”

**31** *Infando*: “Infame, ilícito y que no es digno de que se hable de ello” (*Diccionario de Autoridades*, s.v.).

**32** *Irrefragable*: “lo que no se puede impugnar ni contradecir” (s.v. *Diccionario de Autoridades*).

reader who needed reassurance in his return to Judaism or who required an arsenal of arguments to counter his Christian adversary. The *Divine Warnings* can hardly be considered a manual. This does not mean, however, that Orobio targeted this work towards non-Jewish readers, although it sets it apart from other ones, like the *Explanation*, where he specifically addressed a non-instructed *converso*.<sup>33</sup> The *Explanation* also features lengthy phrases or periods but generally lacks repetitions, parallel constructions or double negations; more importantly, its vocabulary hardly has any technical philosophical or theological terms. As is known, the second part of the *Divine Warnings* includes a large part of the *Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah*, taken verbatim and without modification.<sup>34</sup> The difference in style with regards to the first part of the *Divine Warnings* is evident. This is perhaps due to the different genre of text used in the *Explanation*: it is a Jewish exegesis of Isaiah and other prophetic writings. Contrary to the first part of the *Divine Warnings*, the *Explanation* also contains an occasional element of scorn, which had not been present before.<sup>35</sup> In this text, Orobio also referred to the implied reader he had already addressed in the prologue.

In contrast, the author of the first part of the *Divine Warnings* made an effort to elevate his work both intellectually and stylistically, without, however, pursuing an ideal of *obscuritas*. In several areas, Orobio was very clear. As has been observed, no one before him was so explicit in his rejection of Christianity as the Orobio of the *Divine Warnings*. If the continuous use of *amplificatio* can be considered an aesthetic ideal, it also serves the purpose of creating the hammering effect of *emphasis*. Through repetitions and variations, Orobio leaves his adversary no breath to formulate counter-arguments, and even a reader who does not grasp every detail present in the author's lengthy phrases—and arguments—inevitably becomes pervaded by the insistent, repetitive structure of the *Divine Warnings*'s prose. The rhetorical quality of *emphasis* is present on many other levels throughout the text. Again, word choice plays an important part. If Orobio's prose is considered so fierce, this is largely to be attributed to a very consistent use of derogatory qualifiers. From its title on, the author used a very forceful term in favor of Judaism, qualifying Christians as "idolaters." Even if this term might have lost power through its almost ritualistic use in the Sephardic congregations (think of the condemnation of travels to the "lands of idolatry" at the synagogue), it was reinforced by a whole sphere of adjectives and

---

<sup>33</sup> See *supra*, 9–10, 67, 80–81.

<sup>34</sup> Although this point requires further analysis, the stylistic differences between the first part of the *Divine Warnings* and the commentary on Isaiah present in chapters 25–26 of the second part would suggest that Orobio made use of his previous writings. In this case, the *Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah* must have been written before the second part of his *Divine Warnings*.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Orobio's ridiculizing the moaning and tearful Paul; Orobio, *Explicación*, Ets Haim Ms. 48 D 16, 70: "nunca se dixo en las sagradas letras, ni se advirtió en la ley, ni lo lloraron los prophetas, ni hizieron mención de tal reprovación y destierro de Dios, como después lo gimió y lloró Paulo en todos sus escritos."

nouns meant to defy and beat the adversary. Christians and their beliefs were depicted as “vain” (*vana idolatría, vano culto*, but also *vanas opiniones* and *vanas e imposibles representaciones*), their beliefs depicted as illusory, unreal and lying, which is reflected in such nouns as *mentidas sombras*, verbs as *pretenden* and *intentar*, and adjectives as  *fingido, falso, chimérico*. Christians are tainted with either irrational stupidity (*idiota, desatino, absurdo, yerro*) or treacherous manipulation (*pervertido, sofisticado, ingenioso*, etc).

Scholars who have drawn attention to Orobio’s presentation of Judaism as characterised by its rationalism<sup>36</sup>—without ignoring the fundamental role of prophecy—have also identified the author’s continuous use of the powerful metaphor of light and darkness, which, common as it may be in religious and scientific polemics of the Early Modern Age, is still handled with skill and subtlety. Two more “semantic fields” used in depicting Christians have been singled out and come to the fore when Orobio’s *Divine Warnings* is textually analysed. One is the adoption of derogatory qualifiers that contaminate Christians with impurity (*immundos*) or low moral standards (*facinerosos, infames, audaces, audacia, desordenado apetito, desordenada codicia*).<sup>37</sup> If Orobio’s use of “impurity” already echoes a discursive practice in Sephardic literature turning upside down a hegemonic and omnipresent Iberian discourse levelled at the New Christian tainted by his blood, Kaplan and others have also recognised another core element of Orobio’s anti-Christian rhetoric, deeply motivated by the traumatic experience of a declassed and despised minority of *conversos* or New Christians: the depiction of Christianity as a doctrine of common people, those of un noble birth. In the *Divine Warnings*, Christians are identified as “rabble,” “plebeian,” and “barbarian” (*vulgo, plebe* and *bárbaro*), having their origin in “villains, fishermen, publicans, and public harlots” (*vulgares, pescadores, publicanos y públicas ramerás*). Here again former *conversos* inverted the social rejection they were confronted with, bringing the argument back to the adversary.

Demystified and debunked as the false Messiah of a false religion, Orobio voids Christ of any possible prestige by consistently referring to him as “that man” (*aquel hombre*) or “a dead man” (*un hombre muerto*). In the context of the *Divine Warnings* these invectives do perhaps not add much force to a discourse that is sharp enough to stand on its own. The author does not look for the scandal in vituperating the Christian Messiah, contrary to other Jewish polemical texts. The element of humour and mockery, which Orobio had used in other texts, notably against Zepeda, is absent from the *Divine Warnings*. Given the exegetical purpose of the text announced

---

<sup>36</sup> Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 377: “behind his fierce longing for Israel’s liberation from subservience to the Gentiles, one can detect the warning accents of a sober and conservative rationalism.”

<sup>37</sup> Orobio, however, does not go so far as to attribute animal characteristics to Christians: the word *brutos* appears in his text but is not explicitly related to Christianity. In this sense, the author rejects a derogatory discourse, such as found in the fiercest Iberian anti-Jewish literature.



in its title, an analysis of “divine warnings” to be found in the Scriptures, such a device was perhaps not to be expected.

Based upon a literary reading of the *Divine Warnings* after a first analysis of its style and its rhetoric, what was to be expected from Orobio’s *magnum opus*? I venture that much of its intention derives from the author’s highly original conception of an alternative teleological reading of the Bible. Orobio and his fellow New Christians had been continuously confronted with a tradition of Christological interpretation of the so-called Old Testament, in which it was argued that the coming of Christ represented the true fulfilment of biblical prophecies, invariably accompanied by the exposition and derision of blind, stubborn Jews. In his *magnum opus*, Orobio introduced an alternative, subversive Christological reading of the same Scriptures, divinely revealing the falseness and blindness of Christianity. Orobio’s elaborate prose created a monument in words, not primarily meant to instruct the former *converso*, but to strengthen his new identity by the means of counter-discourse.

## Works Cited

- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 16.
- Benítez, Miguel. *La face cachée des Lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits philosophiques clandestins de l’âge classique*. Paris: Universitas, 1996.
- Boer, Harm den. *La literatura sefardí de Amsterdam*. Alcalá de Henares: Universidad, 1996.
- Brown, Kenneth, and Harm den Boer, *El Barroco sefardí: La poesía de Abraham Gómez Silveira, estudio y edición*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 2000.
- Brown, Kenneth. *De la cárcel inquisitorial a la Sinagoga de Amsterdam: Edición y estudio del “Romance a Lope de Vera,” de Antonio Enríquez Gómez*. Toledo: Consejería de Cultura de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007.
- Diccionario de Autoridades*. Edited by Real Academia Española (1726–1739); online edition <http://web.frl.es/DA.html>.
- Enríquez Gómez, Antonio. *La Inquisición de Lucifer y visita de todos los diablos*. Edited by Maxim P.A.M. Kerkhof and Constance H. Rose. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- López Grígera, Luisa. *La retórica en la España del Siglo de Oro: teoría y práctica*. Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1994.
- López Muñoz, Manuel. *Fray Luis de Granada y la Retórica*. Almería: Universidad de Almería, 2000.
- Méchoulan, Henry. *Hispanidad y judaísmo en tiempos de Espinoza: Estudio y edición anotada de La certeza del camino de Abraham Pereyra*. Salamanca: Universidad, 1987.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, vol. 1. Edited by Myriam Silveira. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013.
- Paganini, Gianni. “Orobio e i suoi lettori dall’ebraismo all’illuminismo.” In Orobio, *Prevenções divinas*, V–XV.
- Pieterse, Wilhelmina C. *Daniel Levi de Barrios als geschiedschrijver van de Portugees-Israëlietische Gemeente te Amsterdam in zijn “Triumpho del gobierno popular.”* Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1968.
- Popkin, Richard H. “The Role of Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments in the Rise of Skepticism.” In *New Perspectives on Renaissance Thought: Essays in the History of Science, Education and*

- Philosophy in Memory of Charles B. Schmidt*, edited by J.H. Hutton and S. Hutton, 159–180. London: Duckworth, 1990.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. “Judaism in the Anti-Religious Thought of the Clandestine French Early Enlightenment.” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, no. 1 (2003): 97–117.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. *Judaism and Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Switzer, Rebecca. *The Ciceronian Style in Fr. Luis de Granada*. New York: Instituto de las Españas en los Estados Unidos, 1927.
- Szpiech, Ryan. *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Wilke, Carsten L. “Conversion ou retour? La métamorphose du nouveau chrétien en juif portugais dans l’imaginaire sépharade du XVIIe siècle.” In *Mémoires juives d’Espagne et du Portugal*, edited by Esther Benbassa, 53–67. Paris: Publisud, 1996.
- Wilke, Carsten L. *The Marrakesh Dialogues: A Gospel Critique and Jewish Apology from the Spanish Renaissance*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim. *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.



Adam Sutcliffe

# From Apologetics to Polemics: Isaac Orobio's Defences of Judaism and their Uses in the French Enlightenment

Histories of the intellectual interaction between Jews and Christians in the early modern period have generally been written in an ameliorative mode, highlighting the gradual rise of a more civil tone in theological exchanges over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This has particularly been the case in studies of seventeenth-century Amsterdam. A particularly good example is the pioneering work of Ralph Melnick, who, in his book *From Polemics to Apologetics: Jewish-Christian Rapprochement in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (1981),<sup>1</sup> made his argument very clear in his choice of title. And that argument is very defensible.

The first text Melnick discusses was written in Portuguese by Elijah Montalto, the first significant Sephardic anti-Christian polemicist. His refutation of the Christian interpretation of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah probably originated in Venice around 1610.<sup>2</sup> This extremely polemical text never directly names its target: Christians are always periphrastically but scathingly referred to as the “Slanderers of the Divine Law” (*os depravadores da Divina Ley*).<sup>3</sup> Montalto argues uncompromisingly against numerous tenets of Christian belief, such as original sin, and identifies and ridicules various contradictions and inconsistencies in the gospels, drawing on a detailed knowledge of the New Testament gained during his marrano past.<sup>4</sup> Montalto died in Paris in 1616 as he was serving as doctor to Queen Regent Marie de Médicis. His student Saul Levi Mortera brought his body and his polemical text to Amsterdam, and later himself became a leading rabbi in the Amsterdam community. Mortera also wrote several anti-Christian polemics in which he vigorously confronted various key points of friction between Judaism and Christianity, such as the nature of sin and salvation, the Trinity, and the issue of the Messiah. These circulated quite widely among the Sephardim of Amsterdam alongside Montalto's text,

---

Adam Sutcliffe, King's College London

1 Ralph Melnick, *From Polemics to Apologetics: Jewish-Christian Rapprochement in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981).

2 Jonathan I. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 84–85; Ralph Melnick, *From Polemics to Apologetics*, 24–28; Bernard Cooperman, “Elijah Montalto's ‘Suitable and Incontrovertible Propositions,’” in *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus (Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1987): 469–497.

3 Elijah Montalto, *Tractado do Doctor Montalto Sobre o principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*; University Library of Amsterdam, MS Ros 76.

4 Elijah Montalto, *Tractado do Doctor Montalto Sobre o principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*, 5, 73–76.

where they served to shore up Jewish commitment and pride among doubters in the community.<sup>5</sup>

As Melnick highlights, the highly assertive and uncompromising texts of Montalto and Mortera contrast greatly with the mood elsewhere in Amsterdam. As commercial contacts between Sephardic Jews and Christians became closer—particularly from the 1650s onwards, due to the booming Dutch colonial trade with the West Indies<sup>6</sup>—social and intellectual interchange also grew more amicable and commonplace. The meticulously detailed model of Solomon’s Temple built in the 1640s by Rabbi Jacob Jehuda Leon (1602–1675) fascinated Jews and Christians alike and for several decades attracted large numbers of visitors in both Holland and England.<sup>7</sup> In the middle years of the seventeenth century, a mood of millenarian excitement led to extremely fervid interest in all things Jewish among radical Christians in Holland in particular, as the works of Richard Popkin and several other scholars have shown. Members of a tight Anglo-Dutch, philo-Judaic circle, including the Amsterdam millenarian Petrus Serrarius and the Middelburg Hebraist Adam Boreel; in England, John Durie, Samuel Hartlib, and others were involved in a number of other Hebraistic projects, including translations of the Mishnah into Latin and of the New Testament into Hebrew as well as the collection of funds for the Jewish community in Jerusalem.<sup>8</sup>

Isaac Orobio, who arrived in Amsterdam in 1662, was also far from being a simple polemicist against Christianity. He was respected by Christians as an interlocutor,<sup>9</sup> as was underscored by the appeal made to him by the radical and troubled Collegiant Jan Bredenburg who was trying to write a refutation of Spinoza’s arguments and eventually found himself persuaded by them—this encounter gave rise to Orobio’s *Certamen Philosophicum* (1684). The same is true for his participation in the famous “friendly conversation” between himself and the leading Remonstrant theologian Philip van Limborch, a record of which Van Limborch published in 1687 under the title *De veritate religionis Christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo* (1687).

