

## APPROACHES TO CONVERSION IN THE LATE 13TH-CENTURY CHURCH

With the strengthening of the Church during the thirteenth century, there evolved a strong feeling for the need to convert both the enemy within, the Jews, and the greater exterior enemy, the Muslims.<sup>1</sup> While there were renewed cries for crusades to redeem the Holy Land, the main effort was that of inter-religious polemic or conversion through mission.<sup>2</sup> This fell mainly on the shoulders of the mendicant movements whose training was geared towards this end.

It was realised early on that with regard to Islam, it would be necessary to learn Arabic so as to be able to read the sources while at the same time engage them in debate. While this was recognised in theory, in practice this was rarely achieved. Indeed, the knowledge that Christians had of the Muslim religion was often secondhand and bore little resemblance to the living Islamic faith.<sup>3</sup> There was only a vague notion of the doctrines of Islam, and many of the polemical writers would never have come across a live Muslim. This position would change with the continued success of the *reconquista* in Spain which would bring the Christians into contact with large numbers of Muslims, the majority of the indigenous population of the recaptured territories.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 60 vols. (Blackfriars edn, London, 1964-76), 2a2ae. 10,11, «quod **Judaei** ritus suos observant ... hoc bonum provenit quod testimonium fidei nostrae habemus **ab hostibus**»; and R. Martí, *Pugio fidei adversus mauros et judeos*, (Leipzig, 1687), p. 2, «nullus autem **inimicus** Christianiae fidei magis sit familiaris, magisque nobis inevitabilis, quam **Judaeus**».

<sup>2</sup> See B.Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission*, (Princeton, 1984) esp. pp. 97-158.

<sup>3</sup> See Hillg, p. 6; R.I. Burns, «Christian Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth Century Dream of Conversion», *The American Historical Review* 76 (1971), pp. 1386-412, 1432-4, esp. 1402-8, R.I. Burns, *Muslims, Christians and Jews in the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 95-9; and T.E. Burman, «The influence of the Apology of Al-Kindi and Contrarietas Alfolica on Ramon Lull's late religious polemic, 1303-1313», *Mediaeval Studies* 53 (1991), pp. 197-199, as well as his *Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, c. 1050-1200* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> See J.N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms 1250-1516* (Oxford, 1976), Vol. I, pp. 16-32, and D.S.H. Abulafia, *A Mediterranean Emporium: The Catalan Kingdom of Majorca* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 56-74.

While the position was different with regard to the Jews, who had lived among Christians since late antiquity, the early decades of the thirteenth century show a considerable amount of ignorance with regard to Jewish doctrine and praxis. This has been explained by the Christian adherence to the Augustinian line of thinking, which saw the Jews as the remnant of the old covenant whose position in society was to be tolerated as bearing witness to the truth of Christianity until they would all eventually convert.<sup>5</sup> Hence, little or no effort was made to come to grips with what was a live and vibrant faith, the polemicists preferring to adhere to a traditional view of the Old Testament Jew and using for polemics biblical texts which supposedly proved the truth of Christianity and the stubbornness of the Jews.<sup>6</sup> These texts had long been dealt with by Jewish scholars who interpreted them in ways opposite to Christian exegesis. From the third decade of the century, it was gradually realised that the Jews were not the same as those living in the time of Jesus and that a considerable amount of literature had since been written that needed to be taken into account. This was tantamount to a change in both the emphasis and method of conversion.<sup>7</sup>

Here, I would briefly like to examine the mendicant method of conversion and compare and contrast it with that of Ramon Llull. While the former were mainstream and received the backing of both the Church and secular powers, the latter developed his own approach to conversion, which was an integral part of his world view, and one that he repeatedly attempted to present to the leaders of Christian Europe.

