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# ‘The Jews and Their Doubts’: Anti-Jewish Polemics in the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche* (1583) by Antonino Stabili

## Introduction

The goal of this contribution is to present the first results of an ongoing research project on the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche* ('Dossier of the Jewish Vanity'), an anti-Jewish polemical work written by the Dominican friar Antonino Stabili (c. 1533–1583) and published during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> After an introduction detailing the author's biography, I will focus on the content and structure of his work, pausing on some crucial points and quoting the text in English translation where necessary, with the original in Italian in the footnotes.

Finally, some brief considerations on the use of dialogue in the medieval and early modern periods in anti-Jewish polemical and apologetic Christian works, useful for future perspectives of study, will be offered.

Anti-Jewish literature in the Middle Ages and early modern era was particularly prolific and venomous, and contributed to the creation and strengthening of stereotypes and anti-Jewish feelings. Despite the frequent conflicts and expulsions from one side, and the tireless activity of preaching from the other, the Jewish presence in Christian society was considered necessary in order to testify to the Jews' errors and the triumph of the Christian Church.<sup>2</sup>

The *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche*—which has not been studied at all until now<sup>3</sup>—clearly belongs to this polemical genre because of its content and structure, for reasons we will consider later. The work, written in the form of a dialogue between two Jews, Moses (called Moyse in the work) and Solomon (Salamone), is divided into sixteen chapters, corresponding to the sixteen days on which the conversations between the two characters take place.

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<sup>1</sup> Antonino Stabili, *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche, composto per il R.P.F. Antonino Stabili da S. Angelo a Fasanella, dell'ordine de' predicatori. Giornate sedici, nelle quali si discorre sopra la Scrittura vecchia, & noua, et si proua la venuta del vero Messia Christo, Giesù, Signore, & Redentor nostro. Con due tauole, l'una de gl'autori citati nell'opera, l'altra de gl'argomenti in ciascuna giornata* (Ancona: Francesco Salvioni, 1583). I wish to thank the Biblioteca Vallicelliana in Rome for having given me the opportunity to handle and reproduce a digital copy of the work (S.BOR C.I.104).

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Stow, *Popes, Church and the Jews in the Middle Ages: Confrontation and Response* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 1.

<sup>3</sup> The only person to mention and quote some excerpts from the work is François Secret, “Notes sur les hébreu·s chrétiens,” *Revue des études juives* 124 (1965): 176.

The author, the friar Stabili, speaks through the words of Moses, who is favourable to Christian arguments and doubtful about the coming of the Messiah of the Jews. As the weeks pass, he expresses more and more conviction about the errors and doubts of the Jews, explaining that, because of the many sins of Israel, God has revoked his selection of the Jews as the chosen people and that the only way to dissipate Jewish vanity and stubbornness is the recognition of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and conversion to Christianity.

There is very little biographical information on Antonino Stabili. He was born in Sant'Angelo a Fasanella in the Kingdom of Naples (today in the province of Salerno), probably during the first half of the sixteenth century, and he joined the Dominican order in his youth. He received a good education and he was well versed in the study of philosophy, theology, and Hebrew. It seems that he wrote a monumental work, now lost, called *Delle vanità giudaiche* ('On Jewish Vanity'), consisting of 48 manuscript volumes.<sup>4</sup> His major work is the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche*, which was published in Ancona in 1583 by Francesco Salvioni<sup>5</sup>—son of the Venetian printer and bookseller Marco—who also printed another work by Stabili called the *Rosario della gloriosa vergine Maria* (1581). The edition of the *Fascicolo*, in *octavo*, is quite rare and consists of 319 folios (*recto* and *verso*, i.e. 638 pages), although it was probably conceived by the author as a part of a greater work. Another work by Stabili, the *Introductorium dupli ternario comprehensum ad singula Quadragesimae Evangelia*, was published posthumously.<sup>6</sup> It is an exegetical commentary on the Gospels and other texts from the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible traditionally read during Lent<sup>7</sup>, such as the Pauline epistles and the Psalms, based on sermons that Stabili himself delivered during his lifetime. In the work's preface, the general inquisitor of Venice, Giovanni Domenico Vignucci da Ravenna, describes the author as 'knowledgeable and well-versed in preaching' (*viris peritis et in concionandi arte versatis*).<sup>8</sup> Additional proof of Stabili's prolific activity as preacher and theologian, apart from

<sup>4</sup> See Tommaso Bartoletti, *Biografia cronologica-storico-critica degli uomini illustri Atessani nella dignità ecclesiastica, letteraria, armi, pietà, titoli, e di altri cittadini benemeriti e contraddittori. Offerta all'amor patrio de' signori amministratori e degli amministrati cittadini di Atessa dal sacerdote Tommaso Bartoletti Lettore e predicatore generale dei PP. Predicatori* (Naples: Pasquale Tizzano, 1836): 100.

<sup>5</sup> On Salvioni's family and printing in Ancona, see Ernesto Spadolini, "L'arte della stampa in Ancona dal 1574 al 1660," *La Bibliofilia: rivista di storia del libro e delle arti grafiche di bibliografia ed erudizione* 7 (1906): 78–90; Filippo M. Giochi and Alessandro Mordenti, eds., *Annali della tipografia in Ancona: 1512–1799* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1980); Renato Paci, Marina Pasquali and Ercole Sori, eds., *Ancona e le Marche nel Cinquecento: economia, società, istituzioni, cultura* (Ancona: Pinacoteca "Francesco Podesti", 1982). Among other works printed by Francesco Salvioni are the *Diporti notturni* (1580) by Captain Francesco Ferretti, the *Regula et testamentum beati patris nostri Francisci*, and the general statutes of the Franciscan Order (1582).

<sup>6</sup> Antonino Stabili, *Introductorium dupli ternario comprehensum ad singula Quadragesimae Evangelia* (Venice: Nicola Misserino, 1610).

<sup>7</sup> The liturgical period corresponding to the forty days preceding Easter.