Much could be said about that conversation, which, in brief, should not be considered quite as friendly as Limborch would have us regard it. However, my aspiration here isn’t to refute Melnick’s thesis (although, in fact, I would only accept it with

---

5 See, e.g. Saul Levi Mortera, *Preguntas que se hizieron de un clerigo de Ruan a Amsterdam*, University Library of Amsterdam, ms. Ros. 127. See also Melnick, *Polemics*, 29–32; Marc Saperstein, “Your Voice Like a Ram’s Horn”: *Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1996), 118–125.

6 Israel, *European Jewry*, 154–156.

7 See A. K. Offenbergh, “Jacob Jehuda Leon (1602–1675) and his Model of the Temple,” in *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*, edited by Jan van den Berg and Ernestine van der Wall (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988): 101–110.

8 Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, “The Amsterdam Millenarian Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669) and the Anglo-Dutch Circle of Philo-Judaists,” in *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century*: 73–94.

9 Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro* (Oxford: Littman Library, 1989).

caution and with caveats), but, rather, to offer a sequel to it, looking forward from the late seventeenth century to the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Over that later period, the trend observed by Melnick is, if anything, thrown into reverse.

## Jewish-Christian Rapprochement and its Reversal

The “polite conversation” of the 1680s, I would argue, marked the effective end of the strategy of Christian intellectual leaders, born with the disputations of the thirteenth century, to establish the truth of Christianity and the falsity of Judaism through structured debate between representatives of the two religions. For the next eighty years, Jewish arguments continued to resonate powerfully in non-Jewish thought. But they did so in a disembodied form, with little sense of their connection to a living, contemporary Judaism; and they did so with an increasingly hardened polemical edge, directed simultaneously against institutionalised Christianity and against Judaism itself. This is a complex story that can be grasped by tracing the reception and use of Orobio’s works during the eighteenth century, when they were coopted into the polemical arsenal of the radical French Enlightenment. The rapprochement between Jews and Christians that Melnick observes in seventeenth-century Amsterdam was, in a sense ironically, what enabled this process to get underway.

Although any theological rapprochement was more hesitant than Melnick suggests, it was certainly the case that social contacts at an elite level became much more relaxed over the course of the century. In the period after the Shabbatai Zevi affair, Christian interest in Judaism became less fervid, and was increasingly moulded by the more sober scholarly concerns of the Republic of Letters. In this intellectual climate, Jewish philosophical and theological arguments were explored with a new meticulousness and sense of fascination. By the end of the seventeenth century, it was possible for determined Christian intellectuals, particularly in Holland, to gain access to a range of Jewish anti-Christian texts by Montalto, Mortera, Orobio, and others. The circulation of these manuscripts within the Sephardic community was an open secret, and it seems very likely that leading Dutch Sephardic patricians on occasion proudly showed their sumptuously calligraphed volumes to selected Christian savant acquaintances.<sup>10</sup>

These polemics were written to address specific doubts and uncertainties within the Sephardic community and were intended for an exclusively Jewish readership. However, there is evidence of Christian access to them from as early as the 1630s: Constantijn l’Empereur, Professor of Hebrew at Leiden from 1627 to 1646, possessed several Jewish polemics and mentioned in his correspondence that he was engaged

---

<sup>10</sup> On Jewish/non-Jewish sociability in this period, see Jonathan I. Israel, “Gregorio Leti (1631–1701) and the Dutch Sephardi Elite at the close of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, edited by Ada Rapaport-Albert and Steven Zipperstein (London: Peter Halban, 1988): 267–284.

in translating one of them into Latin.<sup>11</sup> The *Amica Collatio* drew enduring interest across much of Europe in the early eighteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Other Sephardic anti-Christian polemics also at this time attracted significant attention from Early Enlightenment intellectuals. Several such manuscripts were sold at high prices at the auction in The Hague in 1715 of the “Biblioteca Sarraziana,” the vast private library of G. L. de la Sarraz, a Protestant minister and bibliophile.<sup>13</sup> Jacques Basnage, who was Sarraz’s father-in-law, eagerly took the opportunity to consult the library just before its sale, and incorporated much new material from the polemics of Orobio, Mortera, Montalto and Menasseh ben Israel into the third edition of his *Histoire des Juifs* (1716).<sup>14</sup> Basnage treated these texts as striking intellectual curiosities and described their contents in detail without attempting to offer any response to them. In more radical circles, however, the same texts were put to inventive and ingenious use.

## Lévesque de Burigny and the “Dissertation sur le Messie”

The most intricate reception of Orobio’s writings was within the world of early eighteenth-century French clandestine philosophy. The initiator of this was the deist Jean Lévesque de Burigny (1692–1785) who, while in Holland in 1720, made contact with learned Jews and had copies made of the anti-Christian texts by Orobio that they had showed him.<sup>15</sup> He then returned to France, and, in collaboration with his friend Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, introduced these texts into clandestine circulation there.<sup>16</sup> From the 1720s onwards, French manuscript translations of Orobio’s writings circulated in various forms and under a variety of titles. At least four distinct French

---

11 Peter van Rooden, “Constantijn l’Empereur’s Contacts with the Amsterdam Jews and his Confutation of Judaism,” in *Jewish-Christian Relations*: 63–64. See also Peter van Rooden, “A Dutch Adaptation of Elias Montalto’s *Tractado Sobre o Principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*,” *Lias* 16 (1989): 189–204.

12 See Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 615, 688–690.

13 Richard H. Popkin, “Jacques Basnage’s *Histoire des Juifs* and the Biblioteca Sarraziana,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 154–162.

14 Popkin, “Jacques Basnage,” 157–158; Jacques Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu’à présent, pour servir de continuation à l’histoire de Joseph. Nouvelle édition augmentée* (The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1716) IX, 1043ff.

15 Burigny describes this encounter in a much later letter; see Ira O. Wade, *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France, 1700–1750* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), 229–230.

16 Miguel Benítez, “Orobio de Castro et la littérature clandestine,” in *La Face cachée des lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits clandestins de l’âge classique* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996): 147–154, here 150–151; Elisabeth Carayol, *Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, 1684–1746* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1984), 94, 142–145.

clandestine texts are preserved, consisting largely of translations or excerpts from his Spanish works.<sup>17</sup> To the radical readers of these manuscripts, the writings of Orobio and other Jewish controversialists constituted a rich and intriguing seam of arguments against Christian orthodoxy, readily mined for subversive use. However, the specifically Jewish flavour of the texts complicated their reception and was handled in a variety of ways. While at times Orobio's Jewishness was subtly erased from the manuscript translations, at other times it was deliberately highlighted in order to create a sense of daring, exoticism, indeterminacy or irony.

Measured by the number of extant copies, the most widely circulated manuscript based on Orobio's writings was *Dissertation sur le Messie*. Eight copies of this text, between some of which there are variations in wording but not in essential content, were enumerated by Miguel Benítez in the catalogue of clandestine manuscripts in his 1996 volume, *La face cachée des Lumières*.<sup>18</sup> The main body of this manuscript consisted of a loose translation of selected chapters of Orobio's *Prevenções Divinas*, his most trenchant attack on the doctrines of Christianity, which had circulated widely within late seventeenth-century Sephardic Jewry. In the introduction to his text, Orobio states that he first presented his arguments in a debate with some Carmelite friars. According to Yosef Kaplan, this encounter probably did take place (though we cannot be sure), most likely in Brabant or elsewhere in the southern Netherlands. Kaplan dates the text to between 1668 and 1675.<sup>19</sup>

Orobio is responding in the *Prevenções* to a challenge posed to him by the Carmelites (or, possibly, rhetorically posed by himself and ventriloquistically ascribed to the Carmelites): Why didn't God, in his omniscience, warn his chosen people about the challenge they would later face from Christianity? Orobio's answer, in essence, is: He did! In the first chapter of the *Prevenções*, Orobio addressed this challenge directly. The chapter is titled "Proof that in the five books of the law God forewarned Israel against all the idolatries of the gentiles, and against the philosophical arguments the Trinity that the Christians would invent."<sup>20</sup> Orobio here opens his argument by arguing that, although biblical prophecy did not specifically refer to Christianity, or indeed to any specific pagan falsehood or idolatry, nonetheless "the lord God forewarned his beloved people in the divine law that is the archive and sum of all prophecy: there they were clearly taught enough not to accept and to dismiss the

---

<sup>17</sup> See items 30 / C XIV, 67 / D XXXIII, 91 / E XVIII, 145 / P VIII and 234 in the inventory in Benítez, *Face cachée*, 20–61. See also Benítez, "Orobio"; Anthony McKenna, "Sur l'hérésie dans la littérature clandestine," *Dix-huitième siècle* 22 (1990) 301–313; Kaplan, *Orobio*, 451–457.

<sup>18</sup> For further details, including the locations of these manuscript copies, see Benítez, *Face cachée*, 33 [item 67].

<sup>19</sup> Isaac Orobio de Castro, *Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, ed. Myriam Silvera, Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013; Kaplan, *Orobio*, 243–245, 436–439 (for details of identified manuscript copies).

<sup>20</sup> Orobio de Castro, *Prevenções divinas*, vol. 1, 20: "Prueba que en los Cinco Livros de la Ley previno Dios a Israel contra todas las idolatrías de las Gentes, contra los filósofos y contra la trinidad que avían de inventar los Christianos."



many idolatries and superstitions that could be invented by the wickedness or the ignorance of men in all ages.”<sup>21</sup> The ensuing text critiques various Christian doctrines, particularly the Trinity, and offers a detailed defence of the Jewish reading of key biblical prooftexts, especially Daniel’s prophecy of the “seventy weeks” and Isaiah 53.

In the French version, the broad structure of Orobio’s argument is followed, but the “translation” is so tendentious in many places that it barely qualifies as such. “Tendentious rewriting” would be a more accurate description. As an example, here is the first paragraph of the *Dissertation sur le Messie*:

God schooled the Israelites so well in the law that they had to follow that he judged it unnecessary to warn them of that which Jesus Christ would introduce several centuries after Moses. The pagans among whom this chosen people lived followed many religions and worshipped a plurality of Gods incompatible with the unity of the true God. Nowhere in the sacred text does one see that the Israelites were warned that false Gods would rise up capable of seducing them. The only precaution that the Lord took to protect his people from false doctrines consisted in the interdiction that he made on their worship of Gods unknown to their ancestors, and in the order in which he commanded them to punish as false prophets all those who told them that they should abandon the holy laws and precepts that He had ordered them to follow in perpetuity. These sacred orders needed to suffice for the Israelites to condemn all dogmas that were not entirely in conformity with the irrevocable decrees of the Divinity.<sup>22</sup>

The satirical bite here is, I think, pretty clear. The God of the Hebrews relies on the authority of his orders and on fear to ensure that his chosen people remain loyal to his commandments; beyond that, he made no provision to protect them from seduction by pagans and Christians. Orobio’s intent was rather different: to show that the “general precepts” embedded within the Divine Law were quite sufficient to equip the Jews to reject the falsehoods of others.

---

<sup>21</sup> Orobio de Castro, *Prevenções divinas*, vol. 1, 20–21: “las previno el Señor Dios a su amado pueblo en la Ley divina que es archivo y summa de toda la prophesia: ally vocalmente fueron enseñados de quanto bastó para no admitir y arros[j]ar de sí quantas idolatrías y supersticiones podía inventar la malicia o la ignorancia de los hombres en todos los tiempos.”

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Orobio, *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez* (London, n.p., 1770), 200–201: “Dieu a si bien instruit les Israélites dans la loi qu’ils doivent suivre, qu’il a jugé inutile de les avertir de celle que Jésus Christ devoit introduire plusieurs siecles après Moïse. Les payens parmi lesquels ce peuple choisi vivoit, s’étoient fait des religions & adoroient une pluralité de Dieux incompatible avec l’unité du vrai Dieu. On ne voit dans aucun endroit du texte sacré que les Israélites seroient avertis qu’il s’éleveroit de fausses Divinités propres à les séduire. Toute la précaution que le Seigneur a prise pour garantir son peuple des fausses doctrines consiste dans la défense qu’il lui fait d’adorer des Dieux que leurs peres n’ont point connus & dans l’ordre qu’il lui intime de punir comme de faux Prophetes tous ceux qui lui annoncroient qu’il devoit s’écarter des divines loix & des préceptes qu’il leur avoit ordonné de suivre à perpétuité. Ces ordres sacrés doivent suffire aux Israélites pour condamner tous les dogmes qui ne sont pas entièrement conformes aux décrets irrévocables de la Divinité.”

Moreover, the overall argument of Orobio's text is profoundly reframed by the introductory and concluding chapters of the French manuscript version that are clearly written by a non-Jewish, philosophically radical author. These framing chapters, most probably written by Lévesque de Burigny or one of his collaborators, combine to cast a powerfully ironic inflection on the main body of the text. Both interpolated chapters are written in *faux-naïf* style in an anonymous first person voice. The author begins by lamenting the "absurd situation" of his ignorance of even a single letter of the language in which God dictated the Bible. In order to overcome this and to satisfy his zeal to follow the biblical commandments "as exactly as possible," he explains that he has turned to the best possible guides for help: "the most learned rabbis of our century."<sup>23</sup> Expert instruction from the most learned rabbis has convinced him of the enduring authenticity of Judaism, and of the falsity of Christianity. He then summarises the anti-Christian arguments that are elaborated in the main body of the text drawn from Orobio. He dismisses the Trinity as contrary both to reason and Scripture and ridicules the claim that the coming of Jesus Christ abrogated all the laws and ceremonies that are "so clearly set out in the Pentateuch," arguing that such an arbitrary and unheralded change would suggest an imperfection in God and in his sacred law.<sup>24</sup>

This fulsome respect for the Mosaic Law, however, is manifestly ironic. The feigned innocence of the authorial voice is intended not to suggest genuine admiration for rabbinic learning but, on the contrary, to undermine Christianity by implying that Christian zeal logically leads to such absurdity. A truly devoted Christian, the text provocatively implies, should become a Jew.