I would like to preface my remarks by saying that it is problematic to talk about the mendicant orders as one cohesive unit. It is clear that there were great differences between the Dominicans and Franciscans, as well as different factions within the Orders themselves. Ramon Llull, himself a layman, found more in common with the Franciscan Spirituals than with the Dominicans, though he tried to join the latter at a time of crises in his life. It was, however, Franciscans who populated his language school at Miramar in 1276, and it was they who were more receptive of his Art. Llull had contact with leading Franciscans such as Ramon Gaufredi, Minister General of the Order and supporter of the Spirituals, Bernard Délicieux and John Peter Olivii, leader of the Spirituals during the 1290's. It is possible that he became a tertiary toward the end of his

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<sup>5</sup> See B. Blumenkranz, «Augustin et les Juifs; Augustin et le Judaïsme», *Recherches augustiniennes*, 1 (1958), pp. 225-41.

<sup>6</sup> See D. Berger, «Mission to the Jews and Jewish Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature in the High Middle Ages», *The American Historical Review* 91 (1986), pp. 576-91.

<sup>7</sup> See J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca and London, 1982) pp. 19-99, and subsequently, R. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 13-85.

life.<sup>8</sup> Hence, even with regard to Llull himself, there was considerable difference between the two Orders.<sup>9</sup> However, I will refer to the Mendicants as one unit, because their approach to the whole issue of conversion was very similar in theory, and the two Orders often worked hand in hand, for example, in disputations and the inquisition. It is mainly the contrast with Llull that I wish to illuminate here.

Ramon Llull was born in Majorca c. 1232, and grew up in close proximity to the royal court as seneschal to the future king James II. When about thirty, he experienced visions of Christ on the Cross which, he said, led him to a complete change in lifestyle. He proposed to devote his life to three main purposes: to write the best books by which to convert the unbelievers; to establish monasteries where various languages needed for this task could be studied; and to achieve martyrdom. At the advice of the former Master General of the Dominican Order and confessor of count-king James I of Catalonia and Aragon, Ramon de Penyafort, he remained in Majorca and embarked on a course of study including learning Arabic, of which knowledge he would be very proud in later life.<sup>10</sup> As a result of this study and a further illumination on Mt Randa, Llull developed an Art which he believed could solve all problems, demonstrate the truth of the Christian faith, and lead man to honour, love and serve God.<sup>11</sup>

It is the demonstration of the truth of the Christian faith which presents a major contrast between the Mendicants and Llull. It was the *via negativa* which dominated the approach of the mendicants from the middle of the thirteenth century. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa contra gentiles*, as well as in the larger *Summa theologiae*, adopted the philosophical position that it was impossible to

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<sup>8</sup> See *Vita coetanea* in *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, ed. A. Bonner (Princeton, 1985) [hereafter *SWRL*], Vol. I, pp. 31-2, and n. 122 where the evidence is briefly summed up; Hillg, pp. 53-5; and J.N. Hillgarth, *Readers and Books in Majorca 1229-1550* (Paris, 1991), Vol. I, p. 200.

<sup>9</sup> On Llull's relations with the Franciscans, see especially, A. Oliver, «El Beato Ramón Llull en sus relaciones con la Escuela Franciscana de los siglos XIII-XIV», *EL* 9 (1965), pp. 55-70, 145-65; 10 (1966), pp. 47-55; 11 (1967), pp. 89-119; 13 (1969), pp. 51-65; J. Gayà, «"Ars Patris Filius": Buenaventura y Ramon Llull», *EL* 27 (1987), pp. 21-36. On Llull's more troubled relations with the Dominicans, see J. Tusquets, «Relación de Ramon Llull con San Ramon de Penyaforte y con la order de Santa Domingo», *Escritos del Vedat* 7 (1977), pp. 177-95; A. Bonner, «L'apprentissage intellectuel de Ramon Llull», in *Studia in Honorem Prof. M. de Riquer*, Vol. II (Barcelona, 1987); and A. Bonner, «Ramon Llull and the Dominicans», *Catalan Review* 4:1-2 (1990), pp. 377-92.