<sup>8</sup> Stabili, *Introductorium*, 22v.

the length of the *Introductorium* itself,<sup>9</sup> is found in Dominican literature.<sup>10</sup> The same Dominican authors referred to the existence of other works by Stabili, which have remained in manuscript.<sup>11</sup> Three titles are known: *Manuale Predicorum* (another collection of sermons for Lent), *Il nuovo Rosario*, and the *Historia di Lucania oggi detta Basilicata*.<sup>12</sup>

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Dominican friar and historian Tommaso Bartoletti wrote that during the last years of his lifetime, Stabili lost his mental faculties and died in 1583.<sup>13</sup> However, if it is true that Stabili finished the work on 23 May, 1583, at the age of 50 (meaning that he was born in 1533)—as he himself wrote at the end of the *Fascicolo*<sup>14</sup>—the information about his mental illness appears rather problematic. The internal coherence of the work and the complexity of its contents, supported by a large number of sources and quotations, encourage us to believe that the author was in full possession of his intellectual capabilities. According to some other Dominican sources, it is quite certain that Stabili drew up the *Fascicolo* and his other writings in the Dominican convent of Santa Maria in Atessa (in the province of Chieti, Abruzzo), where he lived for twenty or twenty-five years and where he died in 1583.<sup>15</sup>

### **The *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche* (1583): Contents and Structure**

Written in Italian, the work was probably intended to be a functional tool for Christians engaged in the frequent controversies against the Jews living in the Papal States and all over Italy. The writing is dedicated to Rinaldo Carafa,<sup>16</sup> a local patrician and, this must be emphasised, a relative of the Pope Paul IV (1476–1559), the former Grand Inquisitor Cardinal Gian Pietro Carafa, who, among other things, established Jewish

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<sup>9</sup> The *Introductorium* has 588 pages.

<sup>10</sup> Bartoletti, *Biografia cronologica-storico-critica*, 99–100; Jacques Quétif and Jacques Echard, *Scriptores ordinis Predicorum recensiti*, vol. II. (Paris: Ballard et Simart, 1721), 266–267.

<sup>11</sup> Quétif and Echard, *Scriptores ordinis Predicorum recensiti*, 266–267.

<sup>12</sup> Bartoletti, *Biografia cronologica-storico-critica*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> See *Fascicolo*, f. 314v.

<sup>15</sup> See Niccolò Toppi, *Bibliotheca napoletana, et apparato a gli huomini illustri in lettere di Napoli e del Regno, delle famiglie, terre, città, e religioni che sono nello stesso Regno. Dalle loro origini, per tutto l'anno 1678* (Naples: Antonio Bulifon, 1678), 23; Quétif and Echard, *Scriptores ordinis Predicorum recensiti*, 266–267.

<sup>16</sup> Marquis of Montenero and Monfalcone in the Kingdom of Naples and relative of pope Paul IV Carafa. On the Carafa family, see Biagio Aldimari, *Historia genealogica della famiglia Carafa*, 3 vols. (Naples: Giacomo Raillard, 1691).

ghettos in the Papal States and enacted other several anti-Jewish restrictions contained in the bull *Cum nimis absurdum* (issued July 14, 1555).<sup>17</sup>

The dedication and other sonnets addressed to other notable men precede Stabili's preface, in which he informs the reader about his goals and sources:

You do not have to pay attention to the crazy things that it is possible to read at the end of this book. From the thorns we must seize the roses and let the obstinate Jews sting themselves, every time we read about their ineptitude and the silly things that they say so shamelessly [...]. As you can see, in the whole dialogue, there are only two people speaking: Moses, who supports the Christians' arguments, and Solomon, who thinks the opposite, but do not pay attention to his arguments.<sup>18</sup>

The setting of the dialogue is not well defined, but the description of the sea suggests that it is an Italian seaside town, perhaps Ancona, the place of the publishing house and centre of an important Jewish community. The sixteen meetings, corresponding to the sixteen chapters of the writing, always take place on Shabbat, starting in May and continuing until September. To summarise the synopsis preceding each chapter of the work:

1. Beginning of the dialogue between Moses and Solomon in May. Moses declares his doubts concerning the Jewish faith and stresses that Israel is not God's chosen people.
2. Some considerations on compliance with Mosaic Law and the actions of the Jews. Moses recognises the divinity of the Gospels and tells some stories that are critical of the Jews who, according to him, do not deserve to be called 'Jewish people' or 'people of Israel'.
3. Debate on free will, angels, Mosaic Law, and exile. The Jews are deprived of God's grace and mercy because of their stubbornness.
4. Solomon's arguments against the Gospels. Reasoning of Solomon on the exile and on the vanity of waiting for the coming of the Messiah on the basis of rabbinical sources.
5. Other reflections on the Messiah.
6. Some declarations on lies, sins, death and dietary prohibitions, and also on priestly ornaments.
7. The Gospels are true and Jesus Christ is the Messiah whom the Jews are still awaiting.
8. Reasoning on Adam's sin and the King Messiah.

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<sup>17</sup> For an English translation of the bull from Latin, see Kenneth Stow, *Catholic Thought and Papal Jewry Policy 1555–1593* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977): 294–298.

<sup>18</sup> 'Non si dee por mente che elli habian detto tante pazzie come nel fin di questo libro si legge. Impercioche dalle spine non ne dovemo cogliere le rose. Et lasciare le spine acciò con quelle si pungano gli ostinati hebrei, ogni volta che da altri, o da loro si leggeno, le tante dapocagini, e melensagini, che così sfaciatamente essi hanno dette [...]. In tutto questo Dialogo, partito per giornate come si può vedere, solo due sono che ragionano, Moise il quale favorisce le ragioni de Christiani, e Salamone che ragiona in contrario, e però non si deve far caso delle sue ragioni' (*Fascicolo*, f. 11v).

9. Examples from some references on the impossibility of a woman giving birth without being impregnated by a man; the Ten Commandments and the *Mishwot*.
10. Some considerations in favour of Christianity.
11. Reasoning on the cult of icons, adoration, and the keeping of the Shabbat.
12. On the ancient feasts and rites with sacrifices and their rejection. The Mosaic Law is imperfect and must be substituted with the Law of Christ, the Messiah. Other considerations on the keeping of the Shabbat.
13. Account of a dispute that happened in the synagogue on the Book of Jeremiah and Jewish blindness. Legends of extraordinary births.
14. Reflections on spiritual peace and Jewish stubbornness and cruelty. The Jews' sin is greater than that of Sodom because they killed Christ; for this reason, the Temple and Jerusalem will not be built again. Vanity of waiting for the coming of the Messiah.
15. Accounts of the prophets and identification of Christ with God's prophet; reasoning on the King Messiah's names. Declarations on Mary's perpetual virginity.
16. Solomon reveals to his wife his desire to convert to Christianity and they decide to be baptised with the whole family. On the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Transubstantiation (the change of substance of bread and wine into Body and Blood of Christ), and other miracles operated by God. Reasoning on Jewish vanities and madness. Baptism of Moses and Solomon.