In the light of this introduction, the chapters of the text translated from Orobio take on a highly ambiguous gloss. Purely as textual critique, the reader is invited to acknowledge the persuasiveness of their interpretive logic, which is presented as distinctively "rabbinic." The argumentative potency of this, however, is utterly reversed when the text is read in the ironic tone suggested by its introduction. Within the terms of scripturally-based religion, Orobio's arguments defeat those of the Christians. Far from suggesting the underlying validity of these arguments, their intention is to demonstrate the utter ridiculousness of all biblical reverence. Superficially, Judaism is presented as posing a telling challenge to Christian theology, but, more fundamentally, it is cast as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Christianity itself.

---

<sup>23</sup> Isaac Orobio, *Israël vengé*, 189: "L'extrême desir que j'ai de suivre avec le plus d'exactitude possible ce que m'ordonne le texte sacré, m'a engagé à le lire avec toute l'attention dont je suis capable, & pour m'en rendre encore l'intelligence plus facile, j'ai interrogé les plus sçavans Rabbins de notre siecle."

<sup>24</sup> Isaac Orobio, *Israël vengé*, 196: "En un mot la nouvelle loi introduite depuis la venue de Jésus Christ abolit toutes les ordonnances légales, toutes les cérémonies & tout le culte de Dieu si clairement énoncés dans le pentatheuque. Pourquoi les changemens? Qui peut les avoir autorisés? Y a-t-il de l'imperfection en Dieu? Nous a-t-il fixé un tems pour suivre sa loi sacrée & nous a-t-il avertis d'en suivre une nouvelle après le terme expiré?"

The ironic tone of the *Dissertation sur le Messie* is reaffirmed in its concluding editorial interpolation, once again in the voice of our anonymous narrator who here enthusiastically celebrates the revealed authority of Judaism, established in perpetuity at Sinai. Within the culture of French clandestine philosophy in this period, the irony of this argument is unmistakable: it was the most fundamental, radical tenet that faith should not be based on revelation, but on reason. In ostensibly lauding the Sinaitic “beatific vision” through which God had established and consolidated the faith of the Jews “for all eternity,”<sup>25</sup> the text in fact pointedly ridicules the allegedly static, dogmatic and irrational nature of Judaism, and implies that Christianity, if pushed to its logical conclusions, is scarcely any different.

Here as well as in other manuscript versions of his texts, Orobio’s arguments are wielded in an extremely mobile and double-edged manner.<sup>26</sup> They are simultaneously used as a highly effective weapon against Christianity while being framed as even more absurd than the Christian beliefs against which they are deployed. Orobio’s voice at times serves almost as a ventriloquistic mouthpiece for Early Enlightenment rationalism, while also representing an archetype of blinkered rabbinism. The Jewish speaking position in these manuscripts is both fundamentally unstable and deeply ironic. The latter captures a powerful subversive pleasure in using the arguments of a Jew to undermine Christian theology, and yet sustained identification with these arguments is never entertained in these texts. Repeatedly, Jewish victory is ironically undercut through its portrayal as the inverted triumph of a religion even more absurd than Christianity, as a result of the topsy-turvy logic of irrational scriptural fundamentalism.

## The Baron d’Holbach

In 1770 there appeared the first printed edition of Orobio’s anti-Christian writings, in French translation, under the title *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie*. Presented straightforwardly as Orobio’s own work, the publication was in fact sponsored by the radical materialist and atheist the Baron d’Holbach along with other members of his Parisian circle.<sup>27</sup> The overwhelming majority of this text was in fact drawn from the earlier clandestine manuscript translations. The first section of *Israël vengé* is largely taken from a manuscript titled *La divinité du Jésus-Christ détruite*, it-

---

<sup>25</sup> Isaac Orobio, *Israël vengé*, 243 : “cette voix divine, cette vision béatifique a établi & consolidé leur foi pour toute l’éternité.”

<sup>26</sup> For a close examination of these texts, see Adam Sutcliffe, “Judaism and Jewish Arguments in the Clandestine Radical Enlightenment,” in *Scepticism, clandestinité et libre pensée*, edited by Gianni Paganini, Miguel Benítez, and James Dybikowski (Paris: Champion, 2002): 97–113.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Charles Kors, *D’Holbach’s Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

self a free translation from an essay by Orobio on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah (which in turn was largely based on a section on this topic in his *Prevenciones*). The second and final section, meanwhile, is simply a printing, under the same title, of the *Dissertation sur le Messie*.

Holbach's text carefully follows the rationalist logic of Orobio's critique of the Trinity and his exposure of the contradictions he sees as besetting this doctrine. However, through various subtle twists of language the French version discreetly but unmistakably distances itself from Orobio's Spanish original, lightly ridiculing his scriptural fealty while at the same time deploying it as an anti-Christian argument. D'Holbach was one of the most infamous radicals of the late Enlightenment and was an open atheist—in his most famous text, the *System of Nature*, also published in 1770, he advances the uncompromisingly materialist argument that everything in the universe is simply matter in motion. In his hands, Orobio's voice was diffused as one among many strategies through which he sought to undermine and ridicule organised religion in all its forms.

## Anthony Collins

Beyond France, Jewish anti-Christian arguments attracted the attention of the English deists, above all Anthony Collins, whose immense library included manuscript apologetics in Spanish by Troki, Mortera, and Orobio.<sup>28</sup> Collins' *Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1724), in which he argues that the Old Testament prophecies can only lend support to Christianity if they are interpreted allegorically rather than literally, is clearly indebted to the detailed exegesis of the prophetic books of Daniel and Isaiah in Orobio's *Prevenciones Divinas*.<sup>29</sup> In his later *Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* (1727), which he wrote in response to the scandalised outcry provoked by the *Discourse*, Collins more explicitly aligns himself with a "Jewish" insistence on the literal meaning of these biblical passages. He here attacks traditionalists such as Stillingfleet and Grotius for "playing upon words," in ignoring the literal sense of the prophecies that was clearly "intended by the writer," and instead supporting an allegorical interpretation.<sup>30</sup>

In his earlier texts, however, Collins' attitude towards Judaism appears somewhat more ambivalent. Praising Josephus in his *Discourse of Freethinking* (1713), Collins expresses regret that this great historian's talents were wasted on "such an illiterate, barbarous and ridiculous people."<sup>31</sup> Despite his fascination with Jewish themes, there is no underlying stability to his view of Judaism. While drawing on

<sup>28</sup> James O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins: The Man and his Works* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London: n.p., 1724); see also O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 155–199.

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Collins, *A Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered* (London: n.p., 1727), 251.

<sup>31</sup> Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of Freethinking* (London: n.p., 1713), 157.

Mortera and Orobio's literalist scriptural readings in order to challenge the Christian interpretation of biblical prophecy, Collins simultaneously argues in his *Discourse of 1724* that the Talmud also diverged from the literal meaning of the Bible and that therefore the allegorical biblical readings of Jesus and his disciples were in some sense characteristically Jewish. He repeatedly divides the Jews into opposing camps by such means as drawing a sharp contrast between the ancient Sadducees and Pharisees.<sup>32</sup> Such splitting enables him to identify within Judaism the source of both the pure essence of natural religion and the priestly obfuscations that first obscured this wisdom.

## Conclusion

Although Jewish arguments against Christianity were of noteworthy importance in the Early Enlightenment, it is misleading to consider them, as scholars such as Richard Popkin and Silvia Berti have done, as "sources" of unbelief.<sup>33</sup> The arguments of Orobio and others did not in themselves generate doubts in Christian minds, or even strengthen the opinions of radicals by providing them with new reasons to doubt the traditional truth claims of Christianity. Writers such as D'Holbach and Lévésque de Burigny enthusiastically deployed their arguments not because they found them straightforwardly convincing, but because they constituted an extremely intriguing and versatile polemical resource.

For the English Deists and, to an even greater extent, the French compilers of clandestine manuscripts, writing was a performative practice, at least as concerned with the gestural enactment of intellectual transgression as with the formulation of new philosophical truths.<sup>34</sup> The simultaneous exoticism and familiarity of Judaism and its status within traditional Christian theology as both foundational and abhorrent made it a perfect site of symbolic confrontation and intellectual play. A characteristic mode of many clandestine manuscripts was layered argumentation in which superficial readings were undermined by more hidden ones. The subversive use of Judaism typically followed this pattern, functioning as a critique that was itself subject to critique. To the authors and readers of these texts, the logical instability of these arguments was overshadowed by their polemical power and by the intellectual pleasure of the paradoxes and inversions they produced.

---

<sup>32</sup> Collins, *Scheme*, 20–21; Collins, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty* (London: R. Robinson, 1717), 60–61.

<sup>33</sup> See Richard H. Popkin, "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992): 159–181; Silvia Berti, "At the Roots of Unbelief," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 555–575.

<sup>34</sup> See James A. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680–1750* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997).

There was, thus, a paradox at the core of Burigny and D'Holbach's use of Orobio. They were using his arguments to undercut Christianity while simultaneously seeking to ridicule and subvert those Jewish arguments. This self-undermining, inherently unstable form of argument was, to eighteenth-century readers, deliciously playful, mobile, and scandalous. It lacked, however, a clear grounding other than the flat assertion that all this theology was clearly nonsense. While critiquing mainstream Christianity, there was no space unequivocally external to this tradition on which deists and radicals could ground their arguments. While Judaism in some sense offered such a non-Christian point of departure, it also represented the most fundamental roots of the Judeo-Christian world view, in opposition to which these critics largely defined their intellectual project. The use of Jewish sources, in sum, highlighted internal fractures within the formulation of Enlightenment rationalism.

## Works Cited

- Basnage, Jacques. *Histoire des Juifs depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à présent, pour servir de continuation à l'histoire de Joseph. Nouvelle édition augmentée*. The Hague: Henri Scheurleer, 1716.
- Benítez, Miguel. "Orobio de Castro et la littérature clandestine." In his *La Face cachée des lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits clandestins de l'âge classique*, 147–154. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996.
- Berti, Silvia. "At the Roots of Unbelief." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 555–575.
- Carayol, Elisabeth. *Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, 1684–1746*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1984.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Discourse of Freethinking*. London: n.p., 1713.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*. London: n.p., 1724.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*. London: R. Robinson, 1717.
- Collins, Anthony. *A Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*. London: n.p., 1727.
- Cooperman, Bernard. "Eliahu Montalto's 'Suitable and Incontrovertible Propositions'" In *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus, 469–497. Cambridge: Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, 1987.
- Herrick, James A. *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680–1750*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1997.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550–1750*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.
- Israel, Jonathan I. "Gregorio Leti (1631–1701) and the Dutch Sephardi Elite at the close of the Seventeenth Century." In *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, edited by Ada Rapaport-Albert and Steven Zipperstein, 267–284. London: Peter Halban, 1988.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*. Oxford: Littman Library, 1989.
- Kors, Alan Charles. *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

- McKenna, Anthony. "Sur l'hérésie dans la littérature clandestine." *Dix-huitième siècle* 22 (1990): 301–313.
- Melnick, Ralph. *From Polemics to Apologetics: Jewish-Christian Rapprochement in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981.
- Montalto, Eliahu. *Tractado do Doctor Montalto Sobre o principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*. University Library of Amsterdam, MS Ros 76.
- Mortera, Saul Levi. *Preguntas que se hizieron de un clerigo de Ruan a Amsterdam*. University Library of Amsterdam, MS Ros 127
- O'Higgins, James. *Anthony Collins: The Man and his Works*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970.
- Offenberg, Adri K. "Jacob Jehuda Leon (1602–1675) and his Model of the Temple." In *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*, edited by Jan van den Berg and Ernestine van der Wall, 101–110. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez*. Edited by Baron d'Holbach. London: n.p., 1770.
- Orobio de Castro, Isaac. *Prevençiones divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes*, ed. Myriam Silvera. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2013.
- Popkin, Richard. "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* and the Biblioteca Sarraziana." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 154–162.
- Popkin, Richard. "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century." In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, 159–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Rooden, Peter van. "A Dutch Adaptation of Elias Montalto's *Tractado Sobre o Principio do Capitulo 53 de Jesaias*." *Lias* 16 (1989): 189–204.
- Rooden, Peter van. "Constantijn l'Empereur's Contacts with the Amsterdam Jews and his Confutation of Judaism." In *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*, edited by Jan van den Berg and Ernestine van der Wall, 63–64. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988.
- Saperstein, Marc. "*Your Voice Like a Ram's Horn*": *Themes and Texts in Traditional Jewish Preaching*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1996.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. "Judaism and Jewish Arguments in the Clandestine Radical Enlightenment." In *Scepticisme, clandestinité et libre pensée*, edited by Gianni Paganini, Miguel Benítez, and James Dybikowski, 97–113. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- Wade, Ira O. *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophical Ideas in France, 1700–1750*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938.
- Wall, Ernestine G. E. van der. "The Amsterdam Millenarian Petrus Serrarius (1600–1669) and the Anglo-Dutch Circle of Philo-Judaists." In *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century: Studies and Documents*, edited by Jan van den Berg and Ernestine van der Wall, 73–94. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988.

David B. Ruderman

## Reading Orobio in Nineteenth-Century England: The Missionary Alexander McCaul's "Israel Avenged"

This essay represents a mere footnote on the afterlife of Isaac Orobio de Castro's polemical work in nineteenth-century England. It is the story of how reading a text in radically changed contexts for both Jews and Christians evoked a reader response certainly unanticipated by the author in his own time and place in seventeenth-century Amsterdam.<sup>1</sup> It is also an accounting of the translation of words and ideas, in this case from the Spanish original to a French paraphrase and adaptation by a Jew named Henriquez,<sup>2</sup> to a toned-down and modified English version written for Jews in an English-speaking field,<sup>3</sup> and finally to a literal re-translation of part of the French text rendered again into English by an evangelical missionary.<sup>4</sup>

Let me first introduce the two principals in our story.

