



ESTUDIOS LITERARIOS

FAITH UPON INTELLECT. THE ARGUMENT OF PEDRO DE
LA CABALLERÍA IN FAVOR OF TRINITY

FE POR ENCIMA DEL INTELECTO. EL ARGUMENTO DE PEDRO DE
LA CABALLERÍA A FAVOR DE LA TRINIDAD

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ABSTRACT

In this article we analyze the arguments of the Jewish apostate Pedro de la Caballería in his work *Tractatus zelus Christi contra iudaeos, sarracenos et infideles*. We will see that Pedro do not give rational argument in favor on the Christian dogmas. By opposite he argues that people have to believe only according to the authority of the scripture and other authoritative texts. By the end of the article we will conclude that his opinion on rationality come probably from his Jewish background as a follower of kabbalah.

Keywords: Conversos; Trinity; Jewish-Christian debate.

RESUMEN

En este artículo analizamos los argumentos del apóstata judío, Pedro de la Caballería, en su obra *Tractatus zelus Christi contra iudaeos, sarracenos et infideles*. Veremos que Pedro no presenta argumentos racionales a favor de los dogmas cristianos. Por el contrario, sostiene que las personas deben creer únicamente según la autoridad de las Escrituras y otros textos autoritativos. Al final del artículo llegaremos a la conclusión de que su opinión sobre la racionalidad probablemente proviene de su trasfondo judío como seguidor de la kabbalah.

Palabras clave: Conversos; Trinidad; debate judeo-converso.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mass conversion of a significant portion of the Jewish population of Medieval Spain in the late 14th and early 15th centuries was a pivotal event in the history of both the Jewish and Spanish people.¹ The conversion of such large numbers of people raised complex questions for both the remnant Jewish communities and the Spanish Old Christians. One of the major questions concerned the true beliefs of the new converts.² Were the converts forced to convert, yet still desired to remain Jewish? Were they merely trying to be accepted by the Spanish Christian society, despite the antisemitism of the Inquisition? The answer likely lies somewhere in between. There were converts who identified themselves as Jewish and even wrote anti-Christian polemics yet lived as Christians (the most radical of them being probably Profayt Duran).³ There were also converts who sought to persuade the remaining Jewish communities to convert to Christianity.

Without doubt, Pedro de la Caballería was one of these ideological converts. However, an important question arises regarding their understanding of the religion they have now accepted. To what extent is their definition of Christianity rooted in Christian sources, and to what extent is it derived from Jewish sources, creating a form of Christianity that is distinctly distinct from that of their Christian neighbors⁴? Analyzing the writings of Jewish ideological converts is essential to answer this question.⁵

In this article, we will attempt to gain an understanding of the views of Pedro de la Caballería, a lesser-known ideological convert, on the rationality of religion and the doctrine of the Trinity. We will seek to comprehend his stance, as well as the sources to which he refers and the extent of his knowledge of Christian theology.

Pedro de la Caballería⁶ (or Bonafos Caballería, d. 1464) was a prominent member of the Aragon Jewish community who converted to Christianity in 1414 in the wake

¹ We must take into account the conversion of the Jews of Portugal in 1497 when considering the conversion of Spain.

² There is an important debate among scholars regarding the identity of the Conversos, a group of people of Jewish descent who were forced to convert to Christianity in 15th century Spain. Scholars such as Netanyahu (1995; 1998) and Saraiva (2001) argue that the majority of the Conversos wanted to assimilate into the Christian Spanish society. However, some historians (Beinart, 1982) disagree, maintaining that the majority of Conversos desired to remain Jewish and even attempted to keep religious Jewish commandments. Other historians have suggested that there were varied opinions among the Converso community (Haliczzer, 1990; Gitlitz, 1996; Levine-Melamed, 2004). In the debate on the religious identity of the Conversos in Spanish old-Christian society, see Vidal Doval (2015) as well as Hernández Franco (2011).

³ For an analysis of the life and thought of Profayt Duran, see Kozodoy (2015).

⁴ The same question exists regarding the Judaism of Conversos who have returned to Judaism, particularly in Holland, after generations of living as Christians in Portugal. This topic is addressed in the works of Levine-Melamed (2004), as noted previously.

⁵ An examination of the ideology of Jewish conversion is presented in Sadik (2020).