<sup>10</sup> Ramon de Penyafort was very influential in setting the tone for missionary work and relations between Christians, Muslims and Jews in his *Summa de poenitentia* and *Responsiones ad dubia e praxi missionariorum exorta*. See Ca I, pp. 39-40, and E. Colomer, «Ramon Llull y Ramon Martí», *EL* 28 (1988), pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> On Llull's life, see the *Vita coetanea* in *SWRL* I, pp. 10-52, with all its problems, together with the informative introduction by A. Bonner. See also Pla, esp. Vol. I; Ca I, pp. 237-256; A. Llinares, *Ramon Llull* (Barcelona, 1968), pp. 57-94, among others. On this illumination see H. Hames, «Elijah and a Shepherd: the Authority of Revelation», *SL* 34 (1994), pp. 93-102.

know anything about God, except that He exists, and that there is a minimum of knowledge, such as the divine attributes, that reason can infer from this. The logical implication of this was to create a two tiered system of reason and faith. Reason is only useful up to a certain point, after which faith is necessary.<sup>12</sup> In practice, this meant that while the other faiths could be proven to be mistaken, the doctrines of Christianity demanded a belief stemming from certitude in their verity, but were unprovable.<sup>13</sup> Hence, the line of argument taken in the polemical works and debates of the late thirteenth century was to prove that the Messiah had come, and then briefly expound the doctrines of the Trinity, resurrection and original sin. The question of whether the Messiah had come was a concrete historical argument of great importance and relevance. If this could be successfully argued, then it was assumed that the other more difficult points of debate would surely fall into place. It was also a safe subject in that it in no way threatened the foundations of Christian faith, as could, perhaps, argumentation over the essence of the Godhead.

This was also where arguments from reason utilising and undermining the said faiths' authoritative texts could be used with great effect.<sup>14</sup> The Talmud and later Jewish literature could be delved into to show that the Rabbis themselves had believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and that contemporary Jewry was mistaken in its interpretation of the texts. This is the method adopted in the second section of Martí's *Pugio fidei*, which goes to enormous lengths to prove this important point.<sup>15</sup>

Llull, however, developed an Art which came to grips with the essential questions of Christian doctrine. He believed that by using what he called «necessary reason» or «necessary demonstration» it was possible to prove the doctrines of the Christian faith.<sup>16</sup> Llull suggested that there must be a way of demonstrating infinite being through the intellect, seeing that if such a being

<sup>12</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2a. 2ae. 1.5, and *Summa contra gentiles*, 4 vols, A.C. Pegis, trans., (Notre Dame, 1975), 1. ch. 6-9, pp. 71-8. The structure of the latter work goes from what faith affirms and reason investigates (parts 1-3) to what faith affirms and reason cannot investigate (part 4) which deals with the Articles of Faith.

<sup>13</sup> «Articuli fidei demonstrative probari non possunt», *Pugio Fidei*, p. 229. See E. Colomer, «Ramón Llull y Ramón Martí», *EL* 28, pp. 23-34.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Cohen, *The Friars and The Jews*, pp. 51-76; R. Chazan, *Daggers of Faith*, pp. 67-85; and E. Colomer, «El pensament de Ramon Llull i els seus precedents històrics com a expressió medieval de la relació fe-cultura», *Fe i Cultura en Ramon Llull* (Palma, 1986), pp. 9-29.

<sup>15</sup> See *Pugio fidei*, pp. 260-478. See also A. Bonner, «L'apologètica de Ramon Martí i Ramon Llull davant de l'Islam i del Judaisme», in M. Salleras, ed., *El debat intercultural als segles XIII i XIV* (Girona, 1989) p. 174.

<sup>16</sup> On the probable Muslim origin of these terms, see C. Lohr, «Christianus arabicus cuius nomen Raimundus Lullus», *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 34 (1984), pp. 80-1. With regard to the use of reason in proving faith, it would be useful to examine Llull's approach in light of his