By finding proofs in long quotations from the Hebrew Bible and rabbinical works, the author aims to demonstrate Jewish errors and stubbornness. Where Jewish sources do not help him, he turns to Christian sources, such as the New Testament and the Church Fathers (John Crysostom, Jerome, Augustin, Gregory the Great, and Bernard of Clairvaux), but also to classical Greek and Latin authors such as Hippocrates, Aristotle, Menander, Cato, Cicero, Sallustius, Valerius Maximus, and Seneca, Plinius, and also the more recent authors Francesco Petrarca and Giovanni Pontano.<sup>19</sup>

From the very beginning, Moses expresses his doubts about his compliance with Mosaic Law which, according to him, is ambiguous and, for this reason, disputable. He adduces arguments and quotations from the Bible and some rabbinical works to support some examples of doubt. He begins his speech by saying:

With true spirit and true speech, I say that in these hard times we, the Jews, know the compassionate and merciful God, who because of his Glory, and for our salvation and satisfaction, gave us many gifts, particularly the spirit of true interpretation and right wisdom on many obscure aspects of the Mosaic Law, which are very disputable and unclear. Other Jews, because of the many rabbinical expositions and notes, remained perplexed. For this reason, when we are in the synagogue with the same will, we are very satisfied when you declare and show to us

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<sup>19</sup> A table showing the sources is provided in *Fascicolo*, ff. 8r-v.

some things about the Torah for our salvation [...] this salvation must be desired above all. Especially in the present condition.<sup>20</sup>

According to him, although the Jews received wisdom from God so that they were able to understand the Torah properly, they are perplexed about many settings of the Holy Scriptures and, above all, about many rabbinical expositions and notes. The Jews need to strive for the correct interpretation of Mosaic Law, especially during these hard times, in ‘this captivity in which we, the miserable Jews, are, and for which reason God in the past deemed to show to our enemies many signs and deeds.’<sup>21</sup>

During the second half of the sixteenth century—especially after Paul IV’s papacy (1555–1559)—the situation of the Italian Jews living in the Papal States became increasingly dire because of the application of several bulls. The above-mentioned *Cum nimis absurdum*, in particular, marked a turning point in papal policy toward the Jews, establishing Jewish ghettos in the Papal States and imposing a great number of other severe regulations which, among other things, restricted Jewish economic activity and property ownership.<sup>22</sup> The project of segregating and annihilating the Jewish communities finally resulted in the definitive expulsion from the Papal States (with the exception of Rome and Ancona) set forth by another bull, the *Hebraeorum gens sola* (1569) issued by Pius V, formerly known as the Grand Inquisitor Michele Ghislieri.

Stabili, who finished the work fourteen years later at the latest, clearly hints at this situation. Continuing with the dialogue, Moses does not hesitate to state that the miserable condition in which the Jews live is the proof that they have not been chosen to be in covenant with God because of their many sins and lies. For this reason, they have to suffer not only in the present time, but also eternally.<sup>23</sup> Hearing such things, his friend Solomon is simply dumbfounded and tries to counter his arguments by showing examples from the Bible. But Moses responds by confessing his concerns about the Jewish faith: after having heard Psalm 102 in the synagogue two weeks before, ‘with which words the holy and pious prophet demonstrates the falsehood of our doctrine, through which he persuades us that the mercy of God is only

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**20** ‘Con animo sincero, e con parlare non finto, dico che per quello, che da noi altri hebrei in questi tempi calamitosi si può conoscere il pietoso, e misericordioso Iddio, che per la sua gloria, e per la nostra salute, e satisfattione ve ha manifestamente dotato e arrichito di certi doni particolari, e particolarmente vi ha dotato lo spirito della vera interpretazione e della retta intelligenza di molti luoghi della scrittura Mosaica, e profetate, delle quali altri in se stessi dubiosi sono, e oscuri. Altri, per le tante esposizioni e glose fatte da nostri Rabbini, restano perplessi, et oscuri assai. Di modo che tutti con uno istesso volere restiamo da voi molto satisfatti, quando nella Sinagoga vi degnate con carità dechiararci e manifestarci per nostra [17v] salute alcune cose della Legge, impercioché tal salute si deve da tutti desiderare sopra ogn’altra cosa che sia. Et particolarmente in questo stato, e in questa cattività nella quale noi disgratiati hebrei ne ritroviamo, per la cui cagione Iddio ne passati tempi si degnò di operare et manifestare a nostri avversari tanti segni e tante maraviglie’ (*ibidem*, f. 17r-v).

**21** *Ibidem*.

**22** For the English text of the bull, see Stow, *Catholic Thought*, 291–298.

**23** *Fascicolo*, f. 22r.

upon us, the blind Jews,<sup>24</sup> he convinced himself that the Jews were not the chosen people.<sup>25</sup> God—Moses continues—complains again and again to his people in the Hebrew Bible because of their many sins, as we read in the Book of Ezekiel: ‘at the same time they also did this to Me: they defiled My Sanctuary and profaned My sabbaths. On the very day that they slaughtered their children to their fetishes, they entered My Sanctuary to desecrate it. This is what they did in My House.’<sup>26</sup>

For this reason, according to Moses, God has revoked his grace and mercy, denying Israel the status of his chosen people. Moreover, he states that it is possible to worship God only in Jerusalem. What about the Jews who live in peace beyond the Caspian Sea? Solomon asks, referring to the myth of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel, which was the subject of many medieval and early modern speculations. Moses replies saying that there are no Jews there: in fact, if a similar condition of peace for Jews were real, he affirms that, in that case, all of the Jews would have moved there. The reality is that the Jews are forced to live in the same Christian lands from whence they were expelled in the Middle Ages and in modern times: France, Germany, Spain, the Kingdom of Naples, and now the Papal States. This happens, according to Moses’s words, because ‘we practice the cursed usuries and we like gaining without difficulty’.<sup>27</sup> Usury is a recurring theme in Franciscan preaching against the Jews<sup>28</sup> and it represents a critical point also in Luther’s work ‘On the Jews and Their Lies’.<sup>29</sup> Citing numerous examples from the Bible, and above all the story of Job, Solomon replies that God inflicted numerous punishments and periods of exile on his people because of the sins of Israel, but at the same time, he also showed his immense mercy, for which the Jews must strive. At this point Stabili is speaking through Moses, saying that it is true that the Jews must pray and have high hopes in God (as Psalms 31 and 71 state ‘In Thee, O Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be ashamed’), but that this also is the case for all the nations and people of the world. Moses refers to Christians in particular, and, to prove their perse-

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24 ‘Nelle quali parole il santo, et devoto profeta ne dimostra più che chiaro la falsità della nostra dottrina, per la quale noi ci persuademo, che la misericordia di Dio (per salvare) sia solo sopra noi accatissimi hebrei, come già voi di sopra diceste’ (*ibidem*, f. 27r).