⁶ Regarding Pedro and his singular polemical work, see Gómez Llaguer (2013). She argues that the author of *Zelus Christi* was a different Pedro de la Caballería than the political figure of the same

of the Tortosa debate. This paper will analyze his sole extant work, *Tractatus Zelus Christi contra Iudaeos, Sarracenos et infideles* (henceforth: *ZC*), to examine his arguments for the position that one cannot prove religious dogmas through rational proofs. It will also explore the different descriptions Pedro offers regarding one of the major Christian dogmas, the Trinity, and assess how his understanding of it differs from the standard Christian definition. The conclusion will suggest that Pedro's understanding of Christian dogma was mainly based on Jewish sources, particularly Kabbalah, which he already knew from before his conversion, and much less on actual Christian sources with which he had only a superficial familiarity. Moreover, it will be argued that Kabbalah was also likely the source of his rejection of rational inquiries into the foundations of religion.

The importance of this article lies in its analysis of Pedro's opinions, which allows for a better understanding of the religious situation of some of the first generation of conversos. Pedro's Christianity was largely based on Jewish sources, particularly Kabbalah, and he was one of the first to give a Christian interpretation of Kabbalist texts. His lack of influence from later Christian Kabbalists meant that he was not part of the history of Christian's Kabbalah, but rather a part of the history of the conversion of the Spanish Jewish community.

2. THE IRRATIONAL BASIS OF RELIGION

At the conclusion of his *Zelus Christi*, Pedro asserts that it is impossible to validate the veracity of religion through philosophical inquiry.⁷ He states that "quae non teneret demonstrative apud concedentes scripturas, sed auctoritative" (*ZC*, sec. 1050)⁸ that is, the truth of religion and the sacred scriptures cannot be established through demonstration, but only through authoritative sources.

Pedro does not merely assume religious beliefs to be true, but rather argues that there is no need for intellectual proofs when it comes to religious beliefs. He then offers philosophical reasons to convince his non-Christian readers of the existence of the Trinity and to disabuse the Jews of the philosophical suppositions that prevent them from seeing the dogma of Trinity as truth. Through this, it is possible to learn how Pedro understood the Trinity and how far removed he was from the Christian sources that address these concepts. This paper will first summarize Pedro's arguments regarding the irrelevance of intellectual proofs in the context of religious polemics, and then examine his view of the Trinity.

name. The two individuals were likely members of the same extended family and converted around the same time.

⁷ In *Zelus Christi*, Sections 956-964 and 1050 provide an interesting discussion of the subject, which appears sporadically throughout the book but is mainly concentrated at its conclusion.

⁸ All quotations in this work will be taken from Pedro de la Caballería's *Zelus Christi contra Iudaeos, Sarracenos, et infideles*, published in Venice in 1592.

Pedro's discussion of the source of evidence in religious debate appears towards the end of his *Zelus Christi*. He demonstrates that it is neither necessary nor possible to infer evidence for religion from philosophy (*ZC*, sec. 956-964). Nevertheless, he offers a set of philosophical arguments in support of Christianity (*ZC*, sec. 965-1015). This style of argumentation is like that of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi in his *Kuzari*. Interestingly, Pedro appears to be responding to R. Halevi's objections to Christianity, which are presented at the beginning of the *Kuzari*.⁹

Initially, Pedro claims that the universal acceptance of Jesus by people of different faiths should demonstrate the veracity of his mission.¹⁰ He then responds to the criticism that Christianity appears to have more intricate beliefs than other religious systems: "Et si tu dixeris mihi: Fides Christi, ultra omnes, habet articulos difficiles ad credendum" (*ZC*, sec. 958).¹¹

Pedro's response suggests that all monotheistic religions rely on faith rather than intellectual evidence to uphold certain fundamental beliefs. He emphasizes this point by reiterating it at the conclusion of his answer:

Cur mihi Christiano indignaris quae omnia mea supernaturalia, incredibilia per naturam, attribuo creatori & non creaturae; in quibus nulla est impossibilitas, aut contradictio, considerata omnipotentia divina, videlicet, quod Christius fuerit de virgine natus, & surexerit ad mortuis, & ascenderit ad coelos, & alia quae de Christi humanitate credimus Christiani.... Postquam enim omnis fides habet transcendere naturales regulas, & habet fundamentum sui esse in & supernaturalibus, & extra naturam consistentibus doctrinis, ita quod non esset fides, si esset contenta naturalibus demonstrationibus, ut est videre de miraculis legis Moysi; quae omnia transcendunt naturales cogitationes, & demonstrationes Philosophales, & naturales... (*ZC*, sec. 962)¹²

⁹ There is insufficient evidence to conclusively demonstrate that Pedro had read the *Kuzari*, thus it is plausible that the similarities between the *Kuzari* and *Zelus Christi* are simply fortuitous.

¹⁰ This argument, that if the whole world agrees on an opinion it must be true, can be found in numerous places in the *Kuzari*, beginning with section IV of Part I. Elsewhere in the book, Pedro examines the distinctions between the Christian and Islamic view of the divinity of Jesus, particularly in Sections 863-876. In these sections, he attempts to demonstrate the concept of the Incarnation through references to the *Quran*.