truly exists it must surely merit such demonstration.<sup>17</sup> For him, the relationship between faith and reason was inverted, «it is more noble to desire to understand the articles of faith than to desire to believe them».<sup>18</sup> The only way one could persuade an unbeliever to convert was by proving the tenets of one's own faith to be true. In the *Liber de demonstratione per aequiparantiam*, Lull writes that it is unreasonable to expect someone to leave his faith for another faith unless the new faith is demonstrated by reason.<sup>19</sup> Hence, much of Lull's literary output was devoted to proving the articles of faith, especially with regard to the Trinity and Incarnation. He rarely deals with the question of the coming of the Messiah, as for him this is far less important than proving the existence of a Trinity in the Godhead in a conclusive manner.<sup>20</sup> Lull's system starts from the largest common denominator of all three religions, the existence of God and His attributes, and proceeds to build a structure whereby could be proven the inherent necessity of a Trinity in the Godhead. This would then reflect on the whole structure of creation, and would also elucidate the incarnation, dogmas which were the major sticking points between Jews, Muslims and Christians.<sup>21</sup>

This difference in approach is best illuminated by a story Lull himself tells a number of times in his works about Ramon Martí's disastrous trip to Tunis in 1268-9 to try and convert the sultan al-Mustansir. After proving to the sultan the falsehood of Islam, the sultan requested that the friar, probably Martí, should prove by necessary reason the truth of Christianity.<sup>22</sup> If he was able to do so, the

12th-century predecessors such as Anselm and Gilbert Crispin. See A. Sapir Abulafia, «Christians disputing disbelief: St Anselm, Gilbert Crispin and Psuedo-Anselm», *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien (Sonderdruck, 1992), pp. 131-48, and her *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth Century Renaissance* (London/New York, 1995) reviewed below. See also J. Tolan, *Petrus Alfonsi and his Medieval Readers* (Gainesville, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> *Libre de demostracions*, ORL XV, pp. 93-4, and M. Johnston, *The Spiritual Logic of Ramon Lull* (Oxford, 1987), p. 112.

<sup>18</sup> *Libre de demostracions*, ORL XV, p. 36. See also *Libre de contemplació*, ORL VI, pp. 113-14. Lull did recognise the need for illumination or grace to achieve understanding, and that having faith was easier than achieving understanding. See *Libre de contemplació*, ORL VI, 124-5, and *Doctrina Pueril*, ORL I, pp. 90-1. Hence, for Lull there is quite a complicated relationship between faith and reason. See M. Johnston, *Spiritual Logic*, pp. 120-133.

<sup>19</sup> ORL IX, pp. 221-2.

<sup>20</sup> See for example, *Libre de demostracions*; *Libre de coneixença de Déu*, *Liber de Trinitate et Incarnatione*, *Liber praedicationis contra Judaeos*, *Liber de Trinitate in Unitate permansive in essentia Dei*, *Liber de secretis sacratissimae Trinitatis et Incarnationis*, among many others. Lull did devote a book to the issue of the Messiah. See W.A. Euler, «De adventu Messiae: Ramon Lull's Beitrag zur Christlich-Jüdischen Messiascontroverse» in F. Domínguez et al. (eds.), *Aristotelica et Lulliana* (Steenbrugis, 1995), pp. 429-441.

<sup>21</sup> On the Lullian Art, see F.A. Yates, «The Art of Ramon Lull: An approach to it through Lull's theory of the Elements», *Lull and Bruno: Collected Essays* (London, 1982), Vol. I, pp. 9-77, as well as R.D.F. Pring-Mill, *Estudis sobre Ramon Lull* (Barcelona, 1991), among others. See also A. Bonner, «Lull and the Dominicans», pp. 384-5.

<sup>22</sup> For the identification of the friar in this story with Martí, see E. Longpre, «Le B. Raymond Lulle et Raymond Marti O.P.», *EL* 13 (1969), pp. 197-200.

sultan promised to convert to Christianity together with all his subjects. Martí answered: «It is impossible to demonstrate the Christian faith; however, I have here the articles of faith in Arabic, believe them». The sultan was very angry because he was now a man without faith. He would not accept the truth of Christianity without proper proof and that was not forthcoming. Needless to say, Martí and his companions were *personae non gratae* and had to leave Tunis.<sup>23</sup> This was an anomaly to Llull as he firmly believed that had he been in Tunis with his Art he would have been able to convert the sultan.