25 *Ibidem*, ff. 26v-28v.

26 *Ezek.* 23:38-39 (Jewish Publication Society edition, 2000).

27 ‘Ci esercitiamo nelle maledette usure, et ci piace il guadagno senza fatiche’ (*Fascicolo*, f. 38v).

28 Especially in fifteenth-century Italy, the observant friars attacked Jewish moneylending and encouraged Christian society to turn to the *Monti di pietà*, charitable institutions providing loans for a relatively low rate of interest. Franciscan friars promoted the new institutions through sermons, sometimes very aggressively, which often resulted in episodes of violence against the Jewish groups living in the city. Cf. Giacomo Todeschini, “Testualità francescana e linguaggi economici nelle città italiane del Quattrocento,” *Quaderni medievali* 40 (1995): 21-50; idem, “La riflessione etica sulle attività economiche,” in *Economie urbane ed etica economica nell’Italia medievale*, eds. Roberto Greci, Giuliano Pinto and Giacomo Todeschini (Rome: Laterza, 2005): 151-228.

29 Martin Luther, *Von den Juden und Ihren Lügen* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1543); there are several references to usury in the pamphlet. For the English text, see Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, vol. 47, trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther’s Works*, ed. Franklin Sherman and Hartmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); for usury, see parts 11 and 12.

verant attitude towards God, he quotes directly from the Gospels. Jesus himself taught perseverance: ‘Ask, and it will be given. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you’ (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9). Moses does not finish here, but goes on to quote the Pauline epistles, recalling how Paul exhorted those Jews who converted to the Christian faith to persevere: perseverance is the only way to reach the reward, that is to say, salvation. The same idea is expressed by another quotation from the *Epistula 65* by Seneca.<sup>30</sup> Aware of the possibility of being charged by apologetics for having used Christian sources to support his arguments from an internal (and Jewish) perspective, Stabili describes a scene of a controversy between the same Moses and Solomon. Indeed, the latter affirms that his friend appears to be a real Christian and asks him whether he has wasted his time by studying the Christian scriptures. Moses replies that all his knowledge comes only from conversations with the Christians who live in the city, and that anyway, ‘their authorities are so engraved in *his* mind that they are impossible to forget’.<sup>31</sup> The reason for this is explained by the compliance between the Christian and Jewish faiths. After a long argumentation on the analogies and differences between the two laws, Moses is charged again by Solomon with being a Christian because of his defence of Christian arguments.<sup>32</sup> The debate becomes heated, and at this point Moses invites Solomon to speak more carefully and not to be angry with him because ‘we are not having this discussion in order to upset one another, but only to seek and know the truth that we really need’.<sup>33</sup>

Stabili’s intention behind these words is clear, and this is only one of countless examples presented by the (somewhat) sceptical Moses to his coreligionist Solomon. Continuing his dialogue—although it would be more appropriate to describe it as a monologue—Moses reviews the story of the Jewish diaspora from Babylon to the most recent generations, saying that in the past, captivities used to last only one hundred years. Since the destruction of the Temple by Titus (70 AD), who took the Jews to Rome in chains, the diaspora has continued up until the present time, and God is not sending signs or prophets to save his people. With this argument, Moses aims to prove that the Jews are not the *Verus Israël* because of their sins, and so ‘all our things are in a great confusion [...] our wise men are confused and scared’<sup>34</sup> because God has disregarded his people, as is written in Psalm 52. Solomon, becoming more and more puzzled, replies that it is necessary to hope, because God is merciful. So Moses replies that both God and Jesus Christ are merciful, as the New Testament shows.

From now on, the conversation between the two Jews is entirely focused on Christian faith and on the possibility of Jews converting to Christianity. Day by day, Shabbat after Shabbat, Solomon asks Moses to discuss a disputable aspect of Jewish and Christian faith. Returning to their speech on the diaspora, Moses starts

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<sup>30</sup> *Fascicolo*, f. 10r.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 41r, italics mine.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 44r.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 31v.

to convince himself and his friend that the Jews, living in these difficult conditions and awaiting the Messiah, are mistaken, and that the Messiah will not come to the diaspora because he had already arrived, but the Jews—especially the rabbis—did not recognise him. This is a possibility, not a certainty. Moses goes on to talk about the disputes between Jews and Christians on the coming of the Messiah:

M: How many times, when we discuss the coming of the King Messiah that we are desiring and awaiting with the Christians, are we defeated, remaining confused by them? And so, because we do not know what else to say, we begin to say: 'we were born in Judaism, by God's will, so we want to die as Jews.' If this expression is appropriate and right, we should also say the same for the other unfaithful nations. What do you think about this?