¹¹ Here, Pedro continues his debate with R. Halevi, who asserts that the Christian faith is, to some extent, antithetical to reason. Had the Khazar king been born into a Christian family and been exposed to the tenets of the faith, he may have been able to explain them. However, since he was not born a Christian, he is not inclined to engage with an irrational religion (*Kuzari*, I:5). A Hebrew translation of R. Yehuda Ibn Tibon (the Hebrew translation available to Pedro):

אמר הכוזרי: אין בכאן מקום לסברא, אך הסברא מרחקת רב הדברים האלה. אך פאשר תתאמת הראיה והנפיון, עד שיאמין בו כל הלב ולא ימצא דרך אחרת להאמין בזולת מה שנתברר אצלו, יתחכם להקשה וינהלה לאט עד שיקרב הרחוק ההוא, כאשר יעשו הטבעיים בכחות המפלאים אשר הם רואים, שאם יספר להם עליהם מבלי ראותם, מ' כחשים אותם, וכאשר רואים אותם, מתחכמים ושמים להם סבות מן הכוכבים והרוחניות ולא ידחו הראות. אבל אני איני מוצא דעתי נוהה לקבל הדברים האלה מפני שהם חדשים לי ולא גדלתי עליהם, וחובה עלי לחקר בשל' מות חדשים

¹² Original Latin: *Postquam enim omnis fides habet transcendere naturales regulas.*

In this passage, Pedro expresses his opinion that all religions contain irrational beliefs that are contradicted by rational proofs. He states that, in Judaism, these beliefs include the miracles of Moses, and in Christianity, they include the co-existent humanity and divinity of Jesus, as well as faith in the immaculate conception and the resurrection of Jesus. He argues that believers must maintain their faith despite the rational arguments that disprove these beliefs.

According to Pedro, the essence of faith is fundamentally distinct from nature and the philosophical deductions that arise from it.¹³ Since the entire domain of faith is, by definition, not based on nature or the intellectual proofs that can be derived solely from nature, but rather on revelation and its interpretation, it follows that there is no room for the examination of the substance of faith using the tools of philosophy. Once it is accepted that all religions concur that God performs supernatural acts, there is no distinction for Pedro between the division of the Red Sea, the transformation of Aaron's staff into a snake, and the Christian Trinity. In his view, the supernatural realm of faith is beyond the capacity of the human intellect to assess.

It is noteworthy that Pedro takes a more extreme stance than many Christian theologians, who accept that it is impossible to verify the absolute truth of religious doctrines but maintain that it is possible to demonstrate their plausibility.¹⁴ In contrast, Pedro believes that since faith and reason are distinct, there is no way to either confirm or refute religious beliefs through logical reasoning.

In another part of his book, Pedro critiques Maimónides' philosophical stance that Judaism is equivalent to philosophy (Maimónides, ca.1190). Pedro believes Maimónides is a heretic, not because he rejected Christianity, but because, according to Pedro's interpretation of Maimónides' writings, he also rejected Judaism. This criticism is based on the French rabbis who excommunicated Maimónides, and Pedro's close reading of his writings: "Ecce mentem, & verba illius insani haertici Rabbi Moysi Aegypti [...] non solum in infidelitas judaica; sed etiam in haeresi detinet, & fouet. Et licet plures, & meliores, ac saniores judai fuerint sibi contrarii, inter quos spcipuus fuit Rabbi Moyses Gerundensis, & omne judai Gallici" (ZC, sec. 267-268).¹⁵

¹³ It is noteworthy that Pedro's definition of philosophy is similar to that of the most radical (naturalist) Jewish philosophers. This Averroist school of thought held that it was impossible for God to alter the nature of His will. Prominent figures in this school of thought included R. Isaac Pulgar, R. Isaac Albalag, R. Josef Ibn Kaspi, and R. Moses of Narbone.

¹⁴ As examples, Thomas Aquinas in the fourth part of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and Augustine og Hippo in the *De Trinitate*.

¹⁵ In the following section, Pedro expresses his view that many Jews of his day adhere to the opinion of Maimónides (ca. 1190) and reject the belief in resurrection. This passage likely serves as a criticism of Jewish Averroists. In regard to the question of the relationship between Jewish Averroism and conversion to Christianity see Sadik (2020) and Lasker (1980). It is evident from Pedro's harsh criticism

In the internal Jewish debate, Pedro advocates for the position of the Kabbalists (such as Nahmanides) in opposition to the Jewish philosophers. Additionally, he draws upon Kabbalistic sources to form his Christian arguments.