It is this belief in his ability to prove the dogmas of the Christian faith that allows Llull to proclaim on his arrival in Tunis in 1293, that he is willing to convert to Islam if he finds the foundations of that faith to be truer than his own.<sup>24</sup> As a result he engages in debates with Muslim wise men who are convinced by Llull's arguments, but Llull then finds himself expelled from Tunis. This leads us to the second major difference between the mendicants and Llull; the method of argumentation.

Llull recognised that it was useless to have recourse to authority. While the authority of the Old Testament was shared with the Jews, it was less accepted by the Muslims as an authoritative text. Hence, any debate based on authority that was not shared and interpreted in a similar manner was doomed to failure. Instead Llull's method of argumentation was based on rational proofs that stemmed from premises acceptable to all sides.<sup>25</sup> One only has to glance at the main mendicant polemical works of the thirteenth century to see just how radically different this approach was. Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles*, written at the insistence of Ramon Martí and Ramon de Penyafort, as well as the texts of the different public debates, and the works of Ramon Martí himself, all share an extensive use of authority blended with rational and philosophical debate.<sup>26</sup> There is no attempt to find common ground and build from it as we find in Llull's works.

In the two main public debates of the thirteenth century, that of Paris in 1240 and Barcelona in 1263, we find the stage set for a disputation that allows no doubt as to who are the superiors and who are the inferiors in the debate.<sup>27</sup> The

<sup>23</sup> *Liber de acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*, ed. E. Longpre, *Criterion* 3 (1927), pp. 276-7, and *Libre de meravelles*, *SWRL* II, pp. 693-4. See also *Blanquerna*, trans. A. Peers (London, no year), ch. 84, pp. 356-58; *Disputació de cinc savis*, *ATCA* 5 (1986), pp. 28-9; *Disputatio fidei et intellectus*, *MOG* IV, viii, 2 (480); *Liber de convenientia fidei et intellectus in objecto*, *MOG* IV, xi, 4 (574); *Liber de fine*, *ROL* IX, p. 267.

<sup>24</sup> *Vita coetanea*, in *SWRL* I, p. 34.

<sup>25</sup> See *Libre de contemplació*, *ORL* V, p. 171; *Doctrina Pueril*, *ORL* I, p. 156; *Book of the Gentile*, *SWRL* I, p. 170; *Disputació de cinc savis*, in *ATCA* 5, p. 34; *Proverbis de Ramon*, *ORL* XIV, p. 271.

<sup>26</sup> See «General Introduction», *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, pp. 20-1, and Martí's *Explanatio symboli apostolorum*, *Capistrum Iudaeorum*, and *Pugio Fidei*.

<sup>27</sup> There is much literature on the debates. For a reasonably comprehensive bibliography, see R. Chazan, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and its Aftermath* (Berkeley, 1992).

atmosphere is one of fear and distrust and in Barcelona, the Jewish representative, Nahmanides (1196- c.1273), has to request permission from the King, James I (1213-1276), to be able to speak freely without fear of reprisal.<sup>28</sup> The Jews are obviously outnumbered by the Christian representatives and have to steer a very cautious course in replying to the Christian arguments. It is also clear that this is not an argument among equals. The agenda is set by the Christian side, and there is no possibility whatsoever that the end of the debate will bring about a Christian admission to the truth of the Jewish faith and a mass conversion to Judaism. At best, the Jews will hold their own sticking to their interpretation while the Christians will be pressing for them to admit defeat. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the content of the debate was not one that could substantially challenge the tenets of the Christian faith. Indeed, a debate would not be held along those lines. Aquinas wrote that debate should be carried out only to confound the beliefs of the unbelievers, not to question or investigate the tenets of the Christian faith which are true beyond any doubt, and not open to debate.<sup>29</sup> In subsequent works there is no attempt to hide what is truly felt about the Jews. The *Pugio Fidei* is full of pejorative names and adjectives for and about the Jews and their intellectual capabilities. Sobriquets such as *stultitia*, *coecitas*, *deliramentum*, *impudentia*, *mentis insania* and *perfidia* are not uncommon.<sup>30</sup>