S: You certainly know that in our synagogues, this expression is being taught to children and the ignorant so that they do not remain confused when they meet Christians and start to discuss with them. This happens so that they are not forced to abandon Judaism and convert to Christianity by some arguments from Christians.<sup>35</sup>

According to Solomon, this sentence is often taught to children and ignorant people in order that they may avoid baptism and remain in Judaism. However, Moses demonstrates that the same behaviour is also adopted by educated and wise people, citing the case of Moise Giazia and Abramo Giairo,<sup>36</sup> common acquaintances of Moses and Solomon who, discussing the coming of the Messiah with a Christian, 'remained so confused that they did not know what to reply, so they said that they were born in Judaism and they wanted to die as Jews.'<sup>37</sup>

The theme of Jewish stubbornness as a reaction to forced preaching by the clergy—in most cases neophytes—has already been highlighted. From the rejection of conversion follows the will to remain and die as Jews. This sentence seems to have become a *topos* in Italy throughout the centuries, and it is possible to find this statement in many works. We could find it, for instance, in a chronicle written in Rome during the eighteenth century, where the Jews Abramo Caivano and Angeluccio della Riccia condemned to death in 1736 refuse baptism and affirm their will to die as Jews:

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35 'M: Quante volte ragionando noi con li Christiani parlando del Re Messia che tanto desideriamo e aspettiamo noi da quegli con le nostre ragioni istesse restiamo vinti, et confusi? E come da noi non si può più alle cose vere rispondere ne voltiamo a dire. Noi siamo nati giudei, e a Dio così ha piaciuto, onde volemo nel giudaismo anco morire. Se questo modo di dire fusse convenevole et buono, converia ancora che si dicesse dell'altre nationi che al certo infedeli sono. Parvi che in questo modo si consenti alla verità?

S: Voi sapete con certezza come nelle vostre sinagoghe questo modo di rispondere si insegna, et per soadarsi a gli putti et a gl'huomini ignoranti acciò non restino essi confusi quando peraventura co' Christiani (nel mezzo de quali habitano) essi ragionano. Et questo si fa acciò che non siano costretti da alcuni argomenti fattili da Christiani, di abandonare il giudaismo et farsi Christiani' (*ibidem*, f. 51r).

36 There is no evidence that they actually existed.

37 'Restarono essi talmente confusi che non sapendo più che rispondere, dissero le parole che di sopra dette habiamo, cioè che essendo essi vati Giudei così volevano anco morire' (*ibidem*, f. 51v).

Abramo [...] after he had met the comforters, started to cry, saying that he had not killed anyone and did not deserve death, but, since he was condemned to it, he wanted to die in his religion, in the grace of the God of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. [...] He wanted to die as a Jew without any baptism [...]. [Angeluccio to the preacher]: 'Leave me, I want to die, I want to die in the grace of Jacob and Isaac and I do not want to listen to your sermons. I was born a Jew and I want to die as a Jew.'<sup>38</sup>

Almost the same are the words of Anna del Monte, a young Jewish woman enclosed in the *Casa dei Catecumeni* ('House of Catechumens') in Rome in 1749 in order to be converted, as appears in the diary of her imprisonment. To the two priests who attempted to convert her, she replied: 'This is nothing for me, whereas I was born a Jew and I want to die as a Jew.'<sup>39</sup>

On the other hand, after the sermons of the preachers, many Jews became more and more perplexed, and in many cases ended up converting to Christianity. The theme of conversion is particularly dear to Stabili, who inserts some neophytes into the dialogue. One of them, Giovanni Battista, was identified by François Secret in 1965 with Giovanni Battista Buonamici (born Aharon ben Menahem), a neophyte in Civitanova Marche, who appears in the chronicle on Paul IV's papacy written by the moneylender Benjamin Nehemiah ben Elnathan.<sup>40</sup>

However, Secret's hypothesis is not strengthened by any strong evidence, since he limited himself to saying only that the name Giovanni Battista was frequently adopted by converts to Christianity and that the Giovanni Battista mentioned in the chronicle by Benjamin must be the same person who appears in the *Fascicolo*.<sup>41</sup> There is no strong proof either that the city in which Moses and Solomon live is Civitanova or that the Giovanni Battista mentioned by Moses is the same neophyte who contributed to the instigation of the Christian population against the Jews in Civitanova, as the author of the chronicle recounts. The city could possibly be identified as Ancona for the reasons expressed before and also because when Stabili was writing (after 1569), the Jews were allowed to live only in Rome and Ancona because of the bull by Pius V mentioned above. Moreover, as proven by the local archival documentation, the Jewish community of Civitanova Marche had disappeared by this time, since the synagogue and the Jewish cem-

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<sup>38</sup> Simona Foà, ed., *Le "croniche" della famiglia Citone* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1988): 295–298. The translation from Italian into English is mine.

<sup>39</sup> Marina Caffiero, ed., *Rubare le anime. Diario di Anna del Monte ebrea romana* (Rome: Viella, 2008), 97 and 45–55. The translation from Italian into English is mine.

<sup>40</sup> François Secret, "Notes sur les hebraïsants chrétiens," 176. The chronicle by Benjamin Nehemiah ben Elnathan from Civitanova Marche was first published by Isaiah Sonne in *Tarbiz* 2 (1930–1): 331–376 and 477–502, then republished in idem, *Mi-Pavolo ha-revî'i 'ad Pius ha-hamišî. Kronikah 'ivrit min ha-me'ah ha-shesh 'esreh* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1954): 3–93. The chronicle in question is the topic of the PhD project I am expecting to complete in 2017, supervised by Professor Paolo Broggio, Università degli Studi Roma Tre, and Professor Giuseppe Veltri, Universität Hamburg.

<sup>41</sup> Secret, "Notes sur les hebraïsants chrétiens," 176.

etry had finally been sold by the Jews in 1569.<sup>42</sup> What is certain is that most of the time, the zealous preaching of the neophytes represented a problem for the rest of the Jewish population living in Christian society.<sup>43</sup>

Then, Moses analyses other arguments about the Christian faith: the Trinity, priesthood, dietary prohibitions, some prophecies on Jesus Christ, and finally, the authority of the Gospels. With more and more conviction, Moses restates that the Messiah has come: the truth is within the Gospels that Jesus is the Messiah that the Jews are awaiting, the New Testament agrees with the Hebrew Bible, and Jesus has not come to abolish Mosaic Law. Using the metaphor of a moth bumping into a light, Moses says that the rabbis were unable to see the truth, or better, that they saw the truth but did not recognise it.<sup>44</sup> At this point, Stabili launches a heavy attack on rabbinical literature, which he has already criticised in the preface. Indeed, at the beginning of the work, Stabili informs the reader about the use of those sources, accepted by the same Jews. Referring to the rabbinical literature, he writes that 'they have [quoted] those modern rabbis whose authority is not so great among the Jews themselves.' In contrast, the Christian authors and writings presented date back to an ancient time, so their authority 'cannot be denied by any Jew.' The references to the Talmud in the *Fascicolo* are very few and, in general, it is simply described as 'the profane and wicked law'<sup>45</sup> of the Jews. Moses/Stabili gives an interesting argument about the prohibition and burning of Christian books charged with heresy. He insists on the importance and veracity of the antique writings, as opposed to the modern authors who have deviated from the doctrine; moreover, he praises the restrictions in matters of faith that the Christians adopt through their councils such as the prohibition and burning of unorthodox writings.<sup>46</sup> According to Moses, this is also what the Jews themselves should do in order to prevent the spreading of various erroneous doctrines. Even though there is no explicit mention of this, it is clear that Stabili is referring to the burning of the Talmud and other forbidden Jewish books. The first burning of the Talmud was decreed in September 1553 by Julius III and renewed a year later; with some exceptions, the order was applied all over the Papal States, and 'thousands of books were destroyed in several Italian cities, and in France and Spain