According to Pedro, there are two debates: the first between all religions and philosophy, and the second between Judaism and Christianity. Regarding both debates, Pedro perceives the Kabbalah to be an ally which, in relation to the first debate, assists him in demonstrating that all religions are irrational, while in the second debate, it furnishes him with Jewish texts that purportedly contain beliefs and descriptions compatible with the principal doctrines of Christianity, such as, for example, the Trinity. He expresses his positive view of Kabbalah in contrast to his criticism of Maimónides in *Zelus Christi*:

Et qui judaei [...] multa habent scripta quae veritatem nostrae fidei fatentur [...] Ipsi quidem judaei, ultra libros Talmud, Habent libros vocatos sermones Hebraico; Cabala, quod est dicere: Traditiones antiquae, sive scriptura, quae posita in scriptis per illos quibus tradita sunt, redacta reperiuntur & ad manus meas deveniunt duo libri, unus vocatur: Portae justitiae, alius portae lucis. In quibus apud judaeos, tractantur secreta Coelestia nominum Dei divinatorum, & proprietatum. (*ZC*, sec. 577-578)

Here we can see that Pedro perceives Kabbalah as an ancient Jewish tradition that contains divine knowledge that is compatible with Christian beliefs. In the subsequent section of the article, we will observe that Pedro provides evidence of the existence and essence of the Trinity from Kabbalist books that he considers to be authoritative. Pedro's positive opinion of Kabbalah and his extensive use of quotations and paraphrases from Kabbalist texts are unique to him and not found in other converts (such as Abner of Burgos and Pablo de Santa María). We can thus conclude that Pedro was likely a Kabbalist prior to his conversion and continued to maintain the same internal Jewish critique of Maimónides and positive view of Kabbalah before and after his conversion.

3. THE TRINITY

The structure of Pedro's discussion of the Trinity is analogous to Augustine's in his book on the Trinity. By the conclusion of this section, it will be evident that Pedro does not concur with Augustine (and most other Christian theologians) regarding the essence of the Trinity. This similarity likely stems from the necessity of both authors to elucidate their Christian faith to non-believers. At the core of Augustine's elucidation of the Trinity lies the traditional Catholic definition: three persons

of Maimónides and Jewish Averroists that he does not view them as potential converts. Instead, he perceives them as part of the Jewish rationalist opposition to Christianity.

united in a single essence,¹⁶ “quod trinitas sit unus et solus et uerus deus, et quam recte pater et filius et spiritus sanctus unius eiusdemque substantiae uel essentiae dicatur” (Augustine of Hippo, Liber I:4). According to this definition, the three persons of the Trinity are distinct manifestations of the one God (i.e. the one divine essence or substance), and the distinction between them lies in their relationship to one another and to humanity.

Augustine discusses the Trinity in many of his writings, particularly in *Confessions* and *The City of God*. In *De Trinitate*, his central work on the subject, he attempts to prove and understand the Trinity through the human intellect alone. This book is typically divided into two sections¹⁷: the first (Books 1-7) seeks to demonstrate that the Catholic definition of the Trinity is consistent with what is stated in the Old and New Testaments, while the second (Books 8-15) attempts to explain this definition as far as the human mind can comprehend it. Additionally, Augustine suggests that there are various analogues of the Trinity in Creation,¹⁸ with the human soul being the most prominent example, as it is believed in Christian theology to be created in the image of the Trinity: “Haec igitur tria, memoria, intelligentia, uoluntas, quoniam non sunt tres uitae sed una uita, nec tres mentes sed una mens, consequenter utique nec tres substantiae sunt sed una substantia” (Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate*, Liber X: 11).¹⁹ According to this proposed analogy, the Father = memory, the Son = knowledge or wisdom, and the Holy Spirit = will (that includes love).²⁰

In numerous places throughout *Zelus Christi*, Pedro discusses the Trinity. In sections 684-735,²¹ he provides his main discussion on the subject. He begins by outlining the main Jewish difficulties concerning the Trinity (ZC, sec. 685-690), focusing on a scriptural difficulty based on the verse “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one,” (Deut. 6:4)²² and a philosophical difficulty stemming from Maimónides’ observations in (Maimónides, ca. 1190: I:50), which reject any divi-

¹⁶ On the foundation of this approach in the Scriptures, see Rudebusch (1989), Cross (2007) and Drever (2007).

¹⁷ Regarding the structure and purpose of Augustine of Hippo *De Trinitate*, see Bourassa (1977), Chadwick (2010), Cavadini (1992), which argues that the composition establishes belief in the Trinity independently of belief in Jesus; Brachtendorf (1998), Madec (1989: 207-222) and Clark (2001: 91-102).