This is not the case with regard to Llull. In his encyclopaedic *Libre de contemplació en Deu*, Llull goes to great lengths to set out the ideal conditions for a religious debate.<sup>31</sup> Very soon after writing this, in another work, his *Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men*, he actually demonstrates how this should be applied in practice. While it is clear that the latter does not reflect a true debate, the records of the debates that we do have support, for the most part, the theory behind what Llull considered, a successful debate.<sup>32</sup> Of crucial importance was the right frame of mind, cordiality between the disputants, tolerance, and an

<sup>28</sup> See C. Chavel, *The Writings of Nahmanides* (in Hebrew), 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1963), Vol. I, pp. 302-3.

<sup>29</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae. 10.7. See the opening paragraph of the Latin account of the Barcelona disputation in Y. Bear, «On the Disputation of R. Yehiel of Paris and R. Moses ben Nahman» (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 2 (1930-1931), p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> See E. Colomer, «Ramon Llull y Ramon Martí», p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> *ORL* V, ch. 187, pp. 169-175.

<sup>32</sup> See for example the *Vita coetanea*, *SWRL* I, pp. 34-5, 41-3; *Disputatio Raimundi et Homeri sarraceni*, *MOG* IV, vii (431-477). While the tone of the debate is not that of the idealized *Book of the Gentile*, the place and conditions of the debate not those envisioned by Llull, the subject and method of argumentation is Lullian. See, A. Llinàres, «Le séjour de R. Lulle à Bougie (1307) et la "Disputatio Raymundi christiani et Hamar sarraceni"», *EL* 4 (1960), pp. 63-72, and E. Colomer, «Ramón Llull y Ramón Martí», *EL* 28, pp. 16-7.

agreement on basic precepts common to all religions.<sup>33</sup> The first of these points is particularly laboured by Llull, who demands a high level of intellectual attainment and equanimity before a debate can commence. In his *Proverbis de Ramon*, Llull defines a disputation as «spiritual contrariness that manifests through words the conceptions one intellect has against another».<sup>34</sup> The debate is a spiritual experience, hence, it is necessary to discard all prior emotional and cultural baggage, so that the debate can take place on a plane of «faith and reason».<sup>35</sup> This also means that the disputants should not allow their imaginative faculties to impede on the debate as it is to be purely intellectual, and only by this latter faculty can one grasp the truth.<sup>36</sup> While this is hard to achieve in practice, it is clear that all the disputants start on an equal footing, there is no predetermined outcome, and that all the sides, within the parameters of the method of argumentation used in the debate, can say what they like.

This is clearly demonstrated in the *Book of the Gentile*, where cordiality, politeness and tolerance reign supreme. The book tells of a Gentile's search for truth, where he stumbles on three wise men, a Jew, Christian and Muslim, amiably talking among themselves about the merits of their respective faiths, and he requests them to prove the existence of God and subsequently discourse on their own faiths. Both the atmosphere and geographical location of the debate, in the shade of trees by a fountain, are conducive to progress and the method of argumentation is agreed upon by all the wise men before the debate begins. There is a brief discussion to set the mood, then basic points of agreement and the methods that will be used are established, the existence of God and resurrection are jointly proven, and then each wise man, without interruption by the others, is allowed to expound on his faith, using the Lullian Art, which is general enough for the task, to prove its veracity. It is clear which religion is the true one, Llull is a Christian; however, each of the religions is proven, none are discarded as being false. We are left in the dark as to what religion the Gentile chooses.

While it is clear that there is a great difference between theory and practice, this is a far cry from the mendicant public debates mentioned above. Llull

<sup>33</sup> See Prologue of *Proverbis de Ramon*, ORL XIV, p. 271. This idea appears in Dominican manuals of advice to preachers, but was seldom adhered to. See R.F. Bennett, *The Early Dominicans: Studies in Thirteenth century Dominican History* (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 75-127. This idea caught on in other circles as well. See O. Limor, «The Disputation of Majorca 1286: A Critical Edition and Introduction» (Hebrew University, Jerusalem Ph.D. thesis, 1984), pp. 36-50. However, this does not mean that Llull necessarily liked his polemical opponents. See H. Hames, «Ramon Llull and his Polemical Work against the Jews», in C. de Valle (ed.), *Historia de la polémica judeocristiana en España* (forthcoming).