*Grace Aguilar* (1816–1847), called “a poet, historical romance writer, domestic novelist, Jewish emancipator, religious reformer, educator, social historian, theologian, and liturgist” by her biographer Michael Galchinsky, was an accomplished literary figure and public role model for Jewish women in England during her brief life of thirty-one years. In her novels, poems and sermons, she articulated a highly spiritual, biblically based and proto-feminist ideology of Judaism, quite attractive to a large number of readers both in Europe and the United States, where she was published as well.<sup>5</sup>

---

David B. Ruderman, University of Pennsylvania

1 The classic work on Isaac Orobio de Castro (c.1617–1687) is by Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, translated from the Hebrew by Raphael Loewe (Oxford: Littman Library/Oxford University Press, 1989). Kaplan discusses all the translations of Orobio's works in an appendix, 451–464.

2 Isaac Orobio, *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez*, edited by Baron d'Holbach (London: n.p., 1770). This French translation is in fact a compilation of several works including a discussion of the messiah, Isaiah 53 and perhaps several original chapters added by the editor.

3 Grace Aguilar, *Israel Defended or the Jewish Exposition of the Hebrew Prophecies applied by the Christians to their Messiah by Isaac Orobio, translated from the French, and Printed expressly for the Use of Young Persons of the Jewish Faith* (London: John Wertheimer and Co., 1838). Note that the edition was printed for private circulation.

4 *Israel Avenged by Don Isaac Orobio, translated and answered by the Rev. Alex. McCaul, D.D. of Trinity College, Dublin*, three parts (London: B. Wertheim, 1839–1840). This retranslation by Alexander McCaul contains only the first two chapters of *Israël vengé*.

5 On Aguilar, see Beth Zion Lask Abrahams, “Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute,” *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 16 (1952): 137–148; Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nine-*



*Alexander McCaul* (1799–1863) was one of the most prominent figures in “The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews” during the first half of the nineteenth century. He later held a chair in biblical and rabbinic studies at King’s College and published over fifty works displaying his vast erudition in Judaism and in theology in general. In 1837, he released a formidable attack against the Talmud entitled *The Old Paths*, engendering considerable consternation and alarm among Jews when the work appeared in Hebrew translation two years later. Having spent ten years as a missionary in Warsaw, McCaul knew Jewish texts and Jewish life intimately. His work engendered a series of long responses from Jewish intellectuals attempting to defend traditional Judaism from his stinging criticisms. Among the most significant of these responses were several written by Eastern European *maskilim* (proponents of the Jewish enlightenment) who had previously condemned the rabbis and their restrictive Talmudic laws in calling for radical religious and educational reform. The irony of these same critics of Rabbinic Judaism feeling obliged to defend their hallowed traditions is at the heart of my study of McCaul’s critique and the Jewish response. Their treatises constitute invaluable Jewish self-reflections on the meaning of their newly constructed identities in the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

It is indeed a fascinating irony that Grace Aguilar would translate an anti-Christian work of a seventeenth century Portuguese Jew “rendering more clear the rudiments of the Jewish Faith to the youthful mind,” as she put it, and should herself subsequently become the target of abuse by one of England’s leading evangelical preachers and scholars of Judaism.<sup>7</sup> If one accepts the convincing reconstruction of Nadia Valman, and before her Rachel Beth Zion Lask Abrahams, that she herself was a kind of Jewish evangelical, echoing the Protestant critique of rabbinism as a metaphor for priestcraft, evoking an earnest bibliocentrism and a Judaism as the religion of the heart, as well as aligning Jews with Protestant values, it became a strange twist of fate that she would be maligned by none other than a leading evangelical missionary such as Alexander McCaul. Other evangelicals like Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846) had praised her as she attempted to articulate a Jewish

---

*teenth-Century British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92–115; Michael Galchinsky, ed. *Grace Aguilar: Selected Writings* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003). The quote is from the latter’s online portrait “Grace Aguilar,” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. Jewish Women’s Archive, 1 March 2009. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/aguilar-grace> [viewed on 16–06–2017].

<sup>6</sup> On McCaul, see David B. Ruderman, “Towards a Preliminary Portrait of an Evangelical Missionary to the Jews: The Many Faces of Alexander McCaul (1799–1863),” *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 47 (2015): 48–69. I am presently working on a larger project on McCaul and his Jewish respondents.

<sup>7</sup> Grace Aguilar, *Israel Defended*, p. vii of the translator’s preface.

identity in the language of Evangelical and feminine Christianity but McCaul held a different attitude towards her work.<sup>8</sup>

So how might one explain her indulgence in translating Orobio? According to Galchinsky, she did so at her father's request.<sup>9</sup> Emanuel (1787–1845) and Sarah (1787–1854) Aguilar were Portuguese Jews who had immigrated to England in search of religious and economic security, settling in the northeast London suburb of Hackney where Grace was born. Emanuel served as a Parnas of London's Bevis Marks Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, and members of the family were active participants in the Sephardic community. No doubt her father was proud of his *converso* ancestry and considered Orobio a hero of sorts. But the need to translate him into English at that moment is not so clear. By taking on this assignment, Grace not only entered directly into public polemics with Christianity; she relied on an ex-Christian who had denounced his former faith, a kind of born-again Jew of Catholic ancestry. If she believed Protestants were essentially different from Catholics, why publish the work in English, stirring the pot, so to speak, using arguments against Christianity that would be misconstrued by English Protestants as they apply more directly to popery, to a Catholic understanding of Christianity? McCaul caught her in a trap, arguing instead that Judaism is indeed closer to popery than evangelical Christianity. He chose to retranslate Orobio more literally to show his true colors and, indirectly, hers. He succeeded brilliantly in pointing out her hypocrisy in attacking Christianity in general on the one hand while espousing a universal spirit of piety shared by Jews and Christians on the other.

Aguilar's *Israel Defended* was published in 1838 for the use of young persons of the Jewish faith. I examined a copy at the Katz center library that included marginalia from its owner, the physician Joshua Cohen of Baltimore.<sup>10</sup> Cohen's entire library was given to Dropsie College Library (now the core collection of the Katz library), along with that of Isaac Leeser, yet another close associate of Aguilar and her publisher in the United States. The book was presented to him personally by Moses Mocatta (1768–1857), a patron of the works of Grace Aguilar, a translator himself, and most likely a person who played a role in encouraging Aguilar to publish the English Orobio.<sup>11</sup> Mocatta's *Faith Strengthened* (1851) is a translation from the Hebrew of the

---

**8** See note 5 above. For Tonna's relationship to Aguilar, see Hillary Rubenstein, "A Pioneering Philosemite: Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846) and the Jews," *Jewish Historical Studies* [Published by the Jewish Historical Society of England] 35 (1996–1998): 103–118.

**9** As he states in his online essay; and see note 5 above.

**10** Joshua I. Cohen (1801–1870) was president of the medical and chirurgical faculty of the University of Maryland and owned one of the finest Judaica collections in the United States. His collection was donated by his heirs to Dropsie College in 1915. My thanks to Dr. Arthur Kiron for this information.

**11** On the title page of his copy of *Israel Defended*, Joshua Cohen wrote the following, dated August 6, 1853: "Given me by Mr. Mocatta, terrible and insincere Jew. [He apparently refers to Orobio here!] There is subtlety in some points and great fallacies in others, particularly in the argument on the immutability of the law being given by God to Moses. Fundamentally different in that no mention what-

famous *Ḥizzuk Emunah* of Isaac ben Abraham of Troki, the famous Karaite polemicist. His other translation, entitled *The Inquisition and Judaism* (1845) was a sermon by the Archbishop of Cranganor on Isaiah 42:22 “addressed to Jewish martyrs on the occasion of an auto da fé at Lisbon” in 1705.

Based on the French translation of “Henriquez,” but not a literal translation, Aguilar believed she was creating an original English book. Quite aware of the wide difference between the kindly charity of Protestants and the bigoted cruelty of Catholicism, as she saw it, she consciously adopted a milder tone. She writes: “We shall pray for the light of our holy faith to beam on them [the Christians], and not condemn them for their belief, though we may consider it erroneous.” McCaul picked up this line and saw it as insulting Christianity. She apologetically claimed that the work was composed not to evoke controversy against other creeds or make converts. Her sole aim was to enlighten Jews in their own faith, but this was hardly convincing.<sup>12</sup>

McCaul’s *Israel Avenged* was published in three parts in 1839–1840. He notes that Aguilar’s work was printed for private circulation “owing to the zeal and talent of a Jewish lady.” He never mentions her by name, which suggests that he did not know her personally. A Christian response is called for, he argues, since she wishes for our conversion; she is guilty of ignoring Jewish principles in seeking converts. He accuses her of being a rabbinist: she should withdraw the book or protest the principles of rabbinism, and she should be aware of how it dooms all Jewish females to contempt. Perhaps cognisant of her image among Jewish women, or simply responding to her as a Jewish woman, a subject he had treated in his earlier writing, he undermines her personal image as well. He purposely retranslates the text from the French, the first two chapters of *Israël Vengé*, realising that hers is not the original and hoping to restore the polemical thrust of Orobio’s pointed argument.<sup>13</sup>

---

ever is made of the miracles which prove that Christianity could not be so important. The strongest part is that Jesus could not be the messiah of the Jews because more of the prophecies of him as concerning them are fulfilled, but [the argument that] the messiah that the Jews still expect the fulfillment of Isaiah’s and Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning them after 3000 years . . . [are] lastly fallacious. But the argument concerning Shiloh . . . is strong.”

**12** The citation is from Aguilar, *Israel Defended*, vi. She adds: “The cruelties inflicted on Orobio; the awful bigotry of the Catholics of Spain, in which nation he drew breath, and lived in continued fear of his Jewish descent being discovered; the very different light in which we were regarded in the seventeenth century to that of the nineteenth; all these facts may well excuse the violence in which some parts of the original are written, pervading the whole, indeed, to a degree, which without altering the sense could not be entirely eradicated.”

**13** McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, preface, p. i. He continues [ii]: “She wishes for our conversion, she prays for it, and teaches the Jewish youth to join in the prayer; consistency would lead her to hold up the light to our view. In her heart and prayers she is a convert-maker, and it is upon the heart that God looks. If convert-making be a practice repugnant to Jewish principles, she is verily guilty before the Searcher of hearts.”

McCaul opens the first part by attacking the character of Isaac Orobio de Castro. On the one hand, it is remarkable, he notes regarding Aguilar's choosing his work for an alleged book of instruction for Jewish youth, that a man who has received a Christian education is preferred. Aguilar's preference for a Christian educated *converso* is perhaps a tacit compliment to Christianity, an admission that Christian training brings one closer to the truth. On the other hand, Orobio is hardly a model to young people, but rather a hypocrite who hid his real identity for such a long time and who later became thirsty for revenge. Orobio is equivalent to Johann Andreas Eisenmenger, McCaul suggests, whose personal bitterness towards his subject warped his judgment.<sup>14</sup> McCaul as a Protestant missionary would not accept the responsibility for Christian persecution to which Orobio was exposed. Persecuting Christians for McCaul are not true Christians; however, persecuting Jews are true rabbinical Jews. To prove his point, he juxtaposes the biography of Orobio with that of his contemporary Uriel da Costa (1585–1640) based on his autobiography. Drawing from the lurid testimony of Da Costa, it is clear, so he contends, that atrocities practiced upon Jews of Spain are not worse than those prescribed by the oral law in Amsterdam. Modern Judaism is just as intolerant as the tribunal of the Inquisition. In addition to Da Costa, he evokes the memory of yet another formidable though less well-known *converso* whom he admires in contrast to Orobio: Thomas de Pinedo (1614–1679). McCaul sees the latter's Hebrew attainments as being superior to those of Orobio. He was a significant classical scholar who never attacked Christianity aside from the Inquisition and also said positive things about Amsterdam's Christian communities. McCaul holds up these two good *conversos* in contradistinction to the bad one he is attacking. In so doing, he displays his thorough knowledge and awareness of the cultural ambiance of seventeenth century Amsterdam.<sup>15</sup>

In the remainder of the first part, McCaul focuses on Isaiah 53 and challenges Orobio's claim that it is the only proof of Christianity. He also demonstrates, based on a vast array of Jewish sources, that Jews associated this chapter with their own messianic ideology. As he had done in his anti-Talmudic work, his proof comes especially from Jewish liturgy. In this case, he illustrates his point from the *Yozer* prayer

---

<sup>14</sup> Johann Andreas Eisenmenger (1654–1704) was the author of *Entdecktes Judenthum*, a highly critical treatment of Judaism. On him, see Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700–1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 13–22. The Reverend William Ayerst, one of McCaul's colleagues at the London Society, in his eulogy of McCaul in 1863, strongly contrasted the loving spirit of McCaul towards Jews and Judaism with the caustic and destructive approach of Eisenmenger. See Ruderman, "Towards a Preliminary Portrait," 51.