¹⁸ Regarding these analogies and their importance in Augustine’s writings, see Bourassa (1977: 379-384, 396-410). On the importance of the analogies to the Father, see Du Roy (1966: 173-409), discussing the various analogies conceived by Augustine during the first half of his life (up to the year 391).

¹⁹ Augustini, *De Trinitate*, Liber X: 11.

²⁰ On this analogy and its unique importance, see Bourassa (1977), Coakley (2007), Drever (2007: 240-241), Clark (2001: 96-99), Maier (1960: 178-199), who discusses the connection between this analogy and the purposes of the tasks of the different faces of the Trinity in the world; Du Roy (1966: 359-367, 432-450), Gilson (1987: 287-298), who also analyzes the relationship between the attributes of God as a whole and the human soul; Brachtendorf (1998: 44-46) and Wolfson (1970: 361-362).

²¹ Cf. ZC, sec. 1007-1011.

²² Pedro also raises a question based on the citation of this verse by Jesus himself (Mark 12:29).

sion in God.²³ Pedro addresses these difficulties by asserting that there are verses in the Old Testament that support the belief in the multiplicity of persons within the singular substance of God. He points to the fact that the common Hebrew name for God in the Bible, Elohim, is in the plural form as evidence of this (ZC, sec. 708-709).²⁴

He presents the Christian position that the Trinity does not negate the unity of God, but rather symbolizes different properties (*proprietates*) of a deity with one essence (*substantia*). To refute the Jewish opinion that verses should be interpreted through logic and philosophical evidence, Pedro provides two parables (ZC, sec. 697-702). These parables juxtapose the unity of the tripartite soul (intellect, active intellect, and passive intellect) with the unity of God's essence and His knowledge of Himself and His love. According to Pedro, the essence of the intellect and active intellect, combined with divine love attained through the intellect, form a single entity capable of various activities. This is meant to explain the unity of the Trinity, as Pedro states: "Non tamen est aliud, quia eadem est essentia Dei, se ipsum intelligens, & essentia Dei intellecta ad se ipsa; nisi quia Deus intelligens se ipsum, se habet per modum passionis. Et quia quelibet res intelligens amat id quod intelligit" (ZC, sec. 700).

Pedro suggests that the relationship between the three parts of the Trinity is analogous to the relationship between God's essence, His contemplation of His essence, and His essence as contemplated by Him. This distinction between the latter two concepts—which can be easily mistaken for the same thing, merely described in active and passive voice—lies in the latter being the result of the contemplation, rather than the action of contemplation itself. God's active contemplation of Himself is emotional, while His passive contemplation, i.e. the perception of His own essence as attained via self-contemplation, is purely intellectual. Through this analogy, Pedro seeks to explain the unity of God, as well as His division into different persons with different attributes. The crucial point for our purposes is the tripartite division itself, in which the essence of God (*essentia*) is the first of the three persons

²³ In the Hebrew translation of R. Samuel Ibn Tibbon, a translation that was likely known to Pedro: אמנם מי שהאמין שהוא אחד בעל תארים רבים, כבר אמר שהוא אחד במלתו, והאמינו רבים במחשבתו; וזה כמאמר הנוצרים, הוא אחד אבל הוא שלשה, והשלשה אחד – כן מאמר האומר: הוא אחד אבל הוא בעל תארים רבים, והוא ותארו אחד, עם הסתלק הגשמות והאמנת הפשיטות הגמורה

In this passage, Maimónides draws a stark comparison between the Christian belief in the Trinity and the belief in the corporeality (and plurality) of God (Maimónides, ca. 1190: I: 50). He uses the Christian example to demonstrate how Jewish thinkers who espouse different attributes of God are misguided. For further insight into the role of philosophy in Jewish-Christian polemics, one may consult Lasker (1977; 2007).

²⁴ Pedro supplements his interpretation with classic Christian arguments from the Bible, such as the plural in the creation "Facimus hominem ad imaginem," and critiques the Jewish interpretation that God spoke with the angel (ZC, sec. 710-712).

of the Trinity, while the intellect and love (which itself arises from the intellect²⁵) are the remaining two persons.

This position differs from the accepted Christian one in that it puts the two persons of the Son (intellect) and the Holy Spirit (love) in a subordinate role to the person of the Father (essence). Rather than the classical view of a single essence with three properties, Pedro proposed a single essence with two functions. He argued that intellect and love are dependent on the divine essence and are a result of the divine essence's existence, necessitating intellection and love. This position has been deemed heretical by the Church since the fourth century CE, and Catholic Christian thinkers have since then tried to distance themselves from it.²⁶ Pedro's lack of mention of this issue suggests his unfamiliarity with Catholic theological literature.