<sup>34</sup> ORL XIV, p. 270.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ars demonstrativa*, SWRL I, pp. 433-4.

<sup>36</sup> See *Lògica del Gatzel*, ORL XIX, p. 32, lines 768-70.



expresses the hope of true dialogue. He wants and is willing to engage in debate which deals with the essence of the respective faiths, so sure is he that Christianity will emerge victorious. It is this confidence which inspires him to write works dealing with the articles of faith, and by using his Art, the conditions of which he is sure all will be able to accept, prove them to be true. It is this attitude which he believed would inevitably lead to the recognition of the veracity of the Christian faith, not the one-sided confrontations that avoided true debate and ignored the real issues, which would achieve the desired effect.

Llull's approach is again reflected in the letter of permission to preach in the synagogues and mosques granted to him by James II in October 1299. Unlike the practice followed by the mendicants in going to preach in the synagogues, probably best reflected at the end of Nahmanides' version of the events of the disputation in Barcelona 1263, Llull wanted a dialogue.<sup>37</sup> The letter says, «...et si voluerint, opportunitate captata, possint respondere ejus predicationi et expositioni...».<sup>38</sup> The Jews were expected to partake in the dialogue, otherwise the whole process was not worthwhile.

To sum up, we have briefly examined two different approaches to the idea of conversion. Both approaches are united in their wish to convert, however, their respective ideas of how this was to be achieved diverged. The mendicants, basing themselves on the scholastic approach did not feel it appropriate to engage with the infidel on equal terms. The inherent truth of the Christian dogmas did not allow them to be scrutinised or subjected to any rigorous examination. The polemical works focused mainly on those issues that were safe from a Christian perspective, and on which authority and reason could be brought to bear. These works were not written for the members of the opposite faiths, but as manuals for the mendicants. The debates were also not supposed to be between equals, but were a bludgeon in the hands of the dominant faith. Llull, however, felt that to convert someone meant being able to prove convincingly the tenets of the Christian faith, and to engage in frank and equal debate on essential questions of dogma. It was for this reason that he wrote books in Arabic, Catalan, and Latin, so that they would be read and studied by Muslims and used as tools for fruitful dialogue and eventual conversion to Christianity.<sup>39</sup> To place

<sup>37</sup> See C. Chavel, *The Writings of Nahmanides*, Vol. I, pp. 318-20.

<sup>38</sup> M. Kayserling, «Raymond Lulle, convertisseur des Juifs», *Revue des Etudes Juives* 27 (1893), p. 149. See also E. Longpré, «Deux opusculs inédits du B. Raymond Lulle», *La France Franciscaine* 18 (1935), p. 153.

<sup>39</sup> See J.N. Hillgarth, *Readers and Books in Majorca*, Vol. I, p. 194, n. 20, on the possibility of Arnau de Villanova owning a copy of Llull's *De Trinitate* in Hebrew, suggestive that perhaps some of Llull's works were rendered in that language as well. There is extant a Hebrew translation of the *Ars brevis* done in Italy in 1472. See Ms. New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, Mic 2312, ff. 1a-42a, an edition of which is forthcoming in a supplementary volume of the *ROL* series.

Llull within the mendicant tradition, as some have, is to ignore the substantial differences in both approach and method between the two.<sup>40</sup>

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Israel

### RESUM

This article deals with two different approaches to conversion prevalent in the thirteenth century. One, promulgated by the mendicants, proposed the use of reason in order to discredit the religion of the unbeliever, and demanded belief in the truth of the Christian articles of faith. The other, adopted by Ramon Llull insisted on the necessity of not only disproving the faith of the other by the use of reason, but also of putting the Christian articles of faith to the same test of reason.

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<sup>40</sup> See for example, J. Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews*, pp. 199-225.