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<sup>42</sup> These acts are preserved in the State Archive of Macerata. Due to the lack of funds in Civitanova, in 1613 the City Council appointed a Jewish banker to come to live in the city in order to lend money at the rate of 12% (Archivio storico comunale di Civitanova Marche, *Riformane*, reg. 197, f. 189v, March 18, 1613).

<sup>43</sup> On some episodes of violence operated by Jew-turned-Christian neophytes see, for example, Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 117–118; Marina Caffiero, *Forced Baptisms: Histories of Jews, Christians, and Converts in Papal Rome* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2012); original title: *Battesimi forzati. Storie di ebrei, cristiani e convertiti nella Roma dei papi* (Rome: Viella, 2004).

<sup>44</sup> *Fascicolo*, f. 124r.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 305v.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 142r.

as well.<sup>47</sup> With this argument, Stabili indirectly justifies not only the burning of the heretical Christian writings, formerly forbidden by the indexes issued by the popes,<sup>48</sup> but also the burning of Jewish texts, including the Talmud.

Moses gives many examples to illustrate his argument that the rabbis' writings are ridiculous and their beliefs are foolish and sometimes heretical. One of these is the belief expressed by Shimon ben Pazzi, student of Jehoshua ben Levi, according to which God made a mistake when he created the moon. In the beginning, as described in Genesis 1, God created the sun and the moon, but after a while the moon became arrogant, so God punished it by reducing its light. However, according to the story, God understood his mistake and finally asked the Jews to make sacrifices to the moon to remedy his error.<sup>49</sup> This example was also very popular in other polemical works, such as the *Riti e costumi degli ebrei* (1736) by the convert Paolo Sebastiano Medici, where it was used to support his arguments against the blasphemies of the Jews.<sup>50</sup>

The last chapters of the *Fascicolo* are entirely devoted to demolishing Solomon's last doubts. Moses explains that Isaiah's prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who came to dissolve the doubts of the Jews of his time, for instance, as to whether it was correct to pay tribute to Caesar or not. Now all the doubts are almost gone: Moses clearly says that the Jews must convert and recognise Jesus as the Messiah that the Jews are expecting. What was once a doubt is now a certainty.

Solomon agrees, even if he has other doubts which prevent him from converting: for instance, the Christian belief of the virginal conception of Jesus. To dissipate this last doubt, Moses recounts a long dissertation on some famous cases of extraordinary births, quoting Valerius Maximus, Flavius Josephus, Giovanni Pontano, Amatus Lusitanus, and many others. Turning from some medieval legends on hermaphroditism via the myth of the Arabian phoenix to the description of the reproductive modalities of some animals (such as bees and mice) referencing the works of Virgil, Ovidius, and Plinius, Moses demonstrates that a woman does not necessarily need a man to give birth, especially if her son is God's son, because nothing is impossible for him.<sup>51</sup>

M: You see clearly, Solomon, the degree of clearness with which we know the vanity, or, on the contrary, I say the falsehood, of our hopes waiting for the King Messiah, the restoration of the Temple,

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<sup>47</sup> Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *The Censor, the Editor, and the Text. The Catholic Church and the Shaping of the Jewish Canon in the Sixteenth Century*, translated by Jackie Feldman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007): 32.

<sup>48</sup> The first of these, issued by Pope Paul IV, dates back to 1559.

<sup>49</sup> *Fascicolo*, f. 304v. This story is reported in the Babylonian Talmud, *Hullin* 60b.

<sup>50</sup> Paolo Sebastiano Medici, *Riti e costumi degli ebrei descritti, e confutati dal dottore Paolo Medici sacerdote e lettore pubblico fiorentino* (Florence: Pietro Gaetano Viviani, 1736), 235–237. The aim of the work was to discredit the *Historia de' gli riti hebraici* (Paris: Gaffarel, 1637) written by the Venetian Rabbi Leon Modena. This ethnographical genre was thoroughly widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: see Giuseppe Veltri, *Renaissance Philosophy in Jewish Garb. Foundations and Challenges in Judaism on the Eve of Modernity* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009): 171ff.

<sup>51</sup> *Fascicolo*, f. 292r.

and the rebuilding of Jerusalem? For God's sake, Solomon, we should not remain in this blindness, perfidy and, stubbornness; let us find out with every effort how to enter this Temple in this spiritual city, that is to say the faith of the Christians. We have to, so that we can praise God both in this world and in the next. If we do the contrary, I doubt the possibility of our salvation.<sup>52</sup>

After Moses's last speech, the dialogue finally ends with Solomon and Moses declaring their intention to convert along with their whole families. The representation of doubt as a fiction, a theatrical performance, apparently recalls the sceptical tradition, but in this case it would be better to talk about a mystification of scepticism, here used by the author with a catechetical goal. The dialogue between the two Jews represents a stratagem, a fictional device through which Stabili constructs a debate for his own dogmatic purposes. It can be argued that, for the author, doubts have a positive value, in opposition to 'Jewish stubbornness', because they represent the pretext for a rational debate based on both Christian and Jewish sources, aimed at resolving doubts. Only by freeing themselves from doubts can the Jews understand their errors and be born again to a new life through the sweet waters of baptism. Also, the choice of the dialogue form seems to aim towards this same goal, for reasons we will discuss in the next section.