Pedro's approach is akin to that of Augustine, who begins by citing evidence from scripture and then providing philosophical explanations. The content of these explanations is similar, as they both explain the Trinity through the faculties of the mind. However, there is a great divergence between the bishop of Hippo in North Africa and the Spanish convert in this regard. Augustine posits that memory symbolizes the Father, knowledge or wisdom symbolizes the Son, and love or will symbolizes the Holy Spirit, with three attributes of the soul symbolizing the three persons of the Trinity. He explains how knowledge and love stem from memory, yet all three qualities are of one soul. Pedro, however, views the situation differently, with a single essence of the soul having only two qualities. This results in a relationship of absolute inequality between the various persons of the Trinity, which is contrary to the official position of the Catholic Church. Though it is possible that Pedro was influenced by Augustine, the difference between the two thinkers suggests that he did not fully internalize the latter's positions.

In contrast to Pedro's likely partial utilization of Augustine's opinion, it is evident that he had a strong belief that the *Zohar* unequivocally supported the concept of the Trinity. His references to this renowned Jewish work demonstrate a deep knowledge of Kabbalah literature and a willingness to cite parts of it to validate the Trinity. For instance, when introducing the book to his non-Jewish readers, Pedro wrote:

²⁵ The position according to which love comes from God's essence and intellect corresponds to the Catholic Christian paradigm, which states that the Holy Spirit derives from a combination of the Father and the Son, in contrast to the position of the Orthodox Church, according to which the Holy Spirit derives from the Father alone.

²⁶ On the history of the catholic version of the Trinity see *inter alia*, Harnack (1901: 1-137); Wolfson (1970: 141-362); and Margerie (1975). It is important to note that the same comparison to the Trinity also appears in Augustine of Hippo, *De Trinitate* (book IX). However, in book X and in its continuation Augustine gives other explanation of the Trinity (as we said the comparison between memory, knowledge, and God).

Et sequitur ibi: Sanctus Sanctus Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabahoth. Et scribunt iudaei antiqui, qui dicuntur Mecubalini (quod est apud eos dicere: Qui sciunt scire Divinia) in quodam libro vocato; Cefer Azohar, quem attribuunt Rabbi Si-meoni Beniohay: qui liber est Regno Castellae, apud peculiares iudaeos. Et dictus liber scribit, & glossat serem totam Bibliam. Et est liber magni voluminis, & mag-norum secretorum apud iudaeos. Et cum est medio. C. 6. Isaia, dicit Sanctus David Abba; (quod est dicere) iste est Pater Sanctus Dabera. quod est dicere: iste est Fi-lius. Sanctus da Ruha de Cudsa: quod est dicere: iste est Spiritus Sanctus. Quia dic-tus liber est scriptus Caldea lingua. (ZC, sec. 212-213)²⁷

It is evident from the passage that Pedro was familiar with the *Zohar* and held it in high regard. He attributed it to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, considered it to be an ancient and authoritative book, and linked it to the Kabbalists. He also noted that it was written in Aramaic (“Chaldean”) and was close to the hearts of the Jews of the Kingdom of Castile. However, there are some inaccuracies in his description of the *Zohar*, such as the fact that it does not provide a commentary on the entire Bible, but rather focuses on the Torah and several books of the Writings.

According to Pedro’s view, the Kabbalists, particularly the *Zohar*, were aware of the secret of the Trinity and believed in it in a similar way to Christians. This is simi-lar to the opinion of the apostate Pablo de Santa María, who also held that the Kab-balists believed in the Trinity, but in contrast to the apostate Abner of Burgos, who, citing Jewish philosophers, argued that the Kabbalists were distant from the Trini-ty.²⁸ However, when one compares Pedro’s presentation of the *Zohar* with the origi-nal text, one finds that it is highly dissimilar and should be seen as, at best, a rough

²⁷ On this passage see Scholem (1979: 31-32), and Huss (2012: 362). Scholem and Huss both assert that the passage is a forgery. However, I believe that the likelihood of Pedro having forged it is low, and it is more probable that he created a loosely based paraphrase of a passage that is present in the Zo-haric literature.