<sup>15</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, 14, where he cites from the *Exemplar humanae vitae* (Gouda, 1687), 347. On da Costa, see Uriel da Costa, *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions*, Translation, notes and introduction by Herman Prins Salomon and Isaac S.D. Sassoon (Leiden: Brill, 1993), introduction. McCaul mentions Thomas de Pinedo in *Israel Avenged*, 23. Pinedo was known primarily as a scholar of ancient Greek, who, in contrast to Orobio, spoke positively of Christianity. His most important publication was his Latin edition of Stephen of Byzantium's geographical work published in Amsterdam in 1678.

recited on the first day of Passover, as liturgy for him reflects the views of the masses of Jews, not merely the views of individuals.<sup>16</sup>

In the second part, McCaul takes up Orobio's arguments on biblical prophecies. Christianity never opposed the Mosaic Law, and its allegorical interpretations can be compared favorably with those of Jewish exegetes such as Isaac Abravanel. What is clear in McCaul's view is how Orobio consciously misrepresented Christianity; this might be expected from illiterate Jews of Turkey or Morocco but not one educated in the superior cultural surroundings of Western Europe (a clear reflection of European, particularly an English sense of cultural superiority). The most obvious fact for McCaul is the evolving nature of Jewish law. In this he relies heavily on Joseph Albo who claimed that the only immutable laws are the Ten Commandments, and only the first two come directly from God without Moses's mediation. David Kimḥi, Abraham Ibn Ezra and others all acknowledge that changes in the law have existed since the time of Ezra. In the final analysis, the rabbinic code is ten times the size of the Mosaic, testifying to its numerous accretions. McCaul brings forth Albo to refute Moses Maimonides's claim that the law indeed changes and he compares this stance with that of Tertullian. McCaul constantly enlists Albo to make his argument regarding the mutability of law; the Hebrew *le-'olam* always means for him a limited amount of time and not eternity. Orobio is thus totally ignorant of the very essence of Judaism and thus he proclaims: "If the Mosaic Law be utterly immutable, [as he had claimed], then Judaism, which has made so many and such enormous changes in that law, is necessarily an imposter."<sup>17</sup>

He proceeds to discuss the doctrine of the Trinity at length. It is not irrational citing contemporary grammarians and medieval exegetes' explanations of plurality of the Hebrew *Elohim*. In evoking both the testimony of Isaac Abravanel of the fifteenth century and Wilhelm Gesenius, his contemporary, he demonstrates that a plurality is not inconsistent with unity.<sup>18</sup>

Orobio ultimately returns to pronouncing how rabbinism possesses only a faint resemblance to Mosaic Law. The worst feature of Orobio's religion is its intolerance, a nursling of inquisitorial cruelty, he calls it. McCaul asks how the circulators of this book would want to teach these cruel sentiments to Jewish youth. Reform Jews see Christians as non-idolaters but Orobio's opinions seem to belong to the old-fash-

<sup>16</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, 24–33. He refers to several examples of Jewish prayers on 33–34.

<sup>17</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, part 2, especially 88–111. On Albo, see the useful synthesis of Dror Erlich, "Joseph Albo," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (first published July 2006; Winter 2016 Edition), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/albo-joseph/>, especially his observation: "Remaining faithful to the dogmatic method, Albo argues that in Mosaic Law, and in divine law in general, changes in the details of the commandments may take place, but their fundamental principles cannot change." McCaul draws heavily from Albo, *Sefer Ha-Ikkarim*, treatise 3, chapters 13–22, especially 14 and 16.

<sup>18</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, 115–127.

ioned and intolerant class of Jews. Why disseminate his work if one aspires to be a liberal, he asks.<sup>19</sup>

McCaul emphasises in the third part that the biblical prophets described not merely corporeal redemption but spiritual as well. In contrast, he points out that common Jews living today both in Eastern Europe and Turkey focus more on material than spiritual redemption; this popular view is based on superstition, again casting aspersions on non-Europeans and their cultural inferiority. Orobio, however, held both the corporeal and the spiritual to be important: “Orobio’s purer idea of a spiritual redemption seems to have been the effect of his education amongst Christians, and his assertion, that such is the hope of Judaism, to be ascribed simply to the ignorance of the religion which he embraced.”<sup>20</sup>

McCaul also praises the focus of Orobio’s discussion of prophecies as some enlightened Jews in his day have eradicated them from the prayer book altogether. They seek only integration into the body-politic. Here McCaul explicitly offers a political message against emancipation and integration. Although he admits it is harsh to call for the destruction of Gentiles in the end of days, faith in the divine word remains unbroken in these prophecies. Christians believe in Jesus but also in the national restoration of the Jewish people and the rebuilding of the Temple. Orobio is wrong again: he argues that Christians object to Jewish restoration by citing a string of ancient and more recent English Protestant Christian authorities who favor it, including Joseph Butler, Thomas Newton, Samuel Horsley, and Benjamin Blayney.<sup>21</sup>

McCaul concludes that Orobio’s education in the Catholic Church led him to misrepresent Christianity. His narrow and vindictive spirit never acknowledged the happiness of Gentiles: “We fearlessly ask every Jewish reader, whether he is not ashamed of a champion so bloodthirsty and so vindictive, and whether he does not regard the republication of such doctrine, at present, not only as unseasonable, but as a libel

---

<sup>19</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, 129–131, especially 129: “Orobio speaks all the way through as if he and his colleagues were really keeping the law, and yet he and they had nothing but a counterfeit, a caricature dishonouring to God and uncharitable to man, the worst feature of which, is intolerance, which appears to be that part of it most easily apprehended and best understood by this nursing of inquisitorial cruelty.”

<sup>20</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, part 3, 171.

<sup>21</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, part 3, 148–170, where these English clerics are cited. Note especially McCaul’s negative position regarding Jewish civic emancipation and cultural integration on 148–149: “In some other countries all hope of the Messiah’s advent has been given up. An attempt is making to identify the Jews as part and parcel of the nations amongst whom they reside, and a desire expressed to strike out of the prayer-book all the petitions for restoration to the land of Israel. In fact the enlighteners there wish to shake off altogether their holy nationality, to sink their privileges as Jews, and to be incorporated into the Gentile body-politic. The reprint of Orobio’s book shows, that the respectable persons concerned in it are far from sharing these Infidel opinions. They are looking themselves and teaching their brethren to look for the total extermination of the nations amongst whom they dwell, rather than their own amalgamation with the gentiles by any so-called act of emancipation.”

upon the Jewish population of Great Britain?"<sup>22</sup> So he asks: How can modern English Jews look forward to a redemption where their fellow countrymen are excluded and exterminated?

It is hard to gauge the impact of Grace Aguilar's book on the Jewish youth of England she hoped to educate through her semi-public translation. It certainly did not achieve the popularity of some of her other books. It does not seem to have been a good choice in light of McCaul's devastating attack. McCaul's translation and commentary, however, seems to have been noticed. In the annual volume of the London Society, the *Jewish Intelligence* of 1839, McCaul's translation is described. In the next issue, Isaak Marcus Jost (1793–1860) is quoted on the work: "Here, the same as in his former workers, we find him calm, collected, free from every spirit of persecution, and his field of battle, only learning." But Jost rejects the notion that the republication of Orobio signaled a new Jewish messianic passion to replace their desire for emancipation. Similarly, in the same issue, Julius Fürst's (1805–1873) review of McCaul is cited from his journal *Der Orient*, of October 24, 1840, expressing the same sentiment but objecting to the notion of a narrow messianism of Jews and encouraging instead their amalgamation into European society. It is indeed fascinating to note how both Jewish intellectuals did not see McCaul's work as offensive and even praised it while disagreeing with it in part.<sup>23</sup>

In the context of the new Jewish-Christian debate of the nineteenth century in contrast to that of the seventeenth, the terms of the conflict had changed and the players were different. Evangelical Protestantism had disassociated itself completely from the history of Catholic intolerance of Jews; English Christians believed that they were more tolerant and appreciative of their Jewish citizenry and the evangelicals in particular had elevated the status of the Jews as key actors in the hopes of national restoration and the second coming. The other obvious change was that the Christian missionary, despite his passionate criticisms of rabbinic Judaism, perhaps knew as much or more about rabbinic literature than Orobio himself, could cite passages from the Talmud, midrashim, targumim, medieval and modern exegetes alike, as well as from ancient and modern historians. He could offer learned responses to Orobio's pointed arguments and could overwhelm Aguilar with his knowledge of rabbinic Judaism in a way to which she was incapable of responding. Unlike the *philosophes* who were intrigued with the novelty of Orobio's assault on Catholicism, in McCaul's time, the attack on popery was commonplace and relatively unoriginal, and Orobio's insight into Judaism could easily be countered by a new generation of erudite Christian scholars who themselves knew more about Judaism than most contemporary Jews, certainly in England. In their era, the Jewish-Christian debate continued, but with new philological and, especially, historical tools, a new kind

---

<sup>22</sup> McCaul, *Israel Avenged*, 195.

<sup>23</sup> *Jewish Intelligence and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* 5 (1839): 104–106; 6(1840):388, 392.

of scholarship that Orobio and his contemporaries could not have anticipated. To answer McCaul, a generation of learned *maskilim* in Eastern Europe was prompted to respond with their intimate knowledge of rabbinic sources and the latest methodologies of *Wissenschaft* and historicism. But that is a story for another occasion.

## Works Cited

- Abrahams, Beth Zion Lask. "Grace Aguilar: A Centenary Tribute." *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 16 (1952): 137–148.
- Aguilar, Grace. *Israel Defended or the Jewish Exposition of the Hebrew Prophecies applied by the Christians to their Messiah by Isaac Orobio, translated from the French; and Printed expressly for the Use of Young Persons of the Jewish Faith*. London: John Wertheimer and Co., 1838.
- Costa, Uriel da. *Examination of Pharisaic Traditions*, trans. Herman Prins Salomon and Isaac S.D. Sassoon. Leiden: Brill, 1993.
- Ehrlich, Dror. "Joseph Albo." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Edward N. Zalta. Winter 2016, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/albo-joseph/>.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism: The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*, trans. Raphael Loewe. Oxford: Littman Library/Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Katz, Jacob. *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism 1700–1933*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Galchinsky, Michael, ed. *Grace Aguilar: Selected Writings*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003.
- Galchinsky, Michael. "Grace Aguilar." In *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. Jewish Women's Archive, 1 March 2009. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/aguilar-grace>.
- Jewish Intelligence and Monthly Account of the Proceedings of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews* 5 (1839); 6(1840).
- Orobio, Isaac. *Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus, leur prétendu Messie, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez*. Edited by Baron d'Holbach. London: n.p., 1770.
- Orobio, Isaac. *Israel Avenged by Don Isaac Orobio, translated and answered by the Rev. Alex. McCaul, D.D. of Trinity College, Dublin*, three parts. London: B. Wertheim, 1839–1840.
- Rubenstein, Hillary. "A Pioneering Philosemite: Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna (1790–1846) and the Jews." *Jewish Historical Studies* [Published by the Jewish Historical Society of England] 35 (1996–1998): 103–118.
- Ruderman, David B. "Towards a Preliminary Portrait of an Evangelical Missionary to the Jews: The Many Faces of Alexander McCaul (1799–1863)." *Jewish Historical Studies: Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 47 (2015): 48–69.
- Valman, Nadia. *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literary Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.





# Bibliography: Studies and Editions of Isaac Orobio de Castro

## Specialised Studies on Orobio

- Benítez, Miguel. "Orobio de Castro et la littérature clandestine." *XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* 14 (1982): 219–226.  
Reprinted in *La face cachée des Lumières: Recherches sur les manuscrits philosophiques clandestins de l'âge classique*, by Miguel Benítez, 147–154. Paris: Universitatis, 1996.
- Caballero, Práxedes. "La crítica de Orobio de Castro a Spinoza." In *Spinoza y España*, edited by Atilano Domínguez, 229–237. Cuenca: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994.
- Carvalho, Joaquim de. *Orobio de Castro e o espinosismo*. Lisboa: Seara Nova, 1940.
- Cohen, Robert. "Yosef Kaplan, Isaac Orobio de Castro, and the Sephardi World of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 23, no. 2 (1989): 186–190.
- Díaz Esteban, Fernando. "Entre la religión y la filosofía: La polémica de Isaac Orobio y Alonso de Zépeda." *Sefarad* 61, no. 2 (2001): 319–344; 62, no. 1 (2002): 21–55.
- Dupuy, Bernard. "Deux contemporains de Spinoza: Abraham Pereyra et Isaac Orobio de Castro." *Istina* 38 (1993): 287–304.
- Esaguy, Augusto d'. "The Dramatic Life of Orobio de Castro." *Bulletin of the Institute of the History of Medicine* 5.9 (November 1937): 822–826.
- Feldman, Seymour. "Ha-bikoret hayehudit ha-rishonah neged Shpinozah." *Iyyun* 37, no. 3–4 (1988): 222–237.
- Friedenwald, Harry. *Jewish Luminaries in Medical History and a Catalogue of Works Bearing on the Subject of the Jews and Medicine from the Private Library of Harry Friedenwald*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1946, 53–56.
- Gebhardt, Carl. "Juan de Prado." *Chronicon Spinozanum* 3 (1923): 269–291.
- Glatzer, Michael. "Mi-natsrut biSefarad leyahadut beHoland." *Peamim* 15 (1983): 137–141.
- Graetz, Heinrich. "Don Balthasar Isaak Orobio de Castro: Eine biographische Skizze." *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 16 (1867): 321–330.
- Graetz, Heinrich. *Geschichte der Juden von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 10: *Geschichte der Juden von der dauernden Ansiedelung der Marranen in Holland (1618) bis zum Beginn der Mendelssohnischen Zeit (1760)*. Leipzig: Leiner, 1868.
- Israel, Jonathan I. "Orobio de Castro and the Early Enlightenment." In *Mémorial I.-S. Révah: Études sur le marranisme, l'hétérodoxie juive et Spinoza*, edited by Henry Méchoulan and Gérard Nahon, 227–245. Paris: Peeters, 2001.
- Julius, Rafael. "Doktor Yitshak, ha-anus she-ḥazar leyahadut." *Maariv* 5 (August 1983): 38.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "El testimonio de Baltasar Álvarez de Orobio sobre la peste en Málaga en 1637." *Helmantica* 29/89 (1978): 212–232.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *Yitshak Orobio de Kastro uveneí hugo*. PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University, 1978.
- Kaplan, Yosef. "Yitshak Orobio de Kastro: Darko shel anus min ha-natsrut la-yahadut." *Peamim* 5 (1980): 29–38.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *Mi-natsrut leyahadut: Ḥayyaw ufe'alo shel ha-anus Yitshak Orobio de Kastro*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982.
- Kaplan, Yosef. *From Christianity to Judaism. The Story of Isaac Orobio de Castro*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