### **The Use of Dialogue in Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics: Notes for Future Perspectives of Study**

Anti-Jewish polemics from Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages gave life to a massive literary production expressed in different genres: the *testimonia*, the *epistola*, the *tractatus*, the *homilia*, the *sermo* and, above all, the *dialogus*, which was the most widespread literary tool in controversies between Christians and Jews.<sup>53</sup>

Concerning the term 'dialogue', the Oxford English Dictionary gives us two different definitions: first of all, dialogue is 'a conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play or film,' but it can also be intended as 'a discussion between two or more people or groups, especially one directed towards exploration of a particular subject or resolution of a problem.'<sup>54</sup> The dialogue is also a literary technique

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52 'Vedete di gratia o Salamone con quanta chiarezza si conosce la vanità, anzi dirò la falsità delle nostre speranze in aspettar più il Re Messia con la reintegrazione del Tempio e della Città per habitar corporalmente. Deh per Dio Salamone, non stiamo più in questa accecatione, perfidia et ostinatione, ma cerchiamo con tutte le forze entrare in questo Tempio, et in questa città spirituale, che altro non è (per quel conoscer si può) se non la fede dei Cristiani, et dovemolo fare ad ogni modo, acciò ne sia lecito lodare Iddio in questo mondo, et nell'altro, et facendo il contrario io ho dubio della nostra salvatione' (*Ibidem*, f. 278r-v).

53 Immacolata Aulisa and Claudio Schiano, "Dialogo di Papisco e Filone giudei con un monaco," *Quaderni di Vetera Christianorum* 30 (2005): 20–21.

54 Oxford English Dictionary, online version: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dialogue>, accessed June 20, 2015.

and its use can be seen as far back as classical literature, especially in the works of Socrates and Plato, with rhetorical and argumentative goals.<sup>55</sup>

Among the Christian dialogues, we can encounter, for instance, the lost ‘Dialogue between Jason and Papiscus’, the ‘Dialogue with Trypho’ by Justin Martyr, and also the writings of Tertullian. It was undoubtable that that a virulent anti-Judaism spread in Europe during the Middle Ages, through the diffusion of the works of Petrus Alfonsi<sup>56</sup> and the preaching of Pablo Christiani,<sup>57</sup> tireless supporters of the *Adversus Judaeos* literature. Similarly, we could name Samuel Maroccanus or Marochitanus, a Jew who converted to Christianity and wrote a polemical work against the Jews in Arabic during the second half of the eleventh century, which was translated into Latin under the title of *Tractatus Rabbi Samuelis* by Alfonsus Bonihominis around 1339, and then into Italian by the friar Gregorio Lombardelli during the sixteenth century, republished by the Venetian philosopher and physician Girolamo Moratino in 1655.<sup>58</sup>

These and other writings were certainly influenced by the late antique Christian polemical works, replying at the same time to the polemical and apologetic Jewish literary production that was very prolific during the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period.<sup>59</sup> Antonino Stabili, who was well versed in Hebrew and Jewish literature, as we know, might have read or known works such as the *Sefer ha-Kuzari* by Yehuda ha-Levi, the *Milhamot ha-Šem*, the *Toledot Yešu*, or the writings of Nahmanides, who, in fact, is mentioned several times in the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche*. Indeed, the work touches on some important aspects of Jewish polemics and apologetics such as, for instance, the coming of the Messiah, the virginal conception of Jesus, Mary’s virginity, and the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Alongside these themes in the *Fascicolo* we encoun-

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<sup>55</sup> On the relationship between dialogue and rhetoric, see: Edda Weigand, *Dialogue and rhetoric* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing & Co., 2008). For more on the dialogue form, see Kenneth Seeskin, *Dialogue and Discovery: A Study in Socratic Method* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

<sup>56</sup> Moshe Sefardi (eleventh century, Spain) converted to Christianity in 1106; he was the author of a *Dialogus contra Iudeos*. See John Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> Shaul ? (thirteenth century, Spain) converted to Christianity and joined the Dominican Order as a friar, participating to the disputation of Barcelona on the Talmud (1263) against Nachmanides. See “Christiani, Pablo,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (online version): <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4365-christiani-pablo>, accessed July 1, 2015. See also Moshe Idel and Mauro Perani, *Nahmanide esegeta e cabalista. Studi e testi* (Florence: Giuntina, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> On the editions of this work, see Norman Roth, ed., *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 222; Centre des études supérieures de la Renaissance, ed., *Antonio Brucioli: humanisme et évangelisme entre Réforme et Contre-Réforme. Actes du colloque de Tours, 20–21 Mai 2005* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Among the extensive literature on the topic, see Daniel J. Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Ktav, 1977); idem, “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*, eds. Chanita Goodblatt and Howard Kreisel (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2006): 469–488.

ter other arguments that recur in anti-Jewish polemical works such as, for instance, the myth of the lost Ten Tribes of Israel and the critics of the Kabbalah. Referring to this last point, Stabili/Moses argues that the modern rabbis, because of their confusion, started to multiply the letters and syllables of words and combine them with each other and other similar kabbalistic matters ‘believing that [in the Kabbalah] are hidden the secrets and the true soul of our [the Mosaic] Law.’<sup>60</sup>

The *Pugio fidei* (completed by 1280) by Ramón Martí, another model used by Stabili, attempts to demonstrate the absurdity of the Jewish faith and the righteousness of Christianity through the use of rabbinical authorities and the Talmud as primary sources.<sup>61</sup> This use of Hebrew texts became more and more fashionable during the Early Modern period, leading to an increase in the number of Christians learning Hebrew, whose teaching was established in the fourteenth century in order to argue against the Jews.<sup>62</sup> Some Christian polemicists who engaged in anti-Jewish controversies in early modern Italy such as Giulio Bartolocci<sup>63</sup> (1613–1687) and Melchiorre Palontrotti (seventeenth century),<sup>64</sup> despite not having a Jewish family background, show a deep knowledge of Judaism and a complete mastery of the Hebrew language. On the other hand, more frequently protagonists of anti-Jewish controversies were neophytes turned from Judaism to Christianity, who offered their service to the Church in many ways, such as, for example, teaching Hebrew, revising Hebrew books considered improper and blasphemous by the Church, and writing polemical

**60** ‘Li Rabbini moderni fatti senza altra autorità vegendosi confusi in molte cose per lo mezzo di tali spositioni diederonsi alla moltiplicatione delle nostre lettere et di ponti, alla continuazione delle sillabe, a congiungere un verso con l’altro, et a simili altre cose secondo l’arte che essi chiamano cabalistica, credendosi che qui vi li secreti et li veri sentimenti della nostra Legge ascosi fussero’ (*Fascicolo*, f. 184r).