²⁸ The relationship between the two apostates and Kabbalah is explored in Sadik (2020: 60-96). Abner is seen to quote from Kabbalistic sources on few occasions, agreeing with their view that the essence of God can be divided without compromising its unity: *E otrossi la conpanna que sse llaman mecubalim otorgan esto en lo que dizen que Dios que es diez cuentos, maguera que es uno sustancia* (Bur-gos, 1996-1997: I: 224). However, Abner does not concur with the Kabbalist, asserting that the Trinity is superior to the ten Sefirot, which are likened to the ten separated intellects: “...ca puede mostrar los diez cuentos que tienen los mecubalim. E con lo que ya prové por dichos de los sabios de (l) Tal-mud que aquel vieso muestra las tres maneras que sson en Dios, con que crio el mundo e con que dio la Ley, e prové que aquella Trinidad es más alta que aquella dezenidad. E assi dize en Beressit Rraba que dixo Rrab Zutra bar Tobia de nonbre de Rrab que con diez maneras que son en Dios fue criado el mundo... Rrabi Alazar dixo: En tres maneras encerró Dios su mundo que estas sson: sapiencia, e en-tender una cosa de otra, e saber... E devemos tener mientes en lo que dixo Rrabi Alazar que con aquel-las tres maneras fue criado el mundo encerradamente, que quiere dezir universsalmient, maguera que especialmient fue (criado) con aquellas diez maneras dichas. E esto es como lo que ya dixiemos que la Trinidat es más alta que la dezinidat” (Burgos, 1996-1997: I: 281). The Kabbalists assert that the divine essence is divided into ten distinct entities, as outlined in Burgos (1996-1997: II, cap. 10: 420). Pablo utilized the *Bahir* in his work (De Santamaría, 1515-1516: I, X, 9: 357-358). This text is not present

paraphrase. It is unclear where in the *Zohar* Pedro is quoting from, though it is likely *Ra'aya Mehimna*, volume 3, Parashat Pinechas.²⁹

It can be concluded from the analysis that Pedro likely had only a partial understanding of Christian theological literature, as he presented a position that was not accepted by the official Church, and seemingly without knowing it was an unusual take on the Trinity. Moreover, he did not show any recognition of the many discussions of the Trinity found in Christian literature in his book. However, Pedro's discussion of the Trinity does indicate a good knowledge of the Kabbalistic literature of his time, and a willingness to use it as a foundation and reference point for Christian beliefs such as the Trinity.

4. CONCLUSION

Pedro was more radical than most Christian thinkers in his opposition to philosophy, rejecting any attempt to analyze faith through the application of human reason. By contrast, most Christian thinkers, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the more conservative members of the Franciscan school, argued that while the foundations of faith are based on divine revelation, it is still necessary to use philosophical methodology to distill the axioms of revelation through theological study. This view maintains that certain points lie beyond the scope of philosophical study, yet still does not contradict philosophical proofs. Furthermore, all revealed knowledge can only be discussed within the framework of intellectual perceptions, making philosophy applicable even in the context of divine revelation.

In terms of the content of his beliefs, it should be noted that Pedro deviated significantly from the accepted Christian paradigm of the Trinity, creating an imbalance among the persons of the Trinity. He believed that the person of the Father was the main person, while the remaining two persons were related to Him in a subordinate manner. While Pedro did not explicitly reject or deviate from the standard doctrine, a comparison between his personal position and the official one reveals a clear contradiction that must be considered for an objective understanding of his position. Furthermore, Pedro drew upon Kabbalistic sources when addressing the two key topics of the Trinity and the role of philosophy within theology.

We can conclude that Pedro likely had only a limited knowledge of Christian sources, although he was likely aware of some of the Church's creeds and had some direct or indirect knowledge of Augustine's views on the Trinity. However, Pedro had a relatively extensive knowledge of Kabbalistic sources, such as Nahmanides,

in our current edition of the book. He also cited the commentary of the Torah by Nahmanides on several occasions.

²⁹ See pp. 242b-243a:

מכל מדות אלין יהבין ליה כתר בשם ידוד כידוד אלהינו בכל קראנו אליו אין קדוש כידוד מעלמא דדכורא דאיהו תפארת מלך מוכתר בכתר עלאה דבה ימלוך בשכינתיה דאיהי נפש יתירה וכתר נשמה יתירה יהו"ה רוח דאתמר אשפוך את רווחי על כל בשר ואיהו כליל י' ספיראן

the *Zohar*, and several books of R. Gikatilla.³⁰ It is likely that Pedro was a Jewish student of Kabbalah prior to his conversion and continued to define his new faith using Kabbalistic tools after his conversion to Christianity.

In his analysis of the two topics discussed in this paper, Pedro serves as an exemplar of some of the adult Jewish converts to Christianity in the Middle Ages who sought to explain their new beliefs primarily through their Jewish knowledge.³¹ Notably, Petrus Alphonsi and Abner of Burgos shared a similar perspective to that of Pedro. Petrus Alphonsi expresses an opinion analogous to that of Pedro concerning the delineation of the Trinity:³² “Volo tres personas substantiam, sapientiam et voluntatem dicere. Ideo autem personam primam substantiam appello, quia in ipsa et de ipsa sunt sapientia et voluntas et ipsa de nullo, quamvis tres personae, omnes sint una substantia” (Alfonso de Huesca, 1996: 104). It is evident from this text that Petrus Alphonsi and Pedro share a similar opinion regarding the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. According to their views, the Father is identified with divine essence, while the Son and Holy Spirit are associated with knowledge and will (or knowledge and love in Pedro's *Zelus Christi*). Consequently, the Father is seen as being of greater importance than the Son and Holy Spirit.