- Kaplan, Yosef. "Isaac Orobio de Castro." In *Die Philosophie des 17. Jahrhunderts, Band 2: Frankreich und Niederlande*, ed. Jean-Pierre Schobinger, 889–891, 973. Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1993.
- Kayserling, Meyer. *Biblioteca española-portuguesa-judaica: Dictionnaire bibliographique*. Strassburg: Trübner, 1890, 81–83.
- Nahon, Gérard. "Échec à l'Inquisition de Séville: Isaac Orobio de Castro (1620–1687)." *Yod* 26 (1989): 57–62.
- Polak, Leo. "De betekenis der Joden voor de wijsbegeerte," in *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland, Eerste deel (tot circa 1795)*, ed. Hendrik Brugmans and Abraham Frank, 680–713. Amsterdam: Van Holkema & Warendorf, 1940.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Orobio de Castro, Isaac," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. XII, 1475–1477. Jerusalem: Keter, 1972, reimpressed in Berenbaum, Michael and Fred Skolnik, ed. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd. ed., vol. XV, 481–482. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007.
- Popkin, Richard H. "Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments as a Source of Irreligion from the Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century." In *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*, edited by Michael Hunter and David Wootton, 159–181. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Rensoli Laliga, Lourdes. "Isaac Orobio de Castro: Intellectual Marrano, Intellectual Jew." *Journal of Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian Crypto Jews* 3 (2011): 67–74.
- Révah, I. S. *Spinoza et le Dr Juan de Prado*. Paris: Mouton & Cie, 1959.
- Révah, I. S. "Orobio de Castro et sa famille aux prises avec l'Inquisition espagnole." *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Genootschap voor de Joodsche Wetenschap in Nederland* 9 (1965): 87–90.
- Révah, I. S. *Des Marranes à Spinoza*. Edited by Henry Méchoulan, Pierre-François Moreau and Carsten Lorenz Wilke. Paris: Vrin, 1995.
- Rooden, Peter T. van and Jan W. Wesselius. "The Early Enlightenment and Judaism: the 'Civil Dispute' between Philippus van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1687)." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 21 (1987): 140–153.
- Ruderman, David. "Yosef Kaplan, Mi-natsrut le-yahadut." *Zion* 49, no. 3 (1984): 306–313.
- Salomon, Herman Prins. "Baruch Spinoza, Ishac Orobio de Castro and Haham Mosseh Refael de Aguilar on the Noahites: A Chapter in the History of Thought." *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* 14 (1979): 253–286.
- Schoeps, Hans-Joachim. "Isaac Orobio de Castros Religionsdisput mit Philipp van Limborch." *Judaica* 2 (1946): 89–105.
- Silva Rosa, Jacob S. da. "Van Marrano tot Joodsch Apologeet: Dr. Isaac (Balthazar) Orobio de Castro (omstr. 1620–1687)." *De Vrijdagavond* (27 March, 1926): 6–9; (28 March, 1926): 21–23.
- Silvera, Myriam. "L'esilio del popolo ebraico nelle *Prevenções divinas* di Isaac Orobio de Castro nel suo dialogo con Philip Van Limborch." In *In the Iberian Peninsula and Beyond: A History of Jews and Muslims (15th–17th Centuries)*, vol. I, edited by José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros, and Lúcia Liba Mucznik, 328–347. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.
- Silvera, Myriam. "D'Holbach and the *Dissertation sur le Messie*: Some Enigmas, and a New Source." In *Portuguese Jews, New Christians, and "New Jews": A Tribute to Roberto Bachmann*, ed. Claude B. Stuczynski and Bruno Feitler, 361–384. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. "Judaism and Jewish Arguments in the Clandestine Radical Enlightenment." In *Scepticisme, clandestinité et libre pensée*, edited by Gianni Paganini, Miguel Benítez and James Dybikowski, 97–113. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- Sutcliffe, Adam. *Judaism and Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Szapiro, Elie. "Un document sur le séjour à Toulouse d'Isaac Orobio de Castro." *Revue des études juives* 138, no. 3–4 (1979): 385–389.
- Taub, Emmanuel. "Mesianismo y ley: Frente al problema del Mesías en la tradición sefaradí de Maimónides e Isaac Oróbio de Castro." *Sefárdica* 19 (2010): 221–231.
- Wilke, Carsten. "Isaak Orobio de Castro." In *Metzler Lexikon jüdischer Philosophen: Philosophisches Denken des Judentums von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, edited by Andreas B. Kilcher and Otfried Fraisse, 153–155. Stuttgart: Verlag J. B. Metzler, 2003.

## Printed Editions of Orobio's Works in Chronological Order

- Epílogo de lo que pasó en la peste de la ciudad de Málaga este año de 1637* (Málaga: Juan Serrano de Vargas y Uruena, 1637). Edition in Kaplan, "El testimonio," 219–231; and Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 387–401.
- Controvertitur utrum materialibus morbis in choantibus sang. missio revulsiva, iuxta Hippocratis, & Galeni dogmata per distantissimas venas effici debeat? Opus editum a Doctore D. Balthasare de Orobio, Excellentissimi D. Ducis de Medina Coeli, & Alcalá a cubiculo medico, quondam insignis Collegii Theologorum Cöplutensium collega, & Hispalensis celebris Vniuersitatis methodi Cathedrae proprietario moderatore.* (Seville: apud Ignatium de Lyra, 1653).
- Pregunta que me fez o eminentissimo Senhor Doutor Orobio*, by Mosseh Rephael d'Aguilar (manuscript). Edition in Salomon, "Baruch Spinoza, Ishac Orobio de Castro," 255–257.
- Epístola invectiva contra un filósofo médico que dudaba o no creía la verdad de la Divina Escritura* (manuscript, Winter 1663–1664). Abridged edition in Révah, *Spinoza*, 84–129.
- Carta apologética del doctor Ishack Orobio de Castro al Doctor Prado* (manuscript, 1664). Edition in Révah, *Spinoza*, 130–142.
- Carta al hijo del doctor Prado* (manuscript, dated from Weycke, August 12, 1664). Edition in Révah, *Spinoza*, 143–153.
- Respuesta a una persona que dudava si el libro de Raymundo Lulio nuevamente traducido y comentado por don Alonso de Zepeda era inteligible y si concluyan sus discursos.* Edition in: Alonso de Zepeda, *Defensa de los términos y doctrina de Raymundo Lullio contra cierto rescribiente judío de la sinagoga de Amsterdam, Brussels, 1666, 2–77.*
- Explicación parafrástica del cap. 53 del profeta Isaías* (manuscript). Edition in Adolf Neubauer, *The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, vol. I. Oxford: J. Parker, 1876, 21–153; reprint New York 1969.
- Respuesta a un escrito que presentó un predicante francés al autor contra la observancia de la divina Ley de Moseh* (manuscript). Edition in Moses Bensabat Amzalak, *La observancia de la Divina Ley de Mosseh, manuscrito do século XVII publicado por primera vez, com um estudo prévio.* Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1925, 1–101, reprint Barcelona: Riopiedras, 1991.
- Prevenções divinas contra la vana idolatría de las gentes* (manuscript). Edizione critica, con introduzione, note di commento e riassunti parafrasi in italiano a cura di Myriam Silvera, vol. I. Florence: L. S. Olschki, 2013.
- Certamen philosophicum propugnatae veritatis divinae ac naturalis: Adversus [Ioannes] B[redenburghii] Principia, in fine annexa, ex quibus quod religio rationi repugnat demonstrare nititur, quo in Atheismi Spinosae baratro immersus jacet, quod religio nil rationi repugnans credendum proponit, evidenter ostenditur.* Amsterdam: n.p., 1684. Reprint Amsterdam: Theodor Ossaan, 1703; and in François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, *Refutation des erreurs de Benoit de Spinoza.* Brussels: Francois Foppens, 1731, 387–483.
- Philippus van Limborch. *De veritate religionis christianae amica collatio cum erudito Judaeo.* Gouda: Apud Justum ab Hoeve, 1687. Reprint Farnborough: Gregg, 1969.

- Israël vengé, ou Exposition naturelle des prophéties hébraïques que les chrétiens appliquent à Jésus leur prétendu Messie*, traduit sur le manuscrit par Henriquez. Edited by Baron d'Holbach. London: n.p., 1770. English translations: *Israel Defended, or the Jewish Exposition of the Hebrew Prophecies Applied by the Christians to their Messiah*. Translated from the French [by Grace Aguilar] and Printed Expressly for the Use of Young Persons of the Jewish Faith. London 1838; *Israel Avenged*. Translated and answered by the Rev. Alex. McCaul of Trinity College (Dublin and London, 1839–1840).
- Entretiens sur divers sujets d'histoire et de religion entre Mylord Bolingbroke et Isaac d'Orobio, rabin des juifs portugais à Amsterdam*. n.p., 1770 (a literary hoax inspired by *Israël vengé*, the text being a reprint of the *Entretiens sur divers sujets d'histoire, de littérature, de religion et de critique* that Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze had published anonymously in Rotterdam, indicating Cologne, in 1711).

## Digitised Manuscripts Accessible Online

- (For a full inventory of the manuscripts, see Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism*, 431–440)
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 A 12: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-a-12/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 A 21: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-a-21/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 A 23: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-a-23/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 B 6: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-b-05/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 B 12: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-b-12/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 1, 2: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-c-01-02/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 4: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-c-04/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 12: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-c-12/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 C 16: [http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/eh\\_48\\_c\\_16/](http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/eh_48_c_16/)
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 6: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-d-06/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 D 16: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-d-16/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 48 E 42: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-48-e-42/>
- Amsterdam, Ets Haim, ms. 49 A 16: <http://etshaimmanuscripts.nl/manuscripts/eh-49-a-16/>
- Bordeaux, Bibliothèque municipale, cod. 828: [http://bibliotheque.bordeaux.fr/in/faces/details.xhtml?id=BordeauxS\\_B330636101\\_Ms828\\_033\\_005](http://bibliotheque.bordeaux.fr/in/faces/details.xhtml?id=BordeauxS_B330636101_Ms828_033_005)
- Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, hebr. 85a: [http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=25088&tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=7](http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=25088&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=7)
- Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, hebr. 240a: [http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=24970&tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5](http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=24970&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5)
- Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Levy 122: [http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx\\_dlf%5Bid%5D=25061&tx\\_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5](http://digitalisate.sub.uni-hamburg.de/nc/detail.html?id=1901&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=25061&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=5)
- Madrid, Biblioteca nacional, cod. 18.249: <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000135633>
- New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 2535: [https://primo-tc-na01.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=JTS\\_DIGITool231960&context=L&vid=JTS&search\\_scope=JTS&tab=default\\_tab&lang=en\\_US](https://primo-tc-na01.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=JTS_DIGITool231960&context=L&vid=JTS&search_scope=JTS&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US)
- New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 2537: [https://primo-tc-na01.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=JTS\\_DIGITool231958&context=L&vid=JTS&search\\_scope=JTS&tab=default\\_tab&lang=en\\_US](https://primo-tc-na01.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=JTS_DIGITool231958&context=L&vid=JTS&search_scope=JTS&tab=default_tab&lang=en_US)
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4° 51: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/60567506-170c-4192-94e4-5db213e177b9>
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4° 147a: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/cccc39c8-3299-460d-9217-d724b0ec65d8>

- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4° 147b: <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/b557972a-6d17-4daa-ac22-d97d3c66738d>
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4° 147c: <http://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/263b0aad-e1ad-4364-9e2e-39d981565b95>
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 4° 148: <http://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/14ce4f24-a9a2-431c-984b-535fc80e678f>
- Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add. 8° 7: <http://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/b9c98a54-100f-4068-a905-81f572fe9c25>



# Index

- Abraham 50–51  
Abravanel, Isaac 16, 110  
Academic scepticism 5  
Aguilar, Emanuel 107  
Aguilar, Grace 80, 105–109, 112  
Aguilar, Mosseh Refael d' 23, 24, 64  
Aguilar, Sarah 107  
Albiac, Gabriel 3–4, 6, 40  
Albo, Joseph 110  
Alcalá de Henares 18, 31–34, 36, 37, 84  
Alvares, Manuel 21, 24  
America 25, 52  
*amplificatio* 80, 83, 84, 86–88  
Amsterdam 3, 6, 7, 11, 19, 20, 22–24, 26, 31,  
34–36, 40–44, 52, 53, 57–61, 63, 67, 70,  
72, 77, 93, 94, 96, 105, 109  
– Beth Yahacob 71  
– City Archive 34  
– College of Physicians (Collegium Medicum)  
32, 34  
– Ets Haim Library 9, 19, 36, 53, 62  
– Herengracht 26  
– Holy Fraternity 46  
– Honen Dalim 34  
– mahamad 43, 60  
– Municipality 59  
– Jewish orphanage 71  
– present Jewish community 26  
– Sephardi community 4, 18, 24, 26, 34, 44,  
45, 52, 77, 93, 109  
– Synagogue 51  
– University Library / Biblioteca Rosenthalia-  
na 20, 62  
Andalusia 21–22, 31–34, 44, 47, 77, 82  
Andrade Velosinho, Jacob de 64  
animals 8, 89  
Antequera 33–34  
anthropology 27  
anti-Christian writing 1, 9, 11, 22, 53, 57–58,  
60, 61–66, 68, 71–73, 89, 93, 95, 96,  
99–101, 106  
anti-Jewish writing 89  
Antilles 61  
anti-rationalism 1  
anti-religious writing 1, 4, 11, 78  
antisemitism 2  
anti-Talmudic writing 109  
Antwerp 20, 31, 44, 51, 60, 67, 69, 71  
*anussim* 67  
apologetics 18, 45, 48, 53, 77, 78, 81–82, 87,  
93, 101, 108  
apostasy 2, 23, 47, 67, 69, 71  
Aquileya 23  
Aragon 23  
Argentina 11, 20  
Arieli, Yehoshua 16  
Aristotle 8, 10, 35  
Armenians 21  
Arminians 18, 67  
Ashkenazim 4, 71  
assimilation 22, 27  
Astruc, Aristide 2  
atheism 37–39, 41–42, 44–48, 77, 100–101  
Athias, Isaac 64, 66, 72  
Attic style 83  
Augustins 44, 69  
*auto da fé* 108  
*autos sacramentales* 39  
averroism 37  
Ayerst, William 109  
  