**61** The *edition princeps* of the *Pugio fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* appeared in 1651 (apud Mathurinum et Ioannem Henault, Paris). On the work, see Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 343 ff.

**62** Cf. Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96; Samuel David Luzzatto, *Prolegomeni ad una grammatica ragionata della lingua ebraica, di Samuel David Luzzatto da Trieste* (Padua: Tipografia e Fonderia Cartallier, 1836): 40–42.

**63** A Cistercian monk and *scriptor hebraicus* of the Vatican Library, he learned Hebrew from Rabbi Jehudah Jonah from Safed (converted to Christianity with the name of Giovambattista Jonah). Bartolocci was author of the *Bibliotheca Magna Rabbinica de Scriptoribus, et scriptis hebraicis, ordine alphabeticò Hebraice et Latine digestis...*, 4 vols. (Rome: ex typographia Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1683). Cf. Giovanni Garbini, “Bartolocci, Giulio,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 6 (1964).

**64** It might be that this Melchiorre Palontrotti was a descendent of a homonymous cantor who lived in the sixteenth century, see Richard Wistreich, “Palontrotti, Melchiorre,” *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 80 (2014). On the polemicist and his works, see Fausto Parente, “Il confronto ideologico tra l’ebraismo e la Chiesa in Italia,” *Italia Judaica* 1 (1983): 303–381, esp. 335 ff.; Benjamin Ravid, “Contra Judaeos in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Two Responses to the Discorso of Simone Luzzatto by Melchiorre Palontrotti and Giulio Morosini,” *AJS Review* 7–8 (1982–3): 301–351; Giulio Busi, “La Breve Raccolta (Venezia, 1649) del polemista antigiudaico Melchiorre Palontrotti,” *Annali di Ca’ Foscari* 24/3 (1985): 1–19.

works to encourage the conversion of the Jews. This is the case, for instance, of Fabiano Fioghi (first half of the sixteenth century–1611 or 1628), Giulio Morosini (1612–1683), Paolo Sebastiano Medici (1671–1738), and Lorenzo Filippo Virgulti (?–1735). The first of these was, among other things, the author of a dialogue between a neophyte and a preacher who indoctrinates him, printed in Rome in 1582, one year before the publication of Stabili's work.<sup>65</sup> Medici also preferred the dialogue form, although for his exegetical and homiletic works on the books of the Old and New Testament, which were not directly linked to anti-Jewish controversies.<sup>66</sup>

The production of anti-Jewish literature, circulating in Italy in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, was obviously widespread and strongly influenced by the historical circumstances.<sup>67</sup> It is possible that Antonino Stabili, who wrote, as we said above, in the second half of the sixteenth century, could have read and studied most of the medieval Jewish writings, which were certainly available in many religious and private libraries (and maybe in the same convent of Santa Maria in Atessa where Stabili was). On the other hand, it is also possible that he became aware of their contents through the reading of other Italian (and non-Italian) works, based on the Jewish works named above and on Christian anti-Jewish literature.

Furthermore, we cannot overlook the fact that Stabili was a child of his time: during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the preaching of the observant friars took root in the Kingdom of Naples (and throughout Italy) thanks to the activity, among others, of Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444), Giacomo della Marca (1393–1476), and Giovanni of Capistrano (1386–1456). As a Dominican friar who lived only a century after them, Stabili could have been influenced by their preaching and teachings. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that Stabili himself lived in the Kingdom of Naples when the Jews were expelled in 1541, or that he lived during the papacies of Paul IV (1555–1559) and Pius V (1566–1572), who were particularly strict towards the Jews.

The fictional device of a dialogue between two Jews expressing their doubts regarding their faith (and the possibility of eventually converting to Christianity) helps Stabili to construct a new narrative, not reflecting the echoes of venomous preaching but based on the same Jewish evidence from an internal perspective. The only Christians who appear in the *Fascicolo* are those who dispute with the main characters' acquaintances but do not manage to convert them to Christianity. The analysis of long-neglected polemical works like Stabili's, their contextualisation within the historical framework of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, the comparison between Christian and Jewish sources, and their integration with the archival documen-

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<sup>65</sup> Fabiano Fioghi, *Dialogo fra il cathecumino et il padre catechizante, composto per Fabiano Fioghi dal Monte San Savino, Lettore della Lingua hebreo nel Collegio de Neophiti...* (Rome: Antonio Blado, 1582) another extended version was published in 1611, then reprinted in 1628.

<sup>66</sup> His *Dialoghi sacri* were first printed in Florence in 1719, then gathered together and published again in Venice by Angelo Geremia between 1731 and 1737.

<sup>67</sup> Gianfranco Fioravanti, “Polemiche antigiudaiche nell'Italia del Quattrocento: un tentativo di interpretazione globale,” *Quaderni storici* 64 (1987): 19–37.

tation can help historians not only to have a more complete overview of early modern polemics but also, more generally, to develop common paths of research at the cross-roads between literature, history, and the history of ideas.

Concerning the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche*, a more in-depth reading of anti-Christian and anti-Jewish works circulating in the sixteenth century and also further archival and bibliographical research into the convent where the author lived may shed light on some issues. Moreover, further study of Dominican literature in the Early Modern period (and also of Stabili's other writings) would be very useful to reveal the role and the diffusion of the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche* after Antonino Stabili's death and afterwards for a wider comprehension of the work in general.<sup>68</sup>

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**68** Copies of the *Fascicolo delle vanità giudaiche* (Ancona, 1583) are preserved in the Biblioteca Vaticana, in the Biblioteca Alessandrina (Rome) and in other libraries in several Italian cities, (Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Asti, Bergamo, Bologna, Ferrara, Florence, Macerata, Padua, Palermo, Pavia, Pesaro, Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Torino, and Venice). Another two copies are preserved in London (British Library) and in Lugano. A specimen was held in the library of the artist Pietro Veri (1568–1611) from Florence according to a document published in Lothar Sickel, “Pietro Veri. Ein Florentiner Künstler in Diensten des Herzogs von Bracciano, Virginio Orsini,” *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunswissenschaft* 30 (2003): 205. We also found a small excerpt of the work among the papers of Giovanni Pastrizio (1636–1708), a prominent lecturer in theology in the Collegio di Propaganda Fide in Rome (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Borg. lat.* 493).