Abner's opinion on the Trinity is complex and requires a thorough analysis that exceeds the scope of this article.³³ In summary, his opinion on the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity and their relation to the divine essence is largely in line with traditional Christian thought:

Porque la memoria es virtud del ymaginar, assi como (el) entendimiento es el certificar en que cae verdad o mentira. E como es sabido que el ymaginar es ante por natura que el certificar... E por ende fui guisado de asemejar la perssona del Padre a la virtud del ymaginar, que nombramos memoria. E la perssona del Ffijo asemejámosla a la virtud del certificar, que es el entendimiento en acto. E la perssona del Spiritu Santo asemejámosla a la virtud de la voluntad; e como dixo Aristotiles que nos entendemos quando queremos. (Burgos, 1996-1997: I: 269-270)

³⁰ He mentions this book in *ZC*, sec- 577: “Et qui judaei... multa habent scripta quae veritatem nostrae fidei fatentur... Ipsi quidem judaei, ultra libros Talmud, Habent libros vocatos sermones Hebraico; Cabala, quod est dicere: Traditiones antiquae, sive scriptura, quae postea in scriptis per illos quibus tradita sunt, redacta reperiuntur & ad manus meas devenerunt duo libri, unus vocatur: Portae justitiae, alius portae lucis. In quibus apud judaeos, tractantur secreta Coelestia nominum Dei divinorum, & proprietatum”.

³¹ In contrast to the second and third-generation Conversos, who had been born and raised as Christians and were thus more familiar with Christian sources than Jewish ones, there is an interesting parallel with those who returned to Judaism. These individuals sought to construct an idealized version of the religion based on external sources, though in this case the process was reversed: the returning Jews primarily studied Christian sources, and were sometimes taken aback upon encountering the realities of rabbinic Judaism. An extreme example of this phenomenon is Uriel da Costa, who rejected rabbinic Judaism, was eventually excommunicated, and ultimately committed suicide.

³² Without making use of Kabbalistic texts, since Petrus Alphonsi predates Kabbalah.

³³ On this question see Sadik (2020: 114-181).

In this text, Abner identifies the Father with imagination (also known as memory), the Son with knowledge (intellect in action) and the Holy Spirit with will. This opinion is similar to Augustine's view that the different persons of the Trinity correspond to different capacities of the human soul. However, Abner has some unorthodox opinions about Trinity. Notably, his opinion that divine presence is present in all of the world, not just in the person of Jesus, is derived from his very radical neo-Platonic view.³⁴

One exception to the general lack of deep Christian knowledge among the first generation of conversos was the case of Pablo de Santa María (Paul of Burgos). He had obtained a doctorate in theology from the University of Paris,³⁵ demonstrating a thorough understanding of Christian theology and a familiarity with the official doctrines of the Church on theological matters.

Most of the first generation of Jewish apostates did not internalize or study Christian theology or philosophy in depth; however, they typically drew upon well-known sources and developed their ideas based on their prior Jewish knowledge. In some cases, they sought to identify Jewish sources as Christian, as Pedro did with the Kabbalah, while in other cases, they rejected certain Jewish positions and formed their Christian theology in opposition to them.³⁶

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³⁴ In regards to this topic, see, for example, Burgos (1996-1997: I: 149): "Ca las ffondrajás de la olla es dicho segunt el ebrayco por la espeçias que sson mezcladas con la cozina e que dan buen sabor e que se apegan a las parades de la olla... E assi la divinidad da virtud e nobleza a todo el mundo por quanto se enviste e mora en los baxos en alguna manera..." These opinions are reminiscent of certain radical neo-Platonic Christian views (e.g. those of Maester Eckard and Dionysius the Areopagite). However, there is no indication that Abner was aware of these sources, and it is likely that his views were based solely on his Jewish sources and a limited understanding of Christian dogma.

³⁵ For example, Pablo adopted the classical Christian view that it is logically possible to believe in the Trinity, even though it cannot be proven: "Licet posse concedere, quod hoc mysterium, scilicet sanctae Trinitatis & unitatis a ratione naturali comprehendi non posset, cum hoc excedat naturalem hominis rationem, nullo tamen modo concedendum est, quod praedictum mysterium contrariatur naturali rationis humanae" (De Santamaría, 1515-1516: I. D. IX. Cap III).

³⁶ On this see Sadik (2017, 145-167).

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