Bacchus 86  
Baer, Yitzhak (Fritz) 16–17, 37  
Bailén 33  
Baltimore 107  
baptism 1, 23, 44  
Barcelona 20  
baroque 39, 64, 87  
Barrios, Miguel (Daniel Levi) de 40, 46, 52,  
64, 77, 79, 82–83  
Barros, João de 37  
Basnage, Jacques 96  
Bayonne 23–24  
Beinart, Haim 16–17  
Ben Israel, Menasseh 19, 45, 57–58, 96  
Benítez, Miguel 9, 61, 97  
Berlin 69  
Berti, Silvia 102  
Bialik Institute 18–19  
Bible 8–10, 15, 22–23, 41, 50, 68, 70, 72,  
90, 97–99, 101–102, 105–106, 110–111  
– Isaiah 42:22 108  
– Isaiah 53 9, 67, 73, 80, 83, 86, 88, 93, 98,  
101, 105, 109  
– Obadia 1:8 67  
– Psalms 147:20 35



- Esther 2:10 26
- bibliocentrism 106
- bibliophiles 61, 96
- blasphemy 37, 38, 59, 61
- Blayney, Benjamin 111
- bloodletting 20, 34
- Bordeaux 73
- Boreel, Adam 94
- Borges, Jorge Luis 20
- Brabant 97
- Bragança 1, 32
- Brazil 15, 42
- Bredenburg, Jan 69, 94
- Brussels 20
- Burgos 23
- Butler, Joseph 111
- Byzantium 84, 109
  
- Caballero, Práxedes 6
- Cádiz 21, 22
- Calderon de la Barca, Pedro 39
- calligraphy 65, 95
- Calvinism 26, 44, 60, 81, see also Huguenots
- Canary Islands 35, 52
- Cardoso, Fernando (Isaac) 17–19, 39, 49, 79
- Carmelites 68–69, 97
- Carreras y Coligo, José 42
- Cartagena 23
- Cartesianism 42, 44
- Castile 23, 87
- Catalonia 42
- Catholicism 5, 9, 11, 21–24, 44, 67, 69, 73, 81, 83, 107–108, 111–112
- editorship 22, 53, 60
- Central Europe 16
- certainty 1, 6, 7, 36, 42, 43, 48, 49, 74
- China 41
- chosenness, see election of Israel
- Christology 23, 90
- Church 23, 44, 57, 73, 81, 111
- Cicero 82–84
- circumcision 21, 25, 39
- clandestine literature 1, 10, 11, 57–61, 63, 65, 66, 68, 71–72, 96, 97, 100, 102
- Cohen, Joshua I. 107–108
- Colerus 41
- Collegiants 4, 94
- Collins, Anthony 61, 101–102
- communicative rationality 73
- Condé, Louis II of Bourbon, prince of 24
- confessionalisation 67–68, 73
- conscience 51
- Conti, Armand of Bourbon, prince of 24
- consensus omnium* 8, 50
- conversion to Christianity 23, 26
- conversion to Judaism 25–26, 31–32, 34, 59, 72, 108
- conversos* 16–17, 21–22, 25–27, 31–33, 37, 45, 78–82, 87–90, 107, 109
- convert-making 108
- Corpus Christi 39
- Costa, Uriel da 4, 17, 18, 47, 109
- Cranganor, Diogo da Anunciação Justiniano, archbishop of 108
- creation 8, 39, 41, 44, 49
- criteria of truth 5, 7, 51
- critical rationalism 7, 12
- criticism 1, 5–8, 15, 20, 25, 51, 63, 70, 73, 98, 99, 101–103, 106, 109, 112
- crypto-Judaism 7, 11, 31, 33–39
- Cuenca 20, 33
- culteranismo* 87
- Curação 61
  
- damnation 53
- Daniel (prophet) 9, 77, 82, 98, 101
- Danielillo* 64, 70
- De Froe, Arie 27
- deism 3, 7, 9, 11, 25, 31, 36–37, 41, 45, 46, 48–50, 69, 83, 96, 101–103
- Den Boer, Harm 10, 11, 77
- Der Orient* 112
- Derrida, Jacques 58
- dialectics 78, 83, 84
- Dias, Estêvão 63, 66
- Dias Pinto, António 64
- disputation 18, 20, 24, 26–27, 31, 34, 95
- docta ignorantia* 6
- dogma 2, 5, 8–9, 37, 52, 53, 60, 66, 98
- dogmatism 1–3, 7, 10–11, 58, 65, 73, 74, 100, 110
- Dominicans 23, 69
- Dordrecht 60
- doubt 6, 8, 11, 23, 25, 31, 35–42, 44–45, 47–49, 51, 70, 73, 74, 94–95, 102
- Duarte Serrano, Diego 33, 36
- Durie, John 94
- Dutch language 62

- Early Modern Age 1, 5, 16, 19, 27, 60, 61, 67,  
 71–74, 78, 84, 89, 93  
 Eastern Europe 106, 111, 113  
 Edom 67  
 Eisenmenger, Johann Andreas 109  
 election of Israel 49, 97–98  
 Elohim 110  
 emancipation 111–112  
 emotion 52, 84  
*emphasis* 88  
 England 94, 101–102, 105–107, 110–112  
 English language 5, 10, 11, 15, 80, 105, 107–  
 108  
 Enlightenment 1, 11, 19, 25, 61, 62–63, 71,  
 74, 93, 95, 96, 100–103, 106, 108, 111  
 – Early Enlightenment 19, 62, 96, 100, 102  
 – Jewish Enlightenment 106, 111  
 – Radical Enlightenment 61–63, 94–97, 99–  
 103  
 Enríquez de Fonseca, Rodrigo 36–37  
 Enríquez Gómez, Antonio 7, 72, 81  
 epicureanism 3  
 epistemology 8  
*epoché* 74  
 Erasmus of Rotterdam 5  
 Escudero, Lorenzo 64  
 Esther 26  
 ethnocentrism 16  
 Ettinger, Shmuel 18–19  
 Evangelicals 105–107, 112  
 Europe 1, 5, 11, 16, 19, 20, 31, 61, 62, 72, 96,  
 105, 112  
 excommunication 51, 61, see also herem  
 existence of God 39, 45, 46, 48, 49  
 exoticism 97, 102  
 Ezra 110  
  
 faith 4–6, 8, 10, 18, 22–23, 35–36, 38,  
 43–44, 50, 58, 59, 64, 66–67, 100, 106–  
 108, 111  
 fanaticism 3  
 feminism 105, 107  
 fences (rabbinic regulations) 47–48, 50, 72  
 Ferdinand (king of Spain) 23  
 fideism 5–6, 8  
 Florence 71  
*Flos Sanctorum* 22  
*Fortaleza dell'ebraismo* 63–64  
 France 5, 7, 11, 23–24, 31, 38, 49, 62, 67, 71,  
 82–83, 95–96, 100–102  
 French language 11, 16, 34, 53, 61, 63, 69, 71,  
 73, 80, 86, 96, 98–101, 105, 108  
 Franco-Dutch war 9  
 Friedenwald, Harry 17–18  
 Fürst, Julius 112  
  
 Galchinsky, Michael 105–107  
 García Matamoros, Alfonso 84  
 Gebhardt, Carl 4, 40  
 genre 11, 39, 57–62, 65, 70, 72–73, 78–79,  
 81–82, 88  
 German language 16  
 Germany 16  
 Gesenius, Wilhelm 110  
 Goitein, Shelomo Dov 15  
 Gomarists 67  
 Gomes, Jesué Pinharanda 57–58  
 Gómez, Isabel 33  
 Gómez Pereda, Jerónimo 33–34  
 Gómez Silveyra, Abraham 10, 60, 62–65,  
 69–72, 79  
 Góngora, Luis de 87  
 González de Cellorigo, Martín 49  
 Gospel 66, 93  
 Gouda 18  
 Goths 79  
 Gracián, Baltasar 84  
 Gracián, Jerónimo 38  
 Graetz, Heinrich 2, 5, 6  
 Granada, Luis de 84  
 Great Britain 112  
 Greek antiquity 38, 84  
 Greek language 87, 109  
 Groenwolt, Jacobus 65  
 Grotius, Hugo 45, 59, 64, 101  
 Guedella, Jacob 65  
 Guer de Cordoba, Abraham 64  
  
 Hackney 107  
 Hague 62, 96  
 Haifa 19  
 Hamburg 62, 71  
 – mahamad 43  
 – Maimonides Centre for Advanced Studies 1  
 – Senate 59  
 – Sephardi community 39  
 – State and University Library 62, 65  
 Hartlib, Samuel 94  
 Hazard, Paul 62  
 Hebraists 2, 94

- Hebrew language 5, 15, 17–20, 64, 66, 71,  
 94, 95, 106, 107, 109–110  
 Hebrews 36, 49, 96  
 Hebrew University 15–16  
 Henriques de Castro, Esther 26  
 Henriquez (translator) 105, 108, 117  
*herem* 42–44, 51  
 heresy 3, 38, 40, 43–44, 83  
 Hippocrates 82  
 historicism 42, 113  
 historicity 10  
 Holbach, Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d' 100–103,  
 117  
 Holland 25–27, 94–96, see also Netherlands  
 Holocaust 27  
 Horsley, Samuel 111  
 Huguenots 69, 73, see also Calvinism  
 humanism 5, 78  
 hypocrisy 107, 109  
  
 Iberia 4, 11, 21, 25, 27, 31–32, 52, 63, 70–71,  
 78, 79, 83, 84, 89  
 Ibn Ezra, Abraham 110  
 ideology 3, 15, 57–58, 105, 109  
 idolatry 1, 24, 47, 78, 86, 88, 89, 97, 98, 110  
 immortality of the soul 37–39, 50  
 imposture 39, 110  
 Inquisition 22, 27, 37, 66, 108–111  
 – Portuguese Inquisition 32, 108  
 – Spanish Inquisition 3, 16, 20–22, 32–37,  
 44, 52, 81  
 integralism 2, 57  
 intolerance 2, 11, 109–112  
 irony 52, 97, 100, 106  
 Isaiah 9, 67, 73, 80, 83, 86, 88, 93, 98, 101,  
 105, 108–109  
 Israel, Abraham 44  
 Israel, Jonathan I. 63  
 Israel (land) 111  
 Israel (people) 25, 46, 49, 51, 58, 66, 79, 82,  
 86, 89, 97–98, 100, 105  
 Israel (state) 4, 11, 19, 20  
 Italian language 62, 64, 79–80  
 Italy 39, 62, 70  
  
 Jacob (patriarch) 22  
 Jacob, Margaret 63  
 Jacquilot, Isaac 69–70  
 Jaén 32–33  
 Jeremiah 108  
  
 Jerusalem 15–19, 94  
 Jerusalem School 20  
 Jerusalem Temple 17, 94, 111  
 Jesuits 4, 39, 60  
 Jesus Christ 22, 74, 78, 89–90, 98–100, 102,  
 108, 111  
 John the Baptist 22  
 Josephus Flavius 68, 101  
 Jost, Isaak Marcus 112  
 Judaisation 31, see also return to Judaism  
 Judaiser 21, 31, 37  
 Jupiter 86  
  
 Kaplan, Yosef 1, 5–11, 15–27, 58, 66, 77, 89,  
 97, 105, 115–116  
 Karaites 45–47, 64, 108  
 Katz, Jacob 19  
 Kayserling, Meyer 2  
 Kedar, Benjamin 15  
 Kimḥi, David 110  
 Kiron, Arthur 107  
*kohanim* 25  
*Kol Sakhal* 17  
 Kriegel, Maurice 42–43  
  
 La Peyrère, Isaac 41  
 La Sarraz, Georges Louis de 96  
 Lask Abrahams, Rachel Beth Zion 105–106  
 Lasker, Daniel 72  
 Latin language 4, 18, 41, 43, 62–64, 71,  
 83–84, 87, 94, 96, 109  
 Laura 69  
 Le Clerc, Jean 10  
 Leeser, Isaac 107  
 Leibowitz, Yehoshua 17  
 Leibowitz, Yeshayahu 17  
 Leiden 44, 95  
 L'Empereur, Constantijn 95  
 Leon, Jacob Jehuda 94  
 Le Roi, Johannes de 2–3  
 Lévesque de Burigny, Jean 96, 99, 102  
 Levites 25  
 liberals 111  
 libertines 45  
 libertinism 48  
 light 43, 66, 85, 89, 108  
 Lipsius, Justus 83  
 Lisbon 71, 108  
 literalism 101–102, 107–108  
 Lithuania 16, 64

- Livorno 33, 64  
 Locke, John 10  
 Loewe, Raphael 15  
 London 43  
   – Bevis Marks Synagogue 107  
   – British Library 20, 62, 64, 65  
   – Hackney 107  
   – King's College 93, 106  
   – Rabbinat 45  
   – Sephardic community 107  
   – Society for Promoting Christianity amongst  
     the Jews 106, 109, 112  
 Lopera 32  
 Lopes, Jérôme 73  
 Lopes Quiros, Daniel 65  
 López Grigera, Luisa 84  
 Lucas 41  
 Lugo del Castillo, Francisco 52  
 Lull, Raymundus 9, 20, 60, 82–83  
 Lumbroso, Judah 64  
 Lutherans 44, 59
- Machabeu, lehuda 62  
 Machiavellians 45  
 Machorro, Abraham 65  
 Madrid 17, 20, 33  
 Magnes Press 15  
*mahamad* 34, 43, 44, 53, 59, 60  
 Maimonides, Moses 1, 24, 110  
 Málaga 21, 32  
 manuscripts 9, 11, 19, 20, 36, 45, 51, 53, 58,  
   60–65, 72, 77, 79, 82, 95–97, 99–102  
*Marrakesh Dialogues* 58, 62, 63, 66, 69, 72,  
   79, 81  
 Marranos 4, 16–18, 26, 27, 43, 77, 93  
 Mars 86  
 Marx, Karl 3  
 Mary 22  
 Maryland 107  
 Mary Magdalene 22  
*maskilim* 106, 113  
 materialism 37, 100–101  
 McCaul, Alexander 105–113  
 Méchoulan, Henry 19  
 medicine 17, 20–22, 27, 31–37, 39, 45, 71,  
   82–83, 107  
 Médicis, Marie de 93  
 Medina, Fernando de 38  
 Melnick, Ralph 57–58, 67, 93–95  
 Mendes de Solla, Ishac 61
- Menéndez Pelayo, Marcelino 2  
 Messiah 89, 93, 105, 108, 111  
 messianism 49, 109, 112  
 Middelburg 94  
 Middle Ages 16, 37, 61, 72–74, 110, 112  
 middle class 49  
 midrashim 112  
 migration 31–32, 34, 44, 59, 107  
 millenarianism 94  
 mimesis 79  
 miracles 49, 108  
 Mishnah 17, 94  
 missionaries 2, 9, 11, 58, 69–70, 105–106,  
   112  
 Mocatta, Moses 107–108  
 Modena, Leone 45  
 modernity 4, 25, 57, 87, 109, 112  
 monotheism 50  
 Monserrat 20  
 Montaigne, Michel de 5  
 Montalto, Elijah 57–58, 60–61, 63–65, 69,  
   71–72, 93–96  
 Montilla 77  
 Moriscos 64  
 Morocco 110  
 mortality of the soul 38–39  
 Mortera, Saul Levi 4, 57, 61, 63–64, 66–72,  
   77, 93–96, 101–102  
 Moses 98, 107, 110  
 Moses, books of 8, 42, 110, see also Pentat-  
   euch  
 Moses, Law of 33–34, 36, 53, 99, 107, 110  
 Muchnik, Natalia 6, 11, 31  
 Muhammad 35–36  
 Munich 9  
 Murcia 33  
 music 26  
 Muslims 35, 81  
 mystery 85–86  
 mysticism 49, 69
- Naar, Isaac 63, 71, 73  
*nação* 22, 26, 27, 35, 45, see also nation  
 nation 26–27, 35–36, 49, 51, 66, 73, 77, 108,  
   111–112, see also *nação*  
*nation portugaise* 23–24  
 Native Americans 52  
 nature 8, 51, 101  
 natural law 35, 37, 44–45, 50–51, see also  
   natural religion

- natural laws 37, 49  
 natural reason 35, 42, 43, 48, 53, 85, see also  
   natural law  
 natural religion 50, 102  
 naturalism 37  
 Nazis 3, 16, 27  
 Netherlands 59–60, 62, 66–68, 70, 94–95,  
   see also Holland  
 New Christians 19–22, 25, 27, 31, 37, 47, 49,  
   66, 73, 81, 89–90, see also *conversos*  
 New Jews 47, 70, 79  
 New Spain 38  
 New Testament 66, 93–94  
 Newton, Thomas 111  
 New York 62, 65  
 Nieto, David 45  
 Nimrod 70  
 Noahite Laws 66  
 Núñez (doctor) 33  
 Nuñez, Jorge 33  
 Núñez de Acosta, Duarte 33
- Old Christians 22, 26, 37, 81  
 Old Testament 10, 90, 101  
 oral law 47–48, 50, 72, 109  
 Oróbio, Baltasar Álvares 1, 18, 21–23, 31–33,  
   35–36  
 Orobio de Castro, Arthur Caesar Johannes Se-  
   bastian Christian Maximilian 26  
 Orobio de Castro, Herman Arthur 26  
 Orobio de Castro, Isaac 1–16, 18–37, 39–41,  
   44–60, 63–65, 67–105, 107–118  
 – Apologetic Letter 23–24, 31, 37, 40, 50, 53,  
   69, 117  
 – Divine Warnings against the Vain Idolatry of  
   the Gentiles 1–2, 9, 11, 60, 65, 68–70,  
   77–90, 97–98, 101, 117  
 – *La divinité de Jésus-Christ détruite* 74, 100  
 – Explanation of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isa-  
   iah 9–10, 80–81, 83, 86, 88, 101, 117  
 – Friendly conversation 2–3, 18, 41, 69, 94,  
   117  
 – Invective Epistle 4, 7, 31–32, 35–36, 40,  
   44–51, 53, 65, 69, 72, 117  
 – *Israël vengé* 69, 80, 98–100, 105, 108, 117  
 – Letter to Doctor Prado's Son 45, 51–53, 69,  
   117  
 – Philosophical Contest against Jan Breden-  
   burg 8, 69, 94, 117  
 – Poem on the Plague of Málaga 21–22, 117  
 – Reply to a French Pastor 65, 69, 117  
 – Reply to Zepeda 9, 69, 83, 86, 89, 117  
 Orobio de Castro, Richard 26–27  
 Orobio de Castro, Samuel 26  
 orthodoxy 3, 31, 43, 45, 52, 60, 73, 97  
 Osuna 32  
 Oxford 15, 20, 62
- Pablo de Santa María 9, 22–23, 37, 70  
 Pacheco, Samuel 44  
 pagans 51, 86–87, 97–98  
 Paris 19, 31, 71, 93, 100  
 – Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal 9  
 – Bibliothèque Nationale (National Library)  
   20, 53  
 – Collège de France 18  
 Passover 110  
 Paul (apostle) 88  
 Paul of Burgos (Solomon Halevi) 23, see also  
   Pablo de Santa María  
 Penelhum, Terence 5  
 Pentateuch 9, 50, 99  
 Pereda (doctor) 33, see Gómez Pereda, Jeró-  
   nimo  
 Pereira, Joseph 65  
 Pereira, Semuel Israel 65  
 Pereyra, Abraham 45–46, 79, 84  
 Pérez de la Peña, Isabel (Esther) 22, 26  
 Pérez de Maltranilla, Miguel 44  
 performative practice 102  
 persecution 5, 81, 109, 112  
 Petrarch 69  
 Peyrehorade 38  
 Pharisees 102  
 Philadelphia 62, 107  
 philo-Judaism 94  
 philology 2, 112  
*philosophes* 78, 112  
 philosophy 1, 3–10, 12, 21, 34–36, 39, 41,  
   44–45, 48, 51, 57, 72, 80, 86, 88, 95–97,  
   99, 100, 102, 110  
 piety 6, 45, 107  
 Pimentel, Domingo 39  
 Pina, Abigail de 77  
 Pina, Manuel de 42  
 Pinedo, Thomas de 109  
 Piñero, Juan 36–37  
 plague 21  
 pluralism 66–67, 74  
 Poland 16

- polemics 1–3, 6, 9, 11, 22, 41, 45, 53, 57–74,  
 78–83, 89, 93–96, 102, 105, 107–108  
 polytheism 98, 110  
 popery 107, 112  
 Popkin, Richard H. 5, 19, 40–41, 94, 102  
 Popper, Karl 7  
 port Jews 67  
 Portugal 1, 16–17, 32, 42, 69  
 Portuguese language 15, 18, 59, 60, 62–66,  
 71, 78–79, 81, 93  
 Portuguese Jews 11, 26–27, 40, 42, 49, 57,  
 59, 62, 65, 67, 69–70, 74, 106, 107, see  
 also Western Sephardim  
 Portuguese New Christians 19, 21, 23–24,  
 33–34, 42  
 post mortem reward and punishment 37–38,  
 52  
 Prado, David de 43, 51  
 Prado, Juan (Daniel) de 3–9, 11, 18, 21,  
 23–25, 31–53, 69, 73, 83, 117  
 pre-Adamites 41  
 prophecy 9–10, 49, 85–86, 88–90, 97–98,  
 100–102, 108, 110–111  
 prophets 22, 49, 77, 88, 98, 111  
 Prophets, books of 9  
 Protestantism 2, 10, 59, 61, 67, 73, 96, 106–  
 109, 111–112  
 providence 8, 38, 46, 49,  
 psychoanalysis 3  
 purity of blood 27, 81–82, 89  
 Pyrrhonian scepticism 5
- Quevedo, Francisco de 38–39, 84
- rabbis 2, 4, 23–24, 37, 45–46, 57, 61, 64,  
 68–69, 71–72, 77, 93–94, 99, 106  
 rabbinic tradition 9, 24, 42, 47–48, 50, 66,  
 69–70, 106, 110, 112–113  
 rabbinism 3, 99–100, 106, 108–109  
 rationalism 4, 6–12, 37, 73, 89, 100, 101, 103  
 reason of state 38, 39, 46  
 Reformation 16  
 Reform Judaism 43, 105–106, 110–111  
 relativism 42, 51  
 Remonstrants 10, 69, 73, 94  
 Renaissance 58, 69, 72, 74, 83  
 Republic of Letters 95  
 return to Judaism 17, 19, 21–22, 25–26, 44,  
 88, see also Judaisation  
 Révah, I.S. 1, 4, 18, 36, 40, 49
- revelation 8, 35, 48–50, 72, 90, 100  
 Reynoso, Miguel (Abraham Israel) 33–34, 44  
 rhetoric 1, 11, 58, 72, 78, 81–84, 88–90, 97  
 Ribera, Daniel de 42–43, 46  
 Rijnsburg 44  
 Rio de Janeiro 15  
 Rodríguez de Castro, Joseph 2  
 Roman antiquity 38  
 Rome 31, 39  
 Rosenberg, Alfred 3  
 Ruderman, David 11, 80, 105
- Sadduceans 45–46  
 Sages 47, 50, 68  
 Saint-Etienne d'Arribe-Labourd 23  
 Saint-Hyacinthe, Thémiseul de 96  
 Salamanca 33  
 Salomon, Herman P. 66  
 salvation 24–25, 34–36, 38, 50–52, 66, 93  
 Sanlúcar de Barrameda 22  
 Santiago de Compostela 23  
 Saturnus 86  
 scepticism 1, 4–6, 8, 10–12, 19, 25, 27, 31,  
 37, 39, 41–42, 73–74, 80, 100  
 Science of Judaism 2, 113  
 sciences 1, 6, 8, 10, 20, 47, 82, 79, 89  
 scholasticism 1, 5, 78, 81, 83, 87  
 Schwartz, Stuart 25, 52  
 scripturalism 8, 100  
 Scripture 7, 8–10, 12, 23, 42, 45–48, 50, 72,  
 85, 90, 99, 99–102  
 Second Temple 17  
 secrecy 11, 21, 31–32, 59, 66, 95  
 Segovia 23  
 Semah Arias, Joseph 68–69  
 Semites 27  
 Sephardic community 4, 18, 25–26, 39–40,  
 59, 77, 83, 88, 95, 107  
 Sephardic Diaspora 16–17, 25, 34, 45, 79  
 Sephardic culture 4, 18, 57, 62, 64–65, 69,  
 71, 73, 77, 79–80, 82, 87, 89, 93–97  
 Serrano, see Duarte Serrano, Diego  
 Serrarius, Petrus 94  
 Seville 21–22, 32–35, 39  
 Sextus Empiricus 41  
 Shiloh 108  
*siglo de oro* literature 71, 79, 84  
 Sigüenza 34  
 Silva Calvo, Simón de 33  
 Silvera, Myriam 77–78, 80, 84

- Sinai 3, 100  
 Sixtus of Sienna 23, 69  
 Solano y Robles, Tomas 44  
 Solomon (king) 94  
 Soto, Sebastián 34–35  
 Southern Netherlands 97  
 Spain 2–4, 11, 16–21, 23, 25, 31–32, 34, 37–39, 41, 44–45, 47–49, 64, 71, 83, 108–109  
 Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue 107  
 Spanish Jewry 16  
 Spanish language 1–2, 17–18, 62–63, 65, 71–72, 78–79, 81, 83–84, 87, 97, 101, 105  
 Spanish America 25  
 Spinoza, Baruch 4, 8–11, 18, 27, 34, 40–44, 48–49, 64, 77, 94  
 Spinozism 3–4, 10, 41, 69, 73  
 Stephen of Byzantium 109  
 Stillingfleet, Edward 101  
 superstition 86, 89, 111  
 Sutcliffe, Adam 11, 93  
 Switzerland 2
- Talmud 25, 46, 48, 69, 71, 102, 106, 109, 112  
 Targum 112  
 Tavira 61  
 Ten Commandments 110  
 Tenerife 52  
*tertulias* 33–36  
 Tertullian 110  
 theater 17, 39, 64, 70, 81  
 theism 10, 44  
 theology, Christian 2, 5, 10, 18, 26–27, 31, 34–35, 39, 41, 59, 69, 83, 87–88, 94–95, 99–100, 102–103, 106  
 theology, Jewish 1, 4, 7, 11, 58, 64, 67–68, 72, 74, 83, 93, 95, 105  
 Thomas Aquinas 22, 82–83  
 Toledo 32, 34  
 tolerance 24, 57–58, 73, 112  
 toleration 10, 74  
 Tonna, Charlotte Elizabeth 106–107  
 Torah 3, 15, 37, 48–49  
 Toulouse 23–24, 32  
 tradition 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 19, 42, 47, 50–51, 70, 78–79, 83, 90, 103, 106
- traditionalism 1, 4, 8, 11, 101  
 translation 10–11, 15–19, 63–64, 66, 68, 71, 73, 78, 80, 83, 86, 94, 96–101, 105–109, 112  
 Trinity 22, 38, 66, 86, 93, 97–99, 101, 110  
 Troki, Isaac 64, 66, 101, 108  
 Tullius 82–83, see also Cicero  
 Turkey 110–111
- United States 19, 105, 107
- Valencia 36–37  
 Valman, Nadia 106  
 Van den Enden, Franciscus 4, 41  
 Van Limborch, Philip 2, 10, 18, 41, 69, 94,  
 Van Loenen Martinet, Jacoba Louise 26  
 Van Loenen Martinet, Johannes 26  
 Vas da Costa, Joseph 61  
 Vega, Lope de 17, 39  
 Veen, Egbert 10  
 Velázquez, Diego de 27  
 Venice 4, 45, 69, 71, 93  
 Venus 86  
 Veysièere de La Croze, Mathurin 118  
 Villegas Selvago, Alonso de 22  
 Voltaire 1, 5
- Warsaw 106  
 Western Europe 5, 110  
 Western Sephardic Diaspora 19, 25, see also Portuguese Jews  
 West Indies 94  
 Whigs 57  
 Wilke, Carsten 1, 11, 53, 57, 78–79  
*Wissenschaft des Judentums*, see Science of Judaism
- xenophobia 57
- Yerushalmi, Yosef Hayim 17, 19–20, 79  
 Yeshiva University 65  
 Yovel, Yirmiyahu 4, 40  
 Yozer prayer 109
- Zapata, Diego Mateo 37  
 Zepeda, Alonso de 9, 20, 69, 83, 86, 89  
 Zionism